

## Gujarat banks on tavar to fight tsunamis

The bushy tavar, a wonder plant known for stopping water ingress, is being sown along the coastline in Gujarat to fight calamities like the tsunami that in 2004 claimed over 10,000 lives in India.

The state is planting the tavar in the coastal of district of Surat.

Tavar can be of immense help to the state's 1,600-km long coastline to fight tsunami strikes, global warming and siltation, said R.J. Ansari, Forest Conservator of the Surat Circle.

'When the tsunami hit Tamil Nadu's coastal areas, those villages that had planted the tavar suffered minimum losses, suggesting the need to go whole hog for the plant,' Ansari told IANS.

The forest department of Surat has planted the tavar in over 2,000 hectares in Dumas, Hazira, Suvali, Bhimpor, Sultanabad and other south Gujarat villages to prevent soil erosion.

Incidentally, tavar plants are believed to serve as a breeding ground for various fishes while also helping reduce siltation near the coast.

Moreover its leaves have been found to increase the fat content of milk in cattle and the plant is also believed to have antiseptic properties.

Wetland birds use the tavar to build nests. Bees too make hives on the flowering plant.

'There are eight types of tavar available in Gujarat, of which six species have been planted till now. Of the six, five were found in south Gujarat while one was in Saurashtra,' Ansari said.

Most of the species are available in Jamnagar, Bharuch, Kutch and Surat.

Around 65 types of tavar species are available in the world, of which 35 are in India, Ansari said. Of the 35, most are in the Sunderbans and the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The plant grows rapidly at a temperature of 20 to 30 degrees Celsius.

Nondescript plants like the tavar could perhaps go a long way in saving precious lives if allowed to grow judiciously.

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