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| **Tamil Nadu Government and WasteLess from Auroville partner in a world premiere to combat climate change and solve microplastic pollution**  *Project**funded in part by the National Geographic Society and Ramco CSR* |
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A cutting-edge school programme from Auroville in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu School Education Department is helping combat climate change and marine plastic pollution. The *Sea Change* programme is the first of its kind, and uses engaging interactive and experiential teaching methods such as games, experiments and stories in comic form to share the latest science on marine plastic pollution.

* The curriculum was created by the Auroville WasteLess team, piloted over the last 3 years with the support of Ramco CSR, and funded in part by a grant from the National Geographic Society
* In the first phase of the programme, launched by the honourable State Minister of Education, Thiru Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi in Tiruchirappalli on Saturday 29th October 2022, 10,000 students in 200 TN Government Schools will benefit from this curriculum.
* This programme will now be offered in schools in Tiruchirappalli, Virudhunagar and Villupuram districts.
* From November to January, students will complete a 7-lesson programme culminating in a *Sea Change* celebration, where students will educate their parents and peers.
* More than 1.2 million students in 45,000 schools have already received educational materials from WasteLess, showing the importance of Auroville projects for Tamil Nadu and India.
* Tamil Nadu is spearheading the fight against climate change and pollution. It has introduced the forward-thinking legislation banning one-time use and throw away plastic in 2018, ahead of a National ban by CPCB on Single-Use Plastics (SUP) in July 2022. It has also recently set up a State Climate Change mission to proactively tackle these issues.

**Context**

Tamil Nadu is one of the fastest-growing economies in India, and this growth has lifted millions out of poverty, however it has also spurred a massive increase in the consumption of single-use plastics. Managing all this waste will be a challenge in the future, but today the State Government has recognised an opportunity to educate students ahead of time. The average Indian citizen uses a relatively small amount of plastic compared to the rest of the world. Today the per capita plastic consumption in India is estimated to be just 20 kilos per year compared to 81 kilos in Germany, 98 kilos in the UK and 109 kilos in the USA.

Moving forward with such innovative initiatives to educate students with the latest science ensures the State and later the Country, take proactive steps to tackle climate change and reduce plastic pollution. The Honourable State Minister of Education, Thiru Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi during his launch address for the Sea Change programme on Saturday 29th October welcomed this initiative and said: "Environmental change has to start from schools." Right now, there is a massive opportunity to educate future generations and ensure that we never reach the same plastic consumption and pollution as the average European or American citizen.

"With this innovative programme, we are really empowering students. The open house experience, something we all grew up with in Auroville, has been woven into this curriculum design. Students are going to be teachers and educate other students, teachers and their parents in a Sea Change Celebration / Kadal Kondattam just before Pongal," says Mr Savarigi Moorthy, also known as Dinagar, who is a core member of the WasteLess team.

Initiatives taken by the Tamil Nadu Government including the 'Meendum Manjapai' campaign and the latest Governing Council to provide policy directives to the State Climate Change mission can inspire other States across the nation and the world. *Sea Change*, a proactive awareness and educational initiative launched by the Tamil Nadu School Education Department further supports and strengthens Tamil Nadu’s leading position in this field. Through *Sea Change*, pioneering Government school teachers will lead the way in imparting this important education on global challenges to reach more young minds across the world.

Mrs Nirmala Raja, Chairperson of Ramco Community Services and member of the newly created Governing Council for the Tamil Nadu State Climate Change mission, has been a supporter of WasteLess for a decade. She said: "We have first-hand experience of the power of education and the innovations from WasteLess in Auroville. The programmes have transformed our schools and students. I am proud that we have helped bring this latest science to the young minds in the State."

The team at WasteLess, Auroville are excited and deeply honoured that students from Tamil Nadu Government schools will be the first in the world to receive such a cutting-edge comprehensive scientific curriculum on microplastics to increase awareness and foster direct action so that the youth become the teachers and leaders of the future.

In the words of Chandrah Nusselein, co-founder of WasteLess: "With education we have the opportunity to plant a seed in the new generation to grow a sustainable future."

Ribhu Vohra, co-founder of WasteLess and National Geographic Explorer adds: "The timing is perfect: with the onset of monsoon, students understand the connection between land and sea. With deep respect and appreciation for the land that hosts us, this programme is a gift from Auroville."

**Media Contact**

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