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## Gear up for the largest beach clean-up in the country this Saturday

By Express News Service | Published: 16th September 2016 07:44 PM |  
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CHENNAI: The volunteer count for this clean-up is so large — people have been asked to bring water bottles from home at the risk of regenerating litter while picking it up!

Last year, International Coastal Cleanup Day drew over 19,000 people from all over the country assisting the Indian Coastal Guard. This Saturday, the annual initiative which turns ten in India is expected to see greater numbers. So you can only imagine the level of impact expected.

### About the campaign:

- International Coastal Cleanup Day is conducted in various parts of the world in September every year under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and under the aegis of South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) in the South Asian Region.
- Last year, the nationwide campaign resulted in the collection of 68.9 tons of marine litter. Debris collection was highest at Mumbai approximate 8,500 kg and New Mangalore was approximate 6,300 kg.
- Helping hands over the years have come from across the spectrum: school goers, NSS students, NCC students, Marine Police, Navy, ports, oil agencies and other private enterprises

Not to mention, the sweep up of plastic and debris won't stop with the more frequently visited beaches. "Over the last six years, we've begun covering sections of coast that run through villages, and have been roping in families of these

communities to contribute as well," said Indian Coast Guard (East) authorities, who will be organising the efforts in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Andhra Pradesh.

Beyond a garbage-free walk on the beach however, the larger hope for marine life conservationists and NGOs collaborating on the campaign is to create awareness on how littering affects life in the ocean.

"People don't realise it but turtles that ingest plastic often don't recover. They need to be given saline and laxatives and it can take anywhere between 20 to 40 days to flush it out of their system," said Supraja Dharini of the TREE Foundation, a Chennai-based Trust known for their conservation work with turtles and whales.

Who would have thought a plastic bag could cause that much trouble?

The clean up will take place on September 17 between 6.30 am and 8.30 am. In Chennai, the assembly point is the Lighthouse at Marina Beach. For more details, contact 9444926128.

Volunteers will be given biodegradable bags to collect waste and will also fill out data cards on the kind of garbage collected.