

## ZSI to use DNA barcoding technology

CHENNAI: The Zoological Survey of India will be using DNA barcoding technology to tag flora and fauna to ensure protection of the rich biodiversity, as well as to create a national biodiversity database for the benefit of the public. Speaking to the City Express on the sidelines of the golden Jubilee celebrations of the Southern Regional Centre of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) here,

Dr K Venkatraman, Director of ZSI, Kolkata, said that the ZSI will be collaborating with research universities to collect flora and fauna across the country to extract their DNA and establish that they are indigenous species, enabling protection of biodiversity.

He said that the ZSI, which is involved in the survey, inventorisation and establishment of taxonomic status of flora and fauna in the country, will also update its records, publications and taxonomy data about the more than 4,000 species they have identified in a database in the organisation's website.

In addition, ZSI will take steps to modernise its facilities, including purchase of high-end technology equipment such as scanning electron microscopes for taxonomical studies, he added.

Former director of ZSI, Dr AK Gosh, who presided over the event, released four brochures published by the ZSI, including one on the brief history of the ZSI, rare and endangered mammals of southern India, reptiles of India and finally the report on invasive species in India.

AS Balanathan, IFS and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Tamil Nadu presided over the event. Dr Jiwan Dass, Director, Ministry of Environment and Forests presented awards to three stalwarts in the field of conservation, including B Vijaya Raghavan, executive chairman of Chennai Snake Park, renowned herpetologist Romulus Whitaker for his pioneering efforts to rehabilitate the Irula tribes, and Dr Supriya Dharani, Founder and Chairperson of Tree Foundation for her sustained efforts to conserve marine turtles.

The Southern Regional Council (SRC) of the ZSI was set up in 1961, as part of the second five year plan. In Tamil Nadu, the SRC covers 30 districts, including five national parks, eight wild life sanctuaries and one tiger reserve. Tamil Nadu ranks first among all the states in the country with 5,640 floral species constituting nearly one-third of total flora of India. Its faunal diversity thrives with 165 species of fresh water fishes, 76 species of amphibians, 177 species of reptiles, 454 species of birds and 187 species of mammals. SRC also covers Karnataka, including eight districts of southern part with three national parks and six wild life sanctuaries, southern parts of Andhra Pradesh, Pondicherry and two biosphere reserves.