

GCC studying proposal to introduce green tax to protect environment

April 20, 2009

Muscat: The Gulf Cooperative Council (GCC) states are studying a proposal to impose green tax to protect the environment in the region.

"We are discussing a proposal to introduce green tax in the region, which would be modelled on the lines of similar system in some of the EU and Far Eastern countries," Ali Al Kiyumi, Director General for Nature Conservation, told Gulf News on the sidelines of the two-day meetings of the Environment Undersecretaries from the GCC member states.

He said green taxes were aimed at discouraging people from buying or using anything that could harm the environment. "We would impose these taxes on goods arriving at all the entry points, airports and harbours," he said.

Delivering a key note address during the opening of the two-day meetings at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel on Monday, Oman's Undersecretary for Environment, Mohammad Al Araiimi, said the top GCC environment officials will also discuss about setting up a regional centre for monitoring natural disasters and possibly averting them or taking precautionary measures to face it.

However, no concrete plans have been worked out for the location of the Centre. "The committee will discuss all aspects, including financial viability as well as available human resources for the centre before a country is decided as the host for the proposed centre," Kiyumi remarked.

He also revealed that a proposal to set up regional receiving facility to treat oil-contaminated water was also being considered and a decision would be taken soon.

According to the senior Omani environmentalist, the GCC countries were also stressing on the green initiative. "We need to involve governments, individuals as well as private sector to promote green initiatives for the sustainable development," he feels.

The top environmentalist in the region will also study and discuss the potential impact of climate change, "especially on the marine environment and food resources".

Al Araiimi raised the need to study the red tide phenomena in his speech. "We need to look into the reasons for the recent red tide phenomena in the region and see how it impacts our economy, social fabric as well as tourism," the undersecretary said.

To create better awareness about the environment, he wants environmental issues to be included in the school syllabus. "Not only that we need to see media's role in increasing awareness for the better and sustainable environment."

He also urged fellow environmentalist to work out an unified policy to counter the hazardous chemicals.

{Gulf News}