



Forest ranger from Ramanathapuram bags MoEFCC India Biodiversity Award - 2021

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MADURAI: The forest range officer of sub division of Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park S Sathish has bagged the 'India Biodiversity Award - 2021' on the occasion of the of Biological Diversity on Saturday. The award has been given from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and the United National Development Programme (UNDP).

Sathish won the award under the 'Sustainable use of Biological Resources' category for his remarkable work in 'Kaarankadu Community based Eco tourism' located 35 kms from the Ramanathapuram district headquarters.

Started in 2017, there was initial resistance from the local fishermen community as they feared that the forest department would take over their coastal terrain along the East coast road.

The garbage dumped beach was cleaned and after five rounds of talks with the locals the eco-tourism committee was formed with Sathish as secretary and 13 villagers as its president and executive committee members.

Boating was first introduced with a forest department boat and local fishing boats were also roped in when the tourist turnout was high. Local cuisine such as meals with fish curry and fry, squid cutlet and crab were introduced. It was followed by kayaking and snorkeling. Efforts are on to add scuba diving too.

"Kaarankadu eco-tourism is a tourist spot that can be enjoyed in a day with Rs 400 to Rs 600. The fishermen enjoy an additional income of Rs 4,000 to Rs 5,000 a month while it also provides job opportunities to the villagers. Kaarankadu attracts 50 to 100 tourists a day on week days. While there is demand for 300 a day on weekends we can accommodate only 200 a day," Sathish said

A two-member team assigned by the visited Kaarankadu, witnessed the facilities and interacted with the local populace on the functioning of the sustenance of the model.

In April Sathish was among the 10 rangers world over to win the 'International Ranger Award' 2021 from the IUCN, Switzerland, and three other organisations. It includes a cash reward of Rs 7.2 lakh for the forest department

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