

International Biodiversity conference 2012 13th Day on 13th October 2012 in Hyderabad International Convention Centre

హైదరాబాద్ ఇంటర్నేషనల్ కన్వెన్షన్ సెంటర్ లో పదమూడవ రోజు అంతర్జాతీయ

జీవవైవిధ్యం సదస్సు

As CoP-11, Conference of Parties-Convention of Biodiversity, the main event was on at the Hyderabad International Convention Centre and HITEX, a side-event — the People's Biodiversity Festival — that was kicked off here at the Exhibition Grounds on Saturday drew attention from environmental activists.

Entry to the festival was free and it drew an appreciable number of visitors. There were 54 stalls in all, set up by different organisations working on biodiversity and environmental issues from across India and Nepal. The focus was on 'Rice Mela' and the initiative was primarily to improve awareness among people on the need to save rice varieties. One of the organisers Bharat Mansata recalled that from an estimate 2,00,000 rice varieties that India boasted of, barely half a decade ago, there were less than 2,000 varieties now. The traditional long, organic variety had given way to dwarf and semi-dwarf varieties that were chemical dependent.

The official inaugural of the three-day festival will be on Sunday morning with the lamp to be lit by Bhaskar Save, a 90-year-old veteran natural farmer. The launch will be marked by a unanimous declaration that 'Mother Earth is not for sale and plunder' and seeks to affirm to a positive collective pledge to protect nature and its severely endangered, sacred treasure of biodiversity.

Saturday, however, saw the conduct of open seminar on 'Biodiversity and ecological agriculture' to drive home the message of fostering organic farming.

Among those who set up their stalls and marked their presence were representatives of Timbaktu Collective, Deccan Development Society, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, Earth Care Books, 'Manchi Pusthakam' Centre for Education and Documentation, Malka, Save the Rice Campaign, Sahaja Aharam, Deccan Organics and Sahaja Organics.

The delegates from 192 nations now in Hyderabad for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) would get a glowing picture of their host nation's biodiversity wealth going by their welcome kits. Stunning images of tigers and squirrels, peacocks and mountains are splashed across brochures,

along with quaint tales of how Emperor Ashoka established the world's first nature reserves in ancient India in the second century BC, and idealistic Mahatma Gandhi quotes on how the earth provides enough for man's need, not greed.

It's a grimmer picture if one moves from glossy images to hard numbers.

On Friday, the Environment Ministry announced that over the last one year, it has permitted the legal diversion of more than 15,000 hectares of forest land, with the lion's share going to the mining industry. Over the last three decades, more than 11 lakh hectares have been diverted legally, not even taking into account the rampant illegal encroachment and decimation of Indian forests.

The country's national report to the CBD does show progress in afforestation, with 5 million hectares added over the last decade. But environmental experts bemoan the facts beyond those figures: untouched pristine forests are being replaced by paper and timber plantations in the name of afforestation, without any care for the loss of priceless biodiversity.

Putting a human face to those numbers paints bleakness into the picture.

On Monday, a group of Khairwar tribals from the Mahan region of Madhya Pradesh will arrive in Hyderabad to tell international delegates that their forest rights are being ignored in the drive for unfettered development. The government plans to give the green signal for mining the Mahan coal block, despite warnings from its own advisory committee that it will tear up pristine forests, harm biodiversity and threaten a nearby reservoir. Tribals insist that a forest clearance would be illegal as community forest rights have not been granted, in violation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

The FRA and National Biodiversity Act, 2002 have been cited as landmark measures showcasing India's progress on the path of biodiversity conservation over the last decade, with Environment Minister Jayanthi Natarajan telling CBD delegates that India has “a great deal to offer to the world in terms of our experience in protecting biodiversity with the active participation of the local community.”

However, activists working among these local communities say India had better put its own house in order before preparing lessons for the world. “What these legislations have done is to give a framework for people to assert their rights, and that is a positive step, but the government ignores its own laws,”

says Shankar Gopalakrishnan of the Campaign for Survival and Dignity.

“Community protection of forest areas is the most effective way of biodiversity conservation. Far from recognising their efforts, the government regularly infringes the rights of forest dwellers,” adds Greenpeace campaigner Priya Pillai.

Moving from forests to rivers, Himanshu Thakkar of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People feels that the government is ignoring the three pillars of the CBD: conservation, sustainable use, and access and benefit sharing. “What kind of biodiversity conservation are you taking about when Environmental Impact Assessment Reports at best list out species in a river without even assessing what the impact of a dam would be on those species, or how it can be minimised? How is it sustainable use when each project is assessed on its own, without any thought of the cumulative impact of dozens of dams on a single river? And to speak of access and benefit sharing is a cruel joke, when those affected are not even considered for compensation or rehabilitation, leave aside participatory decision-making or benefit sharing.”

Eminent scientist M.S. Swaminathan has been one of the architects of the National Biodiversity Act, and a champion of the protection of traditional varieties of plants and the creation of community gene banks. However, his Research Foundation director Ajay Parida says the three-tier format of the NBA mechanism – national, state and local – has not been effective at the panchayat level. “There is a serious lacuna at the grassroots, where we have failed to create any economic stake in conservation. What economic incentive does a villager have to document and conserve a traditional variety instead of a higher-yielding hybrid?” he asks.

Despite the existence of more than 32,000 panchayat-level biodiversity management committees, only 1,121 people's biodiversity registers are being maintained according to the NBA's fact sheets. “Rather than just listing species, they need to be able to link economic value to biodiversity resources,” says Dr. Parida.

The National Biodiversity Authority has formulated ten targets for 2020, mostly policy measures couched in ambiguous language about developing “national programmes”, “coordination mechanisms” and “cooperative approaches”, aiming to implement existing legislations better. One of the few specific goals is found in the sixth target, which calls for a modest two to five per cent increase in the area of forests, protected areas and marine and coastal

ecosystems by 2017.

However, at a time when major voices in the government bemoan the “hurdles” that green clearances place in the path of economic growth, when the Finance Ministry is proposing a National Investment Board, which could override environmental concerns to fast-track approval for mega projects, the first target seems laughable. It reads: “By 2020, the national planning process of Government of India considers biodiversity as an integral part of national development that is reflected by biodiversity and ecosystem related issues as a part of implementation strategies across sectors, ministries and programmes with adequate and where possible specific financial allocations.”

“Today, biodiversity is seen as an 'impediment' to development, not an 'integral part' of it,” says Divya Raghunandan, campaign director at Greenpeace. “Facts have been presented repeatedly to show that economic bottlenecks are not caused by biodiversity concerns, but it's a convenient scapegoat.”

జీవ వైవిధ్య సదస్సు చర్చలు కీలక దశకు చేరుకున్నాయి. నగోయా ప్రొటోకాల్‌లో పేర్కొన్న అంశాలపై దృష్టి పెట్టాల్సిందిగా అభివృద్ధి చెందుతున్న దేశాలు సీబీడిపై ఒత్తిడి పెంచుతున్నాయి. హైటెక్స్‌లో జరుగుతున్న సదస్సులో శనివారం పలు అంశాలపై కాంటాక్ట్ గ్రూపులు చర్చలు జరిపాయి. సోమవారం నుంచి మళ్లీ రెండు వర్కింగ్ గ్రూపులు ఎజెండా ప్రకారం చర్చలు జరుపుతాయని సీబీడి వర్గాలు పేర్కొన్నాయి.

కాగా.. జీవ వైవిధ్యం, పర్యావరణానికి సంబంధించిన సమాచార లోపాలను భర్తీ చేయడం కోసం సమీకరించాల్సిన నిధులపై వేర్వేరు దేశాల మధ్య భేదాభిప్రాయాలు బలపడుతున్నాయి. 'ఖర్చు పెట్టగల స్థితి'లో ఉన్న ప్రభుత్వాలు, సంస్థలు వనరులను సమీకరించాలని జపాన్, యూరోపియన్ యూనియన్, నార్వే, కెనడా తదితర దేశాలు శనివారం సూచించగా.. చైనా దీన్ని వ్యతిరేకించింది.

జీవవైవిధ్యం, వాతావరణ మార్పు లాంటి అంశాలపై విధానాలను, తీసుకోవాల్సిన చర్యలను సభ్యదేశాలు కేవలం 'పరిశీలిస్తే' సరిపోదని.. 'ప్రమోట్' చేయాలని ఆఫ్రికా దేశం ఇథియోపియా సూచించింది. సమాచారం, విజ్ఞానాన్ని బలోపేతం చేసుకోవడం,

జీవవైవిధ్యం-వాతావరణ మార్పు మధ్య సంబంధాల గురించిన కార్యకలాపాల పర్యవేక్షణ,
ప్రజా సంక్షేమం గురించి అన్ని స్థాయిల్లోనూ తగిన చర్చ జరగాలని సభ్యదేశాలు
ఏకగ్రీవంగా ఒక అభిప్రాయానికి వచ్చాయి.

క్షీణదశలో ఉన్న పర్యావరణ వ్యవస్థలను మెరుగు పరచడానికి వాటి పునరుద్ధరణ
'చిట్టచివరి పరిష్కారం' అన్న పదాన్ని.. సవరించిన ముసాయిదా నుంచి తొలగించాలని
కెనడా ప్రతిపాదించగా.. దానికి భారత్ మద్దతు తెలిపింది. అయిచి లక్ష్యాలను
సాధించడానికి అభివృద్ధి చెందుతున్న దేశాలకు అవసరమైన ఆర్థిక వనరుల విషయంలో..
ఆర్థికంగా పరిపుష్టంగా ఉన్న దేశాలు సాయపడాలని పెరూ, ఎల్ సాల్వెడార్ లాంటి దేశాలు
ప్రతిపాదించగా, కెనడా వ్యతిరేకించింది. ఇక, వనరుల సమీకరణపై చర్చలు వాయిదా
పడగా వాటిని కొనసాగించాలని అభివృద్ధి చెందుతున్న దేశాలు కోరాయి. 'సీబీడీలోని 20వ
అధికరణం ప్రకారం' అనే క్లాజ్ను చేర్చాలని చైనా ప్రతిపాదించగా, బ్రెజిల్ మద్దతు
పలికింది.