

21 years on, JFM set for a relaunch

Vivek Deshpande : Nagpur, Fri Mar 15 2013, 04:44 hrs

Joint Forest Management (JFM), seen as a great forest conservation idea with participation of local communities when it was started in 1992, based on encouraging results of the experiment in some villages in West Bengal, is being relaunched 21 years later by the Maharashtra Forest Department with additional features to suit the fast-changing conservation scenario post the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

A special two-day training workshop organised for JFM leaders and forest staff from Nagpur, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli will be inaugurated Saturday by Anna Hazare, whose village Ralegan Siddhi in Ahmednagar was one of the shining examples of the JFM success story.

The JFM rewards communities with certain forest produce for aiding the department in protecting the forests, through activities like preventing illegal exploitation, grazing, and fires.

Chairman of the state-level Adarsh Gram Committee Popatrao Pawar of Hivre Bazar, which had scripted another JFM success story, would also enlighten the participants at the workshop.

Chief Conservator of Forest, Amravati, Mohan Jha told The Indian Express: "The original JFM idea of 1992 pertained only to protection in degraded forests wherein village communities would get 20% share in value-addition. In 2003, it was amended to include good forests as people won't be much interested in barren forests and the share was increased to 50% in incremental value-additions. Now, we have opened it up for all kinds of forests."

"Earlier, the period of implementation (for evaluation of conservation) was 10 years. Now, it is 5 since 10 years was seen as too long a period for communities to sustain interest," he added.

Asked if JFM is being re-invented in the wake of FRA-induced community forest rights (CFR) movement in the state, Jha said, "It's wrong to say that. Under FRA, villages have to apply for CFR whereas we give JFM to them suo motu. CFR is only for traditionally protected forests. The new JFM is for all forests. CFR gives them minor forest non-timber produce. The JFM also offers value of major forest produce like timber."