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CMFRI students' collective to save villages from plastic menace

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THE Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has formed a students' collective named Blue Green Brigade for implementation of 'Nirmaladhara' project, an initiative to make villages plastic-free.

As many as 50 students from Ernakulam St Albert's College joined the initiative at an awareness workshop on waste management held at the CMFRI on Wednesday. The 'Nirmaladhara' project was launched earlier this year in Mulavukad panchayat to make the water bodies plastic-free. The Blue Green Brigade supports the CMFRI in creating awareness on the need to clean the water bodies.

Fishery Environment Division head V Kripa, who leads the initiative, said the project was launched after the CMFRI re-

searchers found the water quality in backwaters was deteriorating due to accumulation of plastic which made the water unfit for aquaculture practices. The water bodies contained many harmful microbes that posed a threat to public health, she said.

CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan said the institute will take steps to extend the 'Nirmaladhara' initiative to more panchayats. "The studies conducted by the CMFRI have revealed the plastic content in the backwaters in Ernakulam district is very high. If a stake net gets 5 kg catch up to 4 kg will be plastic. It poses a threat to the livelihood of the fishermen in the region", Gopalakrishnan said.

Mulavukad panchayat president Viji Shajan inaugurated the workshop. Shelton Padua, Ramesh KR, K Madhusoodanan, Babu Saith and G Shilaja spoke.

1.5 tonnes of waste needs safe disposal

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THE CMFRI's 'Nirmaladhara' project, which is cleaning the canals of the Mulavukad panchayat, has found around 1.5 tonnes of plastic waste in the canal stretch of Ward 8. With the aim of managing the disposal of waste, a core team has been formed.

A core team of 10 to 12 has been formed under the project to collect plastic waste from different wards. "People have volunteered from the ward itself and they have been given classes on collecting the waste and shredding them. The Health Department has agreed on shredding the plastic waste after collecting it from the different households," said Fishery Environment Division head V Kripa.

Kripa also said most of the people living nearby the canals of Mulavukad

are either disposing plastic waste directly into the canals or are burning them in the open. "Under the project, we found lack of awareness among the people made them dispose the plastic waste in canals and burn them. Rather than the cleaning initiative, managing of these wastes should be given importance," she said.

The disposal of plastic waste into the water bodies is a big challenge as far as the ecosystem is concerned. Even the fishermen are faced with such problems during fishing. Kripa assured steps will be taken by CMFRI to address the grievances of the fisherfolk related to plastic they get from the sea.

"CMFRI will address the grievances of the fishermen, who come across a lot of plastic waste during fishing in the sea," said Kripa.