

Student brigades to raise eco-awareness

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kochi: A team of 50 students from St Albert's College, Ernakulam, was formed to spread awareness on plastic reduction and recycling. "We aim to approach more colleges to form such brigades so that the youngsters will also be part of a movement to clean coastal region.

A sample survey of the canals and backwaters in Mulavukad panchayat, once a home to shrimp farms, found that the waters and the soil sediments have more plastic than organisms, according to scientists at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

The survey formed the base for a participatory initiative to make the panchayat plastic-free under the Nirmalad-



**PLASTIC-FREE
MULAVUKAD**

hara project of CMFRI. "The panchayat suggested to begin drive at ward 8. With the help of Kudumbashree, the canals were cleaned of plastic. The residents were taught to segregate the plastic and keep it aside for recycling. A resident agreed to collect it every 15 days and the residents have decided to ensure that no plastic is dumped into the waters," said V Kripa, head, fishery envi-

ronment division and project head. She said that the water bodies and soil samples showed more plastic than organisms. The bacterial presence was high and there was a huge presence of nitrates and phosphates in the waters. The oxygen levels were low in stagnant waters.

Now, all the remaining 16 wards have come forward to join the initiative to declare the entire Mulavukad as plastic-free.

A workshop was conducted for the students and details of the project were discussed. The project was launched after the CMFRI researchers found that the public water bodies in the panchayat were on a deteriorating stage owing to accumulation of excess amount of plastic, which made the waters unfit to aqua-

culture practices. In addition, many harmful microbes were found in the waterbodies in the region by the CMFRI team before launching the project in public participation to keep the waterbodies plastic-free and clean, she said.

In the second phase of the project, the brigade would join the CMFRI team for creating awareness among the public at village-level for effective waste management to make the water bodies clean, Kripa said.

CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan said the institute would take steps to extend the 'Nirmaladhara' initiative to more panchayats. Viji Shajan, Mulavukad panchayat president inaugurated the workshop which was attended by other representatives of the panchayat.