



A platform to understand the Konkan coast

BNHS and Shell jointly launch the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Assessment Tool which lists key marine and coastal sites and its flora and fauna of the Konkan coast of Maharashtra

Mumbai, November 7: The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in association with Shell jointly launched the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Assessment Tool (CoMBAT) on 6th November 2020. The Chief Guest of the virtual launch event was Mr. N. Vasudevan, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Managing Director, Forest Development Corporation of Maharashtra Limited. He launched the web tool in the presence of 35 guests that included environmentalists, government officials, and corporate professionals. The tool affords easy navigation and accessibility to a wide range of scientifically vetted information related to the coastal biodiversity of Maharashtra.

CoMBAT was a result of a massive exercise by BNHS to assess the Maharashtra coast for its biodiversity, and to identify ecologically important pockets, for more focused and effective conservation efforts. It is a user-friendly open-source platform, using advanced computing technology to make informed decisions by stakeholders about coastal development that can pose a threat to the unevenly explored habitats. In Phase I of the project, seven Ecologically Important Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Areas (EIMCBA) had been identified along the Konkan coast. The aim was to get these assimilated in the functions of Maharashtra State Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, and Mangrove Foundation, and a report was presented during COP-Mexico by Dr. Deepak Apte, Principal Scientist of the project. In Phase II, the data was further refined. The Phase III was primarily to develop a Decision Support System tool named CoMBAT that integrates the primary and secondary data and provides various stakeholders free of cost access to the scientific knowledge generated through this project. The platform is dynamic in nature and additional information layers shall be systematically updated in the coming days. The project was sponsored by BG Exploration & Production India Limited (part of Royal Dutch Shell plc group of Companies) as part of its social investment initiatives.

At the virtual launch, Dr. Deepak Apte said, “It was my dream project which provides vital marine biodiversity conservation tool for various stakeholders. I hope this is used not only by conservation groups but also by planners and decision makers.”

Speaking about the project Mr. Trivikram Arun, GM Upstream India and MD BGEPIIL said, “Shell is pleased and proud to have supported and partnered with BNHS in developing the CoMBAT tool that will help all relevant stakeholders make informed decision to protect and conserve the biodiversity of Konkan region of Maharashtra. We also hope this joint initiative between Shell and BNHS will help set the right precedent in country for protection and conservation of biodiversity.”

--Divyashree Rai
Public Relations Officer