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BACK TO NATURE

NAGESH PRABHU

MARKING A MILESTONE WITH NEW TECHNOLOGY

Institute of Wood Science and Technology (IWST), Bangalore, which is celebrating its platinum jubilee this year, has developed a new technology for manufacturing a ballpoint pen.

Through his ballpoint pen, IWST is able to reduce the usage of plastic by 40 per cent. A leading multinational company manufacturing two million ballpoint pens per day has come forward to utilise the technology developed by the institute, IWST Director V. Ramakanth told *The Hindu*.

It has developed a technology for compounding natural fibres such as bamboo and jute with commercial thermoplastics using a novel coupling agent. The material is not only "green" but also strong. "Natural fibres enhance tenacity and stiffness of plastics. This new-age composite has a wide range of applications, as in moulded products and



The ballpoint pen from wood fibres and plastic. — PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

as Forest Research Laboratory (FRL) on the land given by the Maharaja of Mysore for meeting the research needs of wood utilisation. It has done commendable work on timber species, essential oils, non-wood forest products, and protection of wood and trees from pests and diseases.

In 1956, the Forest Research Institute and College, Dehra Dun, took over this laboratory and turned it into its regional centre for the South. In 1988, the Forest Research Laboratory was upgraded as the IWST under the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) that falls under the jurisdiction of Union Ministry of Environment and Forest. The Woods Museum and Interpretation Centre has within its 3,000 sq ft information on everything starting from the molecular structure of wood and evolution of woody plants 400 million years ago, to new technologies used to create plywood, laminated veneer and particle board.

Programmes

To mark the celebrations, the institute has decided to hold an international seminar in October where a variety of books would be released.

It would hold special training camps for carpenters and professionals in wood industries and students in its advanced wood technology.

It has chalked out a plan to set up one sandal nursery each in four administrative divisions of the State by spending Rs. 10 lakh, he said.

In the next one year, BBMP school students would be brought to the campus every week when they would be given detailed information on the need to save nature.

Institute of Wood Science and Technology develops ballpoint pen manufacturing technology

extruded profiles such as this pen, hangers, decking, door and window frames, wall cladding, outdoor furniture," he said. "After several months of hard work, scientists developed the technology to manufacture the pen. The institute signed a memorandum of understanding with the company for transfer of technology and payment of royalty to the institute," Mr. Ramakanth said.

Platinum jubilee

The institute is all set to celebrate its platinum jubilee this year with many events and programmes starting in October. Located on 10 hectares of greenery near Malleswaram 18th Cross, the IWST houses a Wood Museum and Interpretation Centre, a repository of knowledge about the material.

Mr. Ramakanth said that IWST's origins go back to 1938 and it was started