

નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી-એક્શન પ્લાન સત્વરે અમલ કરવા માંગણી

પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કની વડા પ્રધાનને રજૂઆત

રાજકોટ તા. ૧૩ : પર્યાવરણ વિકાસ દેવની પાઠી, મુજબ પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કના અગ્રણીઓએ વડા પ્રધાન મનમોહન સિંહને પત્ર પાઠવી નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી એક્શન પ્લાનને અમલમાં મુકવા રજૂઆત કરી છે.

આદીવાસી, પશુપાલકો, માછીમારો, નાના મેડુતોની આજીવિકા બચાવવા આયોજનની જરૂરીયાત હોય એક્શન પ્લાન જે કેન્દ્ર અપીલમાં મુકવા અંતમાં માંગણી કરી છે (૨૩.૧૦)

24/10/08
23/10/08

તાજેતરમાં માંધી જયંતિના રોજ પુના ખાતે મળેલ બેઠકમાં ઉપસ્થિત અગ્રણીઓ સી.પી.જીવન તુષાર પંચોલી, આશિષ કોઠારી, અરુણ દિલીપ, મહેશ પંડ્યા, દિવાકર શર્મા, સુભાષ માલી અને સુબ્રતોસિંહ વગેરેએ પ્રધાનમંત્રીને પાઠવેલ પત્રમાં જણાવેલ છે કે ઉક્ત પ્લાન વર્ષ ૨૦૦૦-૦૩ દરમિયાન તૈયાર કરવાની પ્રક્રિયામાં સંસ્થાઓ, જૂથો, અને ગ્રામજનો જોડાયેલા હતા. જે પ્રક્રિયાને કેન્દ્ર સરકારના પર્યાવરણ અને વનવિભાગ મંત્રાલયે પણ ટેકો અને માન્યતા આપી હતી.

પત્રમાં જણાવ્યું છે કે, બ્યુટિનગત અજ્ઞાપિત પ્રત્યયો માહિતી અને લોકોની બાગણીઓ એક્શન પ્લાન બનાવવામાં ઉપયોગી થયા હોય જેના મુખ્ય મુદ્દાઓને પ્લાનમાં સમાવેશ કરાયા છે. ત્યારે રાષ્ટ્રીય કક્ષાના આયોજનની અમલીકરણ ત્વરિત કરવા જૈવિક વિવિધતાના સંરક્ષણ, સમલ ઉપયોગ તથા સમાનતા જેવા હેતુઓ પાર પાડવામાં આવશે.

વપુમાં જણાવ્યું છે કે, દેશના વન્યજીવોને નાશ પામતા અટકાવવા, ખેતી અને પશુપાલનમાં રહેલ વિવિધતાને બચાવવા, જૈવિક વિવિધતાથી જળસંચયના લાભો અને સાથે રોજગારી સંકળાયેલી છે. તેવા પ્રાપ્તિમારમાં રહેતા

“નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી એક્શન પ્લાનને અમલી બનાવો”

પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કની વડા પ્રધાનને રજૂઆત

રાજકોટ તા. ૧૨ : વડા પ્રધાન માન્યતા આપેલી છે. શ્રી મનમોહન સિંહ પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કના અગ્રણીઓએ પત્ર પાઠવી નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી એક્શન પ્લાન અમલમાં મુકવા રજૂઆત કરી છે. પુના ખાતે મળેલી બેઠકમાં ઉપસ્થિત અગ્રણીઓ સી.પી. જીવન, તુષાર પંચોલી, આશિષ કોઠારી, અરુણ દિલીપ, મહેશ પંડ્યા, દિવાકર શર્મા, સુભાષ માલી, સુબ્રતો સિંહ વગેરેએ પત્રમાં જણાવેલ છે કે, સંસ્થાઓ જૂથો અને ગ્રામજનો નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી અને એક્શન પ્લાન તૈયાર કરવાની પ્રક્રિયામાં વર્ષ ૨૦૦૦-૨૦૦૩ દરમિયાન સહભાગી બન્યા હતાં. આજ વર્ષની પ્રક્રિયાને કેન્દ્ર સરકારના પર્યાવરણ અને વનવિભાગ મંત્રાલયે પણ સીધો ટેકો તથા માહિતી, મંચવ્યો, અને લોકોની લાગણીઓ સ્થાનિક, રાજ્ય, પરિસરો અને વિષયને અનુરૂપ એક્શન પ્લાન બનાવવામાં ઉપયોગ બન્યા હતાં. આ એક્શન પ્લાનના મુખ્ય મુદ્દાઓ પ્રક્ટિનેશનલ એક્શન પ્લાનમાં સમાવવામાં આવેલ છે. રાષ્ટ્રીય કક્ષાના આયોજનની સંપૂર્ણ નક્ક કેન્દ્ર સરકારના વન અને પર્યાવરણ વિભાગને વર્ષ ૨૦૦૩ના અંતમાં સોંપવામાં આવેલ. આ દસ્તાવેજ લોકો સુધી પહોંચે તેની રાહ જોઈ રહ્યાં છીએ.

દેશના વન્યજીવોને નાશ પામતા અટકાવવા, ખેતી અને પશુપાલનમાં રહેલી વિવિધતાને બચાવવી, જૈવિક વિવિધતાથી જળસંચયના લાભો બચાવવા અને જૈવિક વિવિધતા સાથે જેની રોજગારી સીધી સંકળાયેલી છે, તેવા દેશના ગ્રામ્ય વિસ્તારમાં રહેતા લોકો આદિવાસી સમુદાયો, પશુપાલકો, માછીમારો અને નાના મેડુતોની આજીવિકા બચાવવા માટે રાષ્ટ્રીય કક્ષાએ આવા આયોજનની ખૂબ જ જરૂરિયાત છે.

કુલ હોદ્દા - ૨૩/૧૦/૦૮

નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી-એક્શન પ્લાન અમલમાં મુકવા વડા પ્રધાનને રજૂઆત

પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કની વડા પ્રધાનને રજૂઆત

રાજકોટ તા. ૧૩ : પર્યાવરણ વિકાસ દેવની પાઠી, મુજબ પશ્ચિમ ભારત જૈવિક વિવિધતા નેટવર્કના અગ્રણીઓએ વડા પ્રધાન મનમોહન સિંહને પત્ર પાઠવી નેશનલ બાયોડાયવર્સિટી સ્ટ્રેટેજી એક્શન પ્લાનને અમલમાં મુકવા રજૂઆત કરી છે. પુના ખાતે મળેલી બેઠકમાં ઉપસ્થિત અગ્રણીઓ સી.પી.જીવન, તુષાર પંચોલી, આશિષ કોઠારી, અરુણ દિલીપ, મહેશ પંડ્યા, દિવાકર શર્મા, સુભાષ માલી અને સુબ્રતોસિંહ વગેરેએ પ્રધાનમંત્રીને પત્રમાં જણાવેલ છે કે, ઉક્ત પ્લાન વર્ષ ૨૦૦૦-૦૩ દરમિયાન તૈયાર કરવાની પ્રક્રિયામાં સહભાગી બન્યા હતાં.

પ્લાનમાં સમાવવામાં આવેલ છે. દેશના વન્યજીવોને નાશ પામતા અટકાવવા, ખેતી અને પશુપાલનમાં રહેલી વિવિધતાને બચાવવી, જૈવિક વિવિધતાથી જળસંચયના લાભો બચાવવા અને જૈવિક વિવિધતા સાથે જેની રોજગારી સીધી સંકળાયેલી છે, તેવા દેશના ગ્રામ્ય વિસ્તારમાં રહેતા લોકો આદિવાસી સમુદાયો, પશુપાલકો, માછીમારો અને નાના મેડુતોની આજીવિકા બચાવવા માટે રાષ્ટ્રીય કક્ષાએ આવા આયોજનની ખૂબ જ જરૂરિયાત છે. તેવા પ્રાપ્તિમારમાં રહેતા

24/10/08
23/10/08

Annexure - III
Paper clippings regarding National Biodiversity Strategy
Press release by Paryavaran - Vikas Kendra - Rajkot - (Mr. Tushar Pancholi)

4/16/04 07

Publish biodiversity plan, greens urge PM

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: Environmentalists from across western India have sought the immediate publication of the national biodiversity plan, in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday. Failing this, they plan to stage nationwide *dharnas* before Parliament, state assemblies and local self bodies in November.

Activists from 21 voluntary agencies met in Pune over the weekend for a follow-up workshop on the Rs 4-crore national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP).

The activists alleged that the Union ministry of forests and environment (MoEF) has been sitting for the last one year on plan, which was prepared with the extensive participation of the public, voluntary agencies and subject experts over four long years.

"The NBSAP is urgently needed to save wild plants and animals from the increasing threat of extinction, in order to protect and maintain India's enormous crop and livestock diversity, to secure critical water security functions, and to ensure the livelihood security of hundreds of millions of people (including tribal communities, pastoralists, fisherfolk and small farmers) dependent on biodiversity and biological resources," the letter to the PM says.

In 2000, the MoEF with funding from the United Nations Development Programme, commissioned Pune-based Kalpavriksh for

the technical co-ordination of the NBSAP. Since then the process has involved tens of thousands of people through workshops, *padayatras*, school and college events and biodiversity festivals. The national plan also yielded 74 local, state, inter-state (eco-regional) and theme-based (such as livelihood and migration-based) plans.

"The final draft of the national plan was submitted to the MoEF in late 2003, and we still await the release of this document," says the letter.

No, minister!

Pune: The ministry of environment and forests has been under fire from activists over several other issues. Nearly 68 leading activists from across the country, including Sunderlal Bahuguna and Medha Patkar, recently raised issues such as discrepancies in biodiversity rules; dilution of notifications under the environment protection Act; improper 'clearance' of development projects; wastage of funds and the lack of transparency in genetic engineering policy.

Citing a discrepancy in biodiversity rules, Ashish Kothari of Kalpavriksh said, "Local communities have been made responsible for listing traditional knowledge of biodiversity, but not for its conservation." TNN

ns2004

HYDERABAD

Water, land, biodiversity

ALL THEME

Environment

What our politicians have brought at all to the
Ashish Kothari

50 million hectares of degraded lands and water bodies that have spread across the country like a cancer. The NDA mentions "wastelands development" and "social forestry" in passing, but gives no indication of the massive effort needed to optimise this opportunity of reversing environmental damage while generating several million jobs.

Is their vision of agriculture any more sound? To its credit, the NDA mentions 'organic farming', but this more in passing than as a central thrust; and the Congress does not even mention it. Both focus heavily on commercialising agriculture, giving

agro-processing priority, and boosting agro-based exports. For fisheries, exploitation of the deep seas and spread of trawler technologies is promised. Small farmers and traditional fisher-folk in India need facilitation to develop forms of production that are self-reliant, organic, biologically diverse, and based on traditional knowledge. Yet both manifestos promise agricultural and fisheries development that will primarily benefit the richer farmers and large-scale fishers. Shockingly, they do not even promise a phasing out of the deadly chemicals used in agriculture and health programmes, that are now known to lace drinking water, vegetables, fruits, and grains.

Both manifestos talk about water harvesting by communities, a positive sign. But neither mentions that this needs to be the single most important direction. The NDA, in the same breath, promises the river linking project, ignoring the history of small-scale projects being consistently displaced in budgets and political attention, by such mega-projects.

The one count on which both sets of parties score, is the promise of land or resource rights over forests to tribals. The section on tribals is the only place where the Congress

notes the need to balance economic development with ecological sustainability. Both manifestos also promise much greater political and financial empowerment of local village bodies. But such promises have been made before only to be broken. Both parties have had time since the 1993 constitution amendment providing powers to panchayats and gram sabhas, to actually carry out such devolution. But both have failed. Nevertheless this promise could be one sign of hope in a rather bleak political scenario for the environment.

There are a few other signs of hope, outside of the manifestos and promises of the big parties.

A number of Independent candidates in several constituencies have raised basic issues of water, food security, land regeneration, forests and forest-based rights. Communities in some areas have threatened to boycott the elections if issues of water, pollution and so on are not tackled. These remain, however, scattered and small. If the key party manifestos are any indication, the environmental movement in India still remains politically insignificant.

(The author is the founder member of Kal-pauriksh - Environmental Action Group)

राष्ट्रीय सप्ताह

5/10/05

प्राकृतिक स्रोतों व जैव वैविध्य संरक्षण पर जोर

सहारा न्यूज ब्यूरो
नयी दिल्ली, 4 अक्टूबर।
पर्यावरण एवं जैव विविधता के कार्यक्रमों
से जुड़े कई विशेषज्ञों ने आज यहां इंडिया
इंटरनेशनल सेंटर में जैव वैविध्य संरक्षण
के मुद्दे पर आयोजित एक परिचर्चा में
भाग लिया। वक्ताओं ने देश के प्राकृतिक
स्रोतों और जैव वैविध्य के संरक्षण के
प्रबंधन पर जोर दिया।

संयुक्त राष्ट्र विकास कार्यक्रम
(यूपनडीपी)
द्वारा वित्त
पोषित गैर
सरकारी

संगठन 'कल्पवृक्ष' ने कुछ विशेषज्ञों के
कोर ग्रुप के सहयोग से देश के विभिन्न
हिस्सों में प्राकृतिक स्रोतों और जैव
विविधता से जुड़े विषयों पर गहन अध्ययन
किया। वर्ष 2000 से 2003 के दौरान
अध्ययन दल ने यह पाया कि देश में जैव
विविधता का अकूत भंडार है लेकिन

कोर ग्रुप की ओर से कल्पवृक्ष ने रिपोर्ट जारी की

संरक्षण सम्बन्धी कारगर नीतियों के अभाव
में इसका तेजी से विनाश भी हो रहा है।
इसके लिए काफी हद तक मानव
गतिविधियां ही जिम्मेदार हैं। इन्हीं सब पर
केंद्रित मुद्दों पर कोर ग्रुप की तरफ से
कल्पवृक्ष ने आज एक फाइनल टेक्निकल
रिपोर्ट 'सेक्योरिंग इंडियाज फ्यूचर' जारी
की। रिपोर्ट पर चर्चा के दौरान कोर ग्रुप के
सदस्यों शेखर, आशीष कोठारी, सीमा
भट्ट, लक्ष्मी, अमिता और कन्हैयालाल

आदि सदस्यों
ने देश में
छोटे-छोटे
मूर्हों में तुप्त

हो रहे प्राकृतिक स्रोतों और जैव वैविध्य पर
चिंता व्यक्त की। उन्होंने इनके संरक्षण के
लिए शुरू की गयी इस पहल में
योजनाकारों को शामिल किये जाने की
आवश्यकता बतायी। श्री कोठारी ने इसके
लिए मंत्रालय की मौजूदा अफसरशाही की
कार्यप्रणाली पर भी अंगुली उठायी।

To
Chief Justice of India
Supreme Court
New Delhi-110001

To
Harish Salve
42 Poorvi Marg
Vasant Vihar
New Delhi- 29
Ph: 26143266/26141217

To,
Hon. Chief Justice of India And / or etc.

.....
Sub: Non Implementation on the Supreme Court orders in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Or Threats to the environment and indigenous peoples in the A&N islands

Dear Sir,

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal are now recognised internationally as a treasure house of biological diversity. They are also home to unique human communities of indigenous peoples that have been living in these islands for thousands of years. These include the Jarawa, Onge and the Sentinelese in the Andaman islands and the Shompen and Nicobarese in the Nicobars.

The last few decades of development and insensitive policies in the islands have not only adversely impacted the forests, but also severely compromised the extremely vulnerable indigenous communities. Efforts have been going on for the last many years for the protection of both these important aspects of the islands and the orders of the Supreme Court passed in May 2002 are considered one of the most important steps in this direction. This order stopped commercial tree felling in the forests here for first time in over a 100 years.

However more than a year since the May 2002 order of the SC has passed and there still are key parts of this order of the SC that remain implemented. This include the order for the closure of the Andaman Trunk Road and directions to put into place a system by which immigration of people from mainland India to the islands would stop. Non implementation of these orders shows clear contempt for the law of the land and the highest court of the country on part of the A&N Administration

Closing down the ATR would ensure the protection of the Jarawa community and importantly also the protection of the last remaining untouched rainforests on the main Andaman islands found in the Jarawa Reserve. Putting in place a system for the control of immigration to the islands is essential as the carrying capacity of this island system has been far exceeded. The Supreme Court orders have clearly asked the Government to implement the Inner Line Area here as a solution to this problem. This letter is being written to urge you to urgently look into the matter, and direct the A&N Administration that the orders passed in May 2002 should be immediately implemented.

Thanking you
Sincerely

NGO report "rejected"

*M. Indu
6/10/05*

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A day after a non-government organisation Kalpavriksha alleged that the Union Environment and Forest Ministry had not taken any action on its report "National Bio-diversity Strategy and Action Plan" for two years, the Ministry said that the report had been rejected as a major part of it was "scientifically invalid." In a statement issued here on Wednesday, a Ministry spokesperson said the report after being reviewed by a group of scientists (appointed by the Ministry) had found it scientifically invalid. The Ministry has started afresh the process of developing the National Bio-diversity Action Plan.

Kalpavriksha was paid more than Rs. 3 crores as consultancy fee by the Global Environment Facility under the United Nations Development Programme for preparing the report but unfortunately this international assistance to India has not yielded the expected benefits, the statement said.

300 activities to protect biodiversity

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

OCTOBER 10

INDIA may have eight per cent of the world's biological diversity, but half of its forests have been lost, more than 40 per cent of different species are extinct and 18 of its indigenous poultry breeds are under threat. These were some facts that tumbled out of the final technical report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

The report was released at a function by environment group Kalpavriksha on Monday. It suggests 200 strategies and 300 activities to the ministry after a four-year project period in which 50,000 people participated.

Kalpavriksha has said the decision-making process in the government on biodiversity is faulty as it is limited to certain people while grass roots-level workers are being ignored.

A proper policy on land and water, resources usage and bringing more areas under conservation were some suggestions. "This has to be done through a participatory method rather than isolating people from the process," said technical coordinator Ashish Kothari. The government was not acting on the report submitted in 2003, he added.

A key recommendation is the national land and water use plan: areas essential for ecological to be declared off limits to large scale commercial purposes.

Questions

1. What are some keys to success for effective water resource management systems that you have observed?
2. What kind of challenges or conflicts did you observe or might be present in the systems you visited, and what kind of mechanisms are in place (if any) for resolving them?
3. What kind of external influences or institutions affect the system you observed and what are the impacts of these outside forces on the system?
4. Do you think that the lessons from successful small and regional water resource management systems can be applied to global water management challenges? Explain why or why not. If possible, how could this be achieved?

Site Visit Groups A, B, and C will each have 20 minutes to deliver their presentations. This will be followed by a discussion and wrap-up moderated by Resource Persons from LEAD Mexico.

The Site Visit Groups, each composed of four Working Groups, will be responsible to design a strategy, divide roles, collect the necessary information, prepare and deliver the presentations. It might be useful to give each Working Group one question and then bring the four groups' responses together to prepare the final presentation. Technical support will be provided by LEAD International in the form of equipment and dedicated computer access during Session 16. Access to computers and material can also be arranged with LEAD International staff for other times.

LEAD Resource Persons will be present at all times during the meetings of the Site Visit Groups and Working Groups to contribute to preparation of the presentations.

Please note: A one-to-two page written report should accompany each group presentation. The report will be posted on the LEAD International website.

Kalpavriksh makes report on biodiversity public

11/10/05
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The much-awaited technical report on India's "national bio-diversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP)" has been finally made public, thanks to the bold move by Kalpavriksh, a Pune-based non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Kalpavriksh — which was commissioned by the Union ministry of environment and forests to prepare the NBSAP — on Monday released the report, claiming that the ministry was sitting on it for the last two years and that it is high time that citizens know about the recommendations made to preserve bio-diversity.

Director of the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCCA), Naresh Dadhich, released the report in the presence of environment activists and researchers, including Erach Bharucha, Nitya Ghotge, Aparna Watwe and Sanjeev Nalawade.

Elaborating on the issue, Ashish Kothari, co-ordinator of the technical and policy core group which prepared the said report, said that his group was commissioned to prepare the report by the ministry in January 2000.

It consulted 50,000 people across the country, and around 70 local, state, interstate and thematic action plans were prepared in consultation with various communities, academicians and government officials. "This was the largest exercise ever undertaken in India to prepare a full-

fledge report on bio-diversity with public participation. We submitted the report to the ministry at the end of 2003. Since then, no action has been taken, and the people who were involved in the process of preparing the report are questioning us on its status. Hence, we are making it public," Kothari said.

Another reason for making the report public is that India, with 2.4 per cent of the world's land, is home to over eight per cent of the world's biological diversity. According to the NBSAP report, the diversity of ecosystems in India — forests, wetlands, grasslands, marine areas and deserts is amongst the world's highest and harbours 1,37,000 species of wildlife. These include 47,000 species of plants and 90,000 species of animals.

The diversity of crops, livestock and pets is also one of the world's greatest. The crops with high diversity include rice (50,000 varieties), mangoes (100 varieties), goats (20 breeds), sheep (42) and cattle (30). It is essential to preserve this bio-diversity as even today, it helps sustain the livelihood of over 70 per cent of the nation's population.

However, during the last couple of years, India has lost half of its forest cover, 40 per cent of the mangroves and significant part of the wetland. At least, 40 species of plants and animals have gone extinct and several more are under the threat of extinction.

SAVING NATURE

Saturday 3 May Guadalajara, Mexico

Time	Event	Content	Facilitator/ Chair
19:00	Dinner <i>(Dining Room)</i>		
20:00	<i>Evening session</i> Networking Fair set-up <i>Salon del Bosque I & II</i>	Associates will set up their Networking Fair Exhibits Local music will be featured during set-up	Associates

जैविक विविधता अहवाल सर्वांसाठी खुला

सकाळ वृत्तसेवा

११/१०/०५

पुणे, ता. १० : भारतातील जैविक विविधतेचे संरक्षण आणि संवर्धनाबाबत केंद्र सरकारला दोन वर्षांपूर्वी सादर करण्यात आलेल्या 'राष्ट्रीय जैविक विविधता व्यवहाराच्या आणि कृषिकार्यक्रमाचा' अहवालाचे 'आयुका'चे संचालक डॉ. नरेश दधिच यांच्या हस्ते आज प्रकाशन करण्यात आले. केंद्र सरकारने याबाबत लवकरात लवकर कृषिकार्यक्रमाचा जाहीर करावा, अशी मागणी हा अहवाल तयार करणाऱ्या 'कल्पवृक्ष' संस्थेने केली.

केंद्रीय वने आणि पर्यावरण खात्याच्या सूचनेनुसार तयार करण्यात आलेला हा अहवाल 'कल्पवृक्ष'ने दोन वर्षांपूर्वी सादर केला. मात्र, सरकारतर्फे या संदर्भात अद्याप कोणतीही ठोस कार्यवाही न झाल्याचा; तसेच त्यासंबंधी

केंद्र सरकारचे दोन वर्षे दुर्लक्षच

कोणतेही स्पष्टीकरण सरकारने दिले नसल्याचा आरोप संस्थेने केला आहे.

यामुळे हा अहवाल सार्वजनिकरीत्या प्रकाशन करून सर्वांना उपलब्ध करून देण्यात येत असल्याचे 'कल्पवृक्ष'चे आशीष कोठारी यांनी सांगितले. ते म्हणाले, "वन खात्याच्या आदेशानुसार 'कल्पवृक्ष'ने चार वर्षांपूर्वी या अहवालासाठी देशभरात अभ्यास मोहीम सुरू केली. बायोटेक इंडिया प्रा. लिमिटेड या संस्थेकडे या मोहिमेच्या व्यवस्थापनाची जबाबदारी होती. संयुक्त राष्ट्रसंघटनेच्या विकास कार्यक्रमांतर्गत या मोहिमेला अर्थसाह्य मिळाले होते. सुमारे शंभर स्वयंसेवी संस्थांची मदत घेण्यात आली."

देशातील जैविक विविधतेविषयी प्रथमच

एवढा विस्तृत अभ्यास झाला असल्याचे सांगून श्री. कोठारी म्हणाले, "देशातील बहुतांश भौगोलिक क्षेत्रांचा अभ्यास करण्यात आला आहे. माहितीसाठी स्थानिक रहिवासी, आदिवासी, सेवाभावी व स्वयंसेवी संस्था यांच्याशी संपर्क साधण्यात आला. स्थानिक व राज्य पातळीवरील कृषिकार्यक्रमांची अभ्यासात समावेश करण्यात आला. जैविक विविधतेच्या संरक्षण व संवर्धनाविषयी त्यात दोनशेहून अधिक व्यवहाराचा व चारशेहून अधिक कृषिकार्यक्रमांचा उल्लेख आहे. निर्णय प्रक्रियांमधील सुधारणा, केंद्र व राज्य सरकारांची; तसेच स्थानिक स्वराज्य संस्थांची या प्रक्रियांमधील भूमिका, इतर संस्थांची भूमिका आदीविषयी अहवालात माहिती देण्यात आली आहे."

MAACHILA

AAGYA

Man. Herald
12/10/05



Citizens' initiative

There is no conflict between
development and environment

THE National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is finally out. In a bold step, environment NGO Kalpavriksha has published the document after a frustrating wait of almost two years. Ever since it began in early 2000, the NBSAP process was conducted as a unique exercise. The usual practice is to channelise policies from the ivory towers of scholarship and research down to the field. Here, in a remarkable reversal of the trend, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) began with widespread grassroots consultations, in a bid to evolve a report that would help frame policies.

The plan has been the collective effort of over 50,000 individuals who participated in the process. It involved public hearings, biodiversity festivals, workshops and seminars, foot marches and boat rallies, questionnaires and outreach programmes through mass and folk media. The report lists various diversities in the country in the field of agriculture, flora and fauna and so on. It talks of the preservation of these diversities and local conservation practices. The report also discusses current issues like patenting. The message of the project is clear. More radical measures are needed to conserve biodiversity while ensuring the livelihood security of millions of people whose lives depend critically on this diversity.

Listing biodiversity losses, the NBSAP participants underline the need for reorienting agriculture, industry, infrastructure and other development sectors besides having a national land and water use plan. Since citizens themselves have formulated the strategies, they can actually be implemented without waiting for the government's initiative. Unfortunately, the MoEF sat on the report after a change of guard at the ministry. There is now a thoroughly avoidable opinion taking ground that environmentalists are opposed to development. There is no reason why development should not factor in the need to protect the environment. In fact, environmental and livelihood security need not be mutually exclusive either. This needs to be the focus of all planning and decision-making in India. The report will now go back to the groups and people it came from. Hopefully, they will act on it instead of nit-picking like the government.

Principle 5

The rights of indigenous peoples in connection with protected areas are an international responsibility, since many of the lands and territories which they occupy, as well as many of the ecosystems in need of protection, cross national boundaries

Guidelines

5.1 Where indigenous lands and territories are located within trans-frontier protected areas, governments should adopt instruments to guarantee that the protected area management respects and supports the integrity of the respective indigenous communities.

5.2 In order to guarantee both indigenous rights and conservation objectives in areas which have been subject to armed conflict or of dispute, governments (singly or in partnership with their neighbours in the region), and other relevant institutions, should develop agreements and measures to ensure that indigenous lands and territories within protected areas are treated as zones of peace and reconciliation.



Nuclear EU

Ignores decommissioning, radioactive waste disposal

BACKTRACKING from nuclear shutdown, the EU has declared its intention of building new nuclear power plants in the coming 50 years. The excuse is climate change. The declaration came soon after the EU executive revised the proposals for nuclear safety and waste management legislation on September 8, 2004. Environmentalists allege the revision weakened the proposals, some of which imposed deadlines for dealing with high-level radioactive wastes and decommissioning of plants.

"The production of nuclear energy has been increasing. This is the reality and, with the challenge of climate change, the EU cannot avoid nuclear

British hypocrisy

Different rules for Iraq and USA's little brother

If you have a global moral watchdog for a big brother, you might lose count of the many things you preach but not practice. Britain took Iraq to task for its yet-to-be-discovered weapons of mass destruction. But, it has refused to grant EU inspectors full access to part of its own Sellafield nuclear site, which stores highly radioactive waste. The EU executive arm, the European Commission (EC), has decided to drag Britain to the European Court of Justice for failing to comply with this nuclear safety protocol. "We are taking this action to demand that British authorities comply with their responsibilities," said EU energy commissioner Loyola de Palacio. "We have to ensure that EU citizens are appropriately protected, that they are informed, that they have a guarantee that all nuclear power stations within the EU are functioning appropriately," she said. This is the first time the EC would take a member country to court over a nuclear safety issue.

Nuclear power's 50th year bash was held recently...EU's already changing?

energy for the foreseeable future," reasoned EU energy commissioner Loyola de Palacio. She said the EU would need to build new nuclear power plants in future. Palacio also conceded that the revised legislation did not lay strict deadlines for storage schemes for radioactive wastes. The European Commission (EC) is yet to complete its inquiry into the funding of decommissioning and waste management. But the energy commissioner stressed that the new proposals contained unified standards of nuclear safety for all the 25 EU members. "These (proposals) are key instruments for ensuring greater transparency, rationalising the debate and dispelling public fears regarding this source of energy," she claimed. The proposals were first made in January 2003.

The proposal of "peer reviews"—inspection of nuclear installations in a member country by another member's inspectors—has also been withdrawn. Now, the EU countries will have to submit national reports on nuclear safety to the EC. Environmentalists allege that the revisions aim to favour the industry. "Nothing in the directives would substantially add to nuclear safety," alleged Mark Johnston, spokesperson of environmental group Friends of the Earth. He claimed that most EU nations would reject the proposals. The UK, Germany, Sweden and Finland have opposed the legislation in the past, saying the matter doesn't require the EU's intervention. A UK spokesman said his country hadn't changed its stand post-revision too. ■

Sapped

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

NITIN SETHI

THE Union ministry of environment and forests (MOEF) has done a double take on its commitments and stalled the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP). The NBSAP is a national obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It is a multi-stakeholder plan being worked upon since 1999 as a government project sponsored by the UNDP, coordinated by Kalpvriksh, a non-governmental organisation, and administered by Biotech Consortium India Ltd (BCIL).

NBSAP's broad purpose was to produce an action plan to ensure the conservation of India's biodiversity and sustainable use of its biological resources. The process, now into its fifth year, should have been completed

The government has refused to make the present report public

by the end of 2003, its report published and its second phase of pilot implementation in place. The plan for the US \$993,000 project was worked upon with the participation of more than 50,000 people.

The MOEF backtracked on the process in January 2004. It indicated that the final draft of NBSAP's National Action Plan could only be considered a technical report and would have to be ratified by a Union cabinet committee to qualify as a 'government action plan'. Now, the government has even refused to make the 'technical report' public in its present form. Earlier, the ministry had promised to publish a mere three copies of it, but now it has refused to do so. Kalpvriksh is yet again negotiating with the MOEF.

Some government officials criticise the plan, saying it is not practical to implement it and that is why the government is stalling it. But environmen-

talists argue that the government should have said so while the report was being prepared as it was an active partner. They stress that the public has a right to a document made with so many people's efforts, using public funds close to a million US dollars. Giving the Global Environmental Facility/UNDP only a technical report would also violate the contractual obligation of the MOEF and the government's department of economic affairs to provide a final National Biodiversity Strategy, they add. ■

Not a bad fad

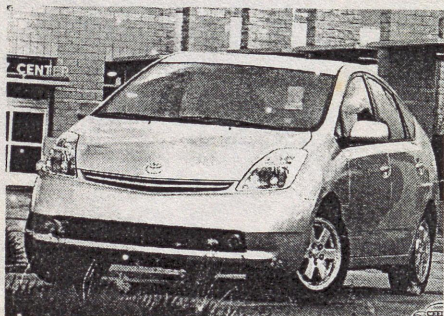
The US takes to hybrid vehicles in a big way

LOPAMUDRA BANERJEE DHAR *Chicago*

RISING petroleum prices have pushed consumers in the US towards eco-friendly hybrid vehicles that combine petroleum and battery powered electric motors. The registration of these vehicles in the country witnessed a 25.8 per cent increase from 2002 last year at 43,435. The Honda Civic hybrid accounted for 50 per cent of all registrations at 21,750. Toyota Prius, which got 47 per cent of the market share, registered 20,387 vehicles, while Honda Insight sold the remaining three per cent, according to the R L Polk & Company, which collects and interprets auto/automotive information.

The government also promotes the sale of hybrid vehicles. Many states have devised tax break plans to give a boost to the technology. Currently, there is a Federal Tax Deduction of us \$1,500 for the purchase of a qualifying hybrid.

Prius is in vogue and the greens happy



WEAK SAFEGUARD

New norms for water in soft drinks

The Union ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW) has directed soft drink manufacturers in the country to use water that meets European standards from October 15, 2004. According to these norms, the residue of any pesticide per litre of water should not exceed 0.0001 milligramme per litre (mg/l). The total pesticide residue shouldn't exceed 0.0005 mg/l. Before the MoHFW's deadline, manufacturers have to recall from the market all samples of their products that don't meet these norms.

Most experts, however, point out that soft drinks can be made free of pesticides only by setting standards for the end product and not just the water used in them. The Joint Parliamentary Committee that reviewed the matter had also asked for stringent norms for pesticide residues in carbonated beverages (see *Down To Earth*, 'A lie is nailed', February 29, 2004, p7). But the process of setting norms for the end product is being delayed (see *Down To Earth*, 'Fizzically Unfit', July 31, 2004, p 16).

Connecticut, Colorado, New York, Maryland, Oregon and Pennsylvania provide additional incentives. California registered the maximum number of such vehicles at 11,425, followed by Virginia at 3,376, Florida at 1,196 and Washington at 1,172. Virginia has even allowed the use of High Occupancy Vehicle Lane — the extreme left and fastest lane used only by vehicles with three or more occupants during rush hours — for a qualifying hybrid vehicle with even a single occupant, says Sam Butto, Toyota Product Communications representative.

The industry, however, has mixed opinions about the government's role in increasing the sales of the vehicles. Butto believes petrol prices and government laws are just additional factors. The main reason is product improvement and increase in awareness and understanding of hybrid technology, press coverage and support from opinion leaders, he claims. But Bill Ford, chairman of the automobile company Ford, recently acknowledged the government's role when he demanded more tax breaks and suggested that taxes on petroleum should be raised to spur consumer interest in hybrids. What manufacturers seem to agree about is cashing the current trend. Many of them have planned a number of new vehicles for the coming year, indicating further rise in sales. In a separate development, Toyota joined hands with China's First Automotive Works to manufacture and sell Prius in the Asian nation. These vehicles would be sold in China's domestic market only. ■

Locked out

Animals to lose rescue home

AS THE world begins celebrating the Wildlife Week on October 1, wild animals at the Pune-based Uttaraj Animal Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (UARRC), many of them injured, would lose their shelter on that day. The centre, located within the Katraj Snake Park, is one of the largest in India. Its closure is being forced by a fund crunch.

"There are no funds and I am not in a position to run the shelter," rues Neelam Kumar Khaire, UARRC director. Khaire would hand over the keys of the centre to the forest department. The main reason behind the crisis is the stoppage of funds by Chennai-based Animal Welfare Board (AWB), under the Union ministry of environment and forests. AWB's grant, meant for laboratory animals sent to UARRC from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, was enough to run the whole centre. But the AWB has stopped funding for more than a year, Khaire complains. When contacted, AWB secretary K Babu said he was "not aware about the closure of the rescue centre".

UARRC's closure might also lead to a spread of deadly viruses like the HIV. Many of the animals to be rendered homeless were used in research at NIV and could be infected, Khaire warns. The UARRC rescues over 900 wild animals and birds and releases them in their natural environs every year. ■

W 9/30/05

50 p.c. forests lost: report

40 species of plants and animals extinct

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The final technical report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) has said that India has lost over half of its forest cover, 40 per cent of its mangroves, and a significant part of its wetlands in the past couple of centuries.

The report "Securing India's Future: The Final Technical Report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan" released here on Tuesday, was originally supposed to have been an official report of the Union Environment and Forests Ministry. It was made public as a citizen's report since the Ministry had failed to act on it for almost two years.

At least 40 species of plants and animals have become extinct, including the cheetah and the pink-headed duck, while several hundred more are under the threat of extinction, it said, adding that much of the diversity crops and livestock had been lost or were under threat. All 18 of India's poultry breeds were also under threat, it added.

Citing habitat destruction, hunting and over-exploitation as the immediate causes of biodi-

versity loss, the report said that behind these factors were an unsustainable and insensitive model of 'development,' breakdown of traditional management practices and institutions, centralisation of decision-making powers in the government, serious social and economic equities, changes in moral and cultural values and lack of recognition of the full value of biodiversity in economic planning. The scenario was worsened by globalisation, it said.

"The focus of all planning and decision-making in India should be to achieve the twin objectives of ecological security and livelihood security, particularly of the most under-privileged sections of society," it pointed out.

Further, it drew the attention of the Government towards the necessity of ensuring that decisions on genetically engineered or modified organisms were evaluated taking into account long-term ecological and socio-economic studies by independent agencies, ensuring the participation of key stakeholders in decision-making and disclosure of information generated in evaluating bio-safety.

Kochi team an finals, Bangalore

Electrifying finale to closely fought

Staff Reporter

KOCHI: The national finals of *The Hindu Young World Quiz 2005*, held at Le Meridien Convention Centre here, was a closely-fought one, between the winners — Sreedhar K. and Nithin S. of Bhavan's Vidya Mandir, Erroor — and first runners-up — Achintya Prahlad and Aditya Goel of DPS (North), Bangalore.

Achintya and Aditya led the competition through five rounds, but made one mistake in the final round, which cost them penalty points — and the title. They were sure that they knew the answer to the question on which character in *Swamy and Friends* wielded a club, but when quizmaster V.V. Ramanan said their answer was wrong, they could not believe it.

The Kochi boys, Sreedhar and Nithin, sealed their victory with a winning point in the final round. They bring the trophy back to Kochi for the second time during the six years of

Adithya and M.A. Uttara of TVS Lakshmi, Madurai. The TVS Lakshmi team was trailing in the initial rounds, but some excellent responses brought them to the top. The New Generation team, however, was quick with the buzzer and won the tie-breaker for the third spot.

The winners scored 40 points, DPS (North) team 31 and New Generation 25. They were followed by the TVS Lakshmi team with 23 points.

Arun T.P. and Abhilash B.S. of Loyola, Thiruvananthapuram, in the fifth position got 23 points, and Hemanth Kumar

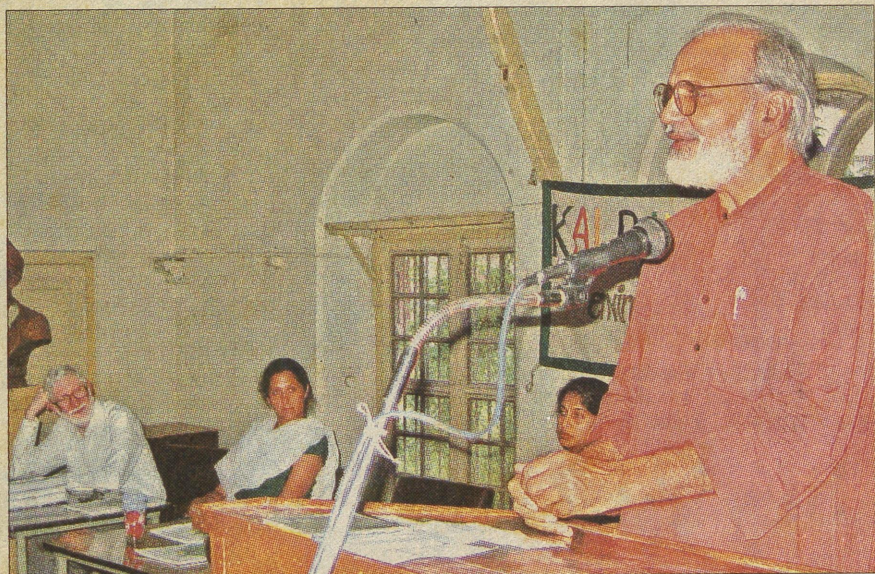


THE HINDU

YOUNG WORLD
ON EVERYTHING

Green issues sacrificed at the altar of devp: expert

Report on country's biodiversity released



Prof Narendra Dadhich, director, IUCAA, speaking after the release of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan report yesterday

BY A STAFF REPORTER
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NARAYAN PETH: "The government has probably started thinking that the environmentalists are a hurdle in the way of development. To speed up the decision making over developmental issues, it might be neglecting the environmental issues," said Ashish Kothari, founder of Kalpavriksha.

He was speaking at the release of the Final Technical Report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) prepared by Kalpavriksha.

He said that the report prepared after a four-year process of consultations across the country was originally supposed to have been an official report of the Ministry of Environment and Forests. It was made public as a citizens' report as the ministry has failed to act on it for almost two years. The report was released at the hands of Dr Naresh Dadhich, Director IUCAA.

Replying to a question on what can be the political reasons for the government neglecting this report prepared after rigorous

consultations, Kothari said, "The government might have started thinking that the environmentalists are a hurdle in the way of development. And to facilitate speedier decisions on development issues, it might be neglecting the environment. Or the change of bureaucracy at the top level can also be the probable reason."

NBSAP is the most comprehensive report on India's biodiversity. Over 50,000 people had participated in its preparation. The report notes that over half its forests have been lost, 18 of indigenous poultry breeds and 40 species have gone extinct and if urgent action is not taken then almost one third of India's biodiversity can be threatened.

The report recommends decentralised governance and administration, a national land use and water use plan and expansion of areas and species under conservation.

A panel discussion was conducted after the release of the report. Dr Erach Bharucha, Dr Nitya Ghotge, Dr Aparna Watve and Sanjeev Nalavde participated in the panel discussions.

DANCE FLOOR ON FIRE!



Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV), Sili, presents the 'Tarpa Patru' dance at the regional meet of students from JNVs in various parts of the country. The event was held at Yas Natyagruh, Kothrud, yesterday

They're 21st century Ein

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER
reporters@sakalherald.com

KARVE NAGAR: Four Pune students Ved Gund, Aniruddha Bapat, Nikhil Deshpande and Kanika Pasricha along with Indraja Jakhlekar from Karad and Bhavana Tondon in New Delhi will represent India at the International Ambassadors Camp being held in Taiwan at the end of this year as a part of World Physics Year programmes, said Indian Physics Association (IPA) yesterday.

The IPA chose the International Ambassador awardees on the basis of students' performance in a national competition. The competition was a part of an international talent search



Jakhlekar



Pasricha



Deshpande



Gund

programme, IPA secretary M N Vahia told *The Herald*. The contestants were given seven tasks, in which they were expected to write about physics, perform certain experiments, design and create a poster and postage stamp etc. Ved from Loyola High School, Aniruddha and Kanika from St Mary's High School and Nikhil from Muktangan

High School is a student of in Karad who Public School expected to part between December 4, 2006, Vahia has sought from the Centre to

GOOD NEWS |

and the power of the pen!

ote to PMT on women's plight in buses

Strategy and inaction

Environmentalists accuse the Ministry of Environment and Forests of gross mishandling of a report an action group prepared for the Ministry on biodiversity and related matters.



RITU RAJ KONWAR

An aerial view of eastern Meghalaya showing mass destruction of forests. India has lost over half of its forest cover in the last two centuries.

LYLA BAVADAM

THE question is straightforward. Why is India's most comprehensive report on biodiversity and related matters suddenly a problem for the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) despite being commissioned by the Ministry itself?

The answer is far from simple and is mired in misconceptions and misrepresentations.

The report, titled *Securing India's Future: The Final Technical Report of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*, was completed two years ago. Four years of intensive field research went into compiling the final 800-page report. It is a unique effort not just in its comprehensiveness and size; the MoEF took the unusual move of giving the entire technical coordination of the report to a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Kalpavriksh, the 20-year-old

environment action group handled the coordination along with a 15-member technical and policy core group. Funding for the project came from the Global Environment Facility through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is an outcome of the Convention on Biological Diversity in which almost all countries agreed to have a national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

This highly participatory report, which involved over 50,000 people in various capacities, hammers home the point that biodiversity is the backbone of ecological and human security. Referring to India's biodiversity as mega diverse, the report says that India, with only 2.4 per cent of the world's landmass, is home to over 8 per cent of the world's biological diversity – it harbours over 137,000 species of plants and animals. The diversity of crops, livestock and pets is also

Ashish Kothari of the environment action group Kalpavriksh, was the coordinator of the technical and policy core group that formulated the National Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan (NBSAP). He spoke to **Lyla Bavadam** on how the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) handled the NBSAP. Excerpts:

► *After you made the report public the MoEF was forced to react to it. In its response to an unstarred question raised in Parliament, the Ministry objected to the "discrepancies and inconsistencies" in the report and claimed that it was part of the reason for not releasing the report. Despite this criticism, it is believed that the Ministry has gone ahead with presenting the original report to the UNDP. Would you have any insight into this ambivalence?*

This [report] has not yet been made public, but we have seen a copy. The Ministry has presented a revised version of the report to the UNDP, not our original. There are a few factual mistakes – 15 to 20 – that have been corrected (which have been corrected in our version also), a few changes made because of missing references. However, most of the changes made are in the nature of diluting our critical analysis, or the more radical recommendations that we have made, and have nothing to do with "discrepancies and inconsistencies".

► *The Ministry's response to the question in Parliament also mentioned a long-drawn-out procedure of correcting and revising the report, at the end of which it will be a mere 'input' for the draft National Action Plan. Was this the procedure you had been led to expect when the report was commissioned?*

Throughout the four-year process, our mutual understanding was that after going through full consultations and peer reviews, the final report we present would be the final action plan. All previous versions of the report were in fact released under the MoEF's name as the 'draft' action plan, not as a draft technical report. Each of these versions was subjected to widespread public review; a chance was given to all State governments and all relevant Government of India Ministries to comment. Our final report was based on all these inputs and

'MoEF trying to divert attention from its inaction'

also on a page-by-page reading by MoEF scientists. Why the MoEF had to repeat the process of peer review after once having gone through all this is not clear; one can only surmise that it was looking for a way to delay the final report.

I spoke to Dr. R. Sukumar of the Indian Institute of Science, who chaired the review committee that the MoEF has quoted as having found our report to be "scientifically invalid". He confirmed that their brief was to do an academic review, during which they found a few factual inaccuracies, some statements without references, and a few recommendations that were politically slanted which required some language modifications. By no stretch of imagination could this be used as the basis for calling it "scientifically invalid"; indeed Sukumar said that most of the report was left intact by the review team. It is clear that the MoEF is only trying to divert attention from its own foot-dragging and from criticism of its non-transparent approach over the last two years, by trying to discredit us. Its insinuations of "scientific invalidity" or of paying us the fictitious figure of Rs.3 crores, are crude. [The MoEF has alleged that Rs.3 crores was paid to Kalpavriksh by the Global Environment Facility as consultancy fees. Kothari says the organisation received Rs.20 lakhs over four years with the rest of the money going to other partners of the core group.]

► *What were the MoEF's real objections to the report?*

The MoEF has not stated anything beyond what is in its October 5, 2005 press note and a couple of responses in Parliament. In one of these responses in 2004, the MoEF stated that our report had numerous factual inaccuracies and statements that could embarrass India in international circles. Examples given included:

★ "India's model of development is inherently unsustainable and destructive of biodiversity... it needs a drastic re-orientation."

★ "In India, a number of biodiversity elements have been subjected to im-

pacts of inappropriate trade systems...impacts to biodiversity from trade are likely to significantly increase in the next few years, with India's acceding to the World Trade Organisation's treaties."

★ "India has played an inadequate role in advocating conservation and sustainable use of shared resources with neighbouring countries at South Asian fora such as SAARC [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation]"

★ "There has been inadequate use of international human rights treaties and fora by India to promote the cause of biodiversity and livelihood security."

★ The need to involve militant groups in assigning responsibility for conservation in sensitive ecosystems affected by armed conflicts.

Strangely enough, most of these statements remain in the report that the MoEF has given to the UNDP. The one that has been substantially changed relates to dialogue with and action by 'militant' groups, which is also rather strange because the MoEF is part of a government that has an explicit policy and programme to bring such groups to the negotiating table. And this helps conservation.... In Manas Tiger Reserve, for instance, dialogue and incentives have brought the support of Bodo tribal groups, helping the ecosystem recover.

Given the above, the real reasons for 'rejection' seem to lie elsewhere. There are two possible explanations. The report has an analysis of the reasons for biodiversity loss, which include a strong critique of government policies and centralised decision-making. We also have a lot of radical recommendations relating to development planning, decentralised governance, reforms in government departments dealing with biodiversity, and so on. Perhaps the MoEF is uncomfortable with some of these. I would not be surprised if this were the case, given the explicitly pro-industry slant that the MoEF has had over the last few years.

► *Why was it not released for two years? What were the reasons you were given for the delay?*

First, we were told that it had to await the finalisation of the National Environment Policy – the supposed logic being that this policy is over-arching so other things in progress have to await its finalisation.... This ignores the fact that the NBSAP started four years before the policy process did, and if anything, the results of the NBSAP should be used in formulating the Environment Policy. And then we were told, after forcing the issue with the Minister in late 2004, that they were taking the report through another review, after which they would finalise the action plan. No further reasons or excuses [were given]... until October 5, when they 'rejected' it! Even now, they are not actually releasing the final technical report that they have provided to the UNDP. One of our network members, Mahesh Pandya of Paryavaran Mitra in Gujarat, filed a Right To Information application asking for this report, and has been told that he has to pay several thousand rupees for it... when he asked for it to be provided on a CD and/or put onto the website, the MoEF refused.

► *The MoEF seems to be playing an old game of trying to keep donors happy and yet get away with what they themselves actually want. This seems to be the case with the Ministry flaunting the report to the UNDP but yet not implementing it. Is there no way their hand can be forced to accept the report using the same arguments that you yourself have mentioned?*

We tried this through the UNDP, but they seem unwilling to take on the MoEF except through soft dialogue. We have tried this through the Prime Minister's Office. They said they could intervene but it is not clear if they have so far... We continue to try. We are also trying through the National Advisory Council, some of whose members have promised to take it up. Senior members of the Planning Commission have also been spoken to. Finally, some Members of Parliament have asked questions in the winter parliamentary session. Let us see if all this pressure helps. ■



At a mangrove on the outskirts of Mumbai, India is home to 8 per cent of the world's biological species. It harbours over 137,000 species of plants and animals.

one of the world's greatest. The maturity of the report lies in the fact that it establishes the connection between conserving biodiversity for its own sake and the fact that it sustains the lives and livelihoods of over 70 per cent of India's population.

The compelling need to implement the report is brought out by the following staggering facts:

In the last two centuries India has lost over half its forests, 40 per cent of its mangroves and a significant part of its wetlands. At least 40 species of plants and animals have become extinct, including the cheetah and the pink-headed duck, with several hundred more under the same threat. Crop and livestock breeds are not exempt either; all 18 indigenous breeds of poultry face the possibility of extinction.

The report is wide-ranging in its recommendations, which stem from an understanding that the greatest threats come from a destructive process of development. It weaves together the effects that everything, from traditional water harvesting to globalisation to a centralised political system, ultimately has on the biodiversity of the country.

Though the facts emphasise the urgent need for action on the report, it has gathered dust in the MoEF ever since it was submitted towards the end of 2003. The Ministry neither refuted nor ap-

proved the report. Exasperated by this, Kalpavriksh finally decided to make it public. A day after the report was made public the MoEF issued a press release rejecting the report. It said that a group of scientists appointed by it had called the report "scientifically invalid", thereby forcing it to start the entire process afresh.

The fact of the matter is that prior to its publication the report had been reviewed by a peer group whose suggestions had been incorporated in the final version. More important, an MoEF official had sat with the team for over two days going over the pre-final draft. Moreover, all earlier drafts had been publicly circulated by the MoEF itself with the Ministry's official name on the copies. In fact, those copies were referred to as the "Draft NBSAP".

There is undeniable confusion in the MoEF's mishandling of the report. When a question was raised in Parliament in November about developing the national biodiversity action plan, the Minister of State for Environment and Forests, Namo Narian Meena, said: "The first draft... has been discussed in the Ministry and the final draft has to be prepared, harmonising it with the provisions of the draft Environment Policy." The Minister's comment about the NBSAP working in conjunction with the National Environment Policy highlights

the confused state of the MoEF. Kanchi Kohli, a member of the coordination team, explains why the Minister's statement is an impossibility: "That the NBSAP needs to be in line with the National Environment Policy was formally conveyed only at the Steering Committee meeting in January 2004 [after the report had been submitted]. The process of drafting of the Environment Policy was initiated much after the NBSAP process, which had started in 2000."

Soon after rejecting the report the MoEF reversed its actions and went ahead and submitted a slightly diluted version to the UNDP. Kalpavriksh's Ashish Kothari told *Frontline*: "I find it ironic that after giving those four or five examples of the problems with our report, the version given by the MoEF to the UNDP seems to retain at least three of them. I wonder how the MoEF suddenly does not find these statements to be embarrassing."

One possible explanation for the MoEF's flip-flop is that the Ministry is facing a deadline. All countries are expected to have an NBSAP in place by 2006. The next conference of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity is this year. Ironically it was India that had suggested a 2006 deadline for having an NBSAP in place for all countries. Perhaps the Government of India has suddenly awakened to this reality. ■

Bio-diversity report released

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 7. — The final report emanating from the mapping of the country's bio-diversity under the National Bio-diversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) was released by Kalpavriksh, the NGO entrusted with the task, even as the environment and forests ministry termed it "scientifically invalid".

"The environment ministry has gone back on its word to make this report an official document for a National Action Plan," Kalpavriksh chief, Ashish Kothari said, while releasing the report here yesterday. "This is the outcome of a four-year process. And the report was submitted in 2003 with the understanding that it would be an official document."

Kalpavriksh, in consultation with the technical and policy core group (TPCG) set up initially, decided to make the report public for three primary reasons, Mr Kothari said. Firstly, it would allow the public easi-

er access to the information, analysis and recommendations contained therein without further delay. Secondly, this move was aimed at providing public access to the 100-odd other documents produced in the NBSAP process. Finally, it is aimed at enabling the public to compare the final action plan as and when brought out by the ministry of environment and forests with this final technical report.

In a scathing comment, Mr Shekhar Singh of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information, who is a member of the Steering Committee set up by the ministry as part of the NBSAP exercise, said: "It wasn't so much the content but the whole mentality of the ministry that has changed, as they did not approve of the participatory process followed."

The ministry had conveyed to Kalpavriksh early this year that it was "not comfortable with some parts" of the report but no specific list was made

available. In March the ministry also wrote to Kalpavriksh "not to publish or in any form make publicly available" the report submitted in December 2003.

In its reaction to the report, the MOEF today said the "Consultant's report" submitted by Kalpavriksh had been reviewed by a group of scientists appointed by the ministry. "They have concluded that the report is for the major part scientifically invalid. Hence the ministry has rejected the report and has started the process of developing the National Biodiversity Action Plan afresh," it said in a communique.

Mr Kothari said that the government was also in technical violation of the UNDP agreement as an Action Plan had to be brought out at the end of the process, which in this case ended in 2003. Moreover, India is committed under the Convention of Bio-diversity (CBD) to come out with a document by 2006.

Farmers stand for bio-diversity

By NAMRATA AHUJA

New Delhi, Oct. 4: On the occasion of the Wildlife Week, the technical coordinating committee of India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) revealed that the national bio-diversity report, as formulated by the panel, is facing a sharp neglect from its own executive committee which is none other than the ministry

of environment and forests (MOEF).

Originally supposed to have been an official report of the MOEF, the report titled *Securing India's Future* was made public as a citizens' report on Tuesday, by its technical coordinator NGO Kalpyriksh and the 15-member Technical and Policy Core Group (TPCG). The plan is being funded by UNDP.

Mr Shekhar Singh, mem-

SPOTLIGHT

ber of the steering committee for NBSAP said, "The ministry has prepared its own report, the contents of which we are not aware of. We fear that it will be completely diluted as our suggestions of dialogue with militant groups in areas of rich bio-diversity like the Northeast did not go well with the government."

Lakshmi Amma, a farmer from Andhra Pradesh, who was present at the release of the citizens' report in the capital said, "We prepared the first draft of the action plan along with 50,000 farmers across 65 villages. If the government diverts its financing to bio-diversity which is a method of self-dependant and environment friendly farming, the problems farmers are facing today will vanish."

The TPCG alleges that the ministry has failed to act on it. "We are releasing the report to put pressure on the government to act on it fast," said Mr Ashish Kothari, member secretary of TPCG. Saroj Amma, a farmer from Medak district of Andhra Pradesh said, "Our entire village preserves seeds, using environment friendly methods. We are now teaching this method to other farmers."