GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 371
TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.11.2024

Global Nature Conservation Index

371. SHRI K.R. SURESH REDDY:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons behind India's abysmal rank of 176th out of 180 countries in the Global Nature Conservation Index, 2024;
(b) since India's rank at the bottom is mainly attributed to inefficient land management and rising threats to its biodiversity, what measures have the ministry take up in these areas;
(c) specific measures being implemented against threats to India's biodiversity, including habitat loss and fragmentation; and
(d) how Government plans to navigate the needs and demands of rapid urbanization and growth along with climate change risks?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) and (b): The Global Nature Conservation Index (NCI) 2024 is brought out recently, for the first time, by Goldman Sonnenfeldt School of Sustainability and Climate Change, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel and BioDB.com. India has been ranked 176 out of total 180 countries undermining the well-recognized efforts of India in Land Management, Threats to Biodiversity, Capacity & Governance and Climate Change Mitigation. NCI has not taken into account the country reported data in respect of many indicators and relied on many other sources leading to unrealistic NCI index. Further, NCI has completely ignored India’s leadership role in international environmental forums such as International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), Mission LiFE, International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilience Infrastructure (CDRI) advocating for global cooperation on biodiversity conservation as well as its leadership role on global climate change agenda.

In recent years, India has taken several measures in areas of land management and threats to its biodiversity which have not been taken into account while deriving NCI. For example, the Government of India enacted Biological Diversity Act, 2002, as amended by the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023 (BD Act) together with new set of Rules to conserve, sustainably use and regulate the access of biological resources and

knowledge associated thereto. The Act covers various measures under the provisions of the BD Act to conserve biodiversity including the constitution of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), notification for Biodiversity Heritage Sites and notification for threatened species. The notification confers power to the State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) for regulating access to the notified species and to take measures to rehabilitate and preserve those species.

Some of India's key achievements in land management and biodiversity conservation are as follows:

i. India has 1022 Protected Areas in the country, covering an area of 178,640 sq. km, which is about 5.43 % of the geographical area of the country.
ii. Total Forest Cover has increased from 21.23% in 2013 to 21.71% in 2021 .
iii. India has 72.16 lakh Ha of forest cover as per the FAO's Global Forest Resource Assessment 2020, securing its place among the top ten countries worldwide.
iv. Eco-Sensitive Zones of 487 Protected Areas have been established across India.
v. Number of Ramsar sites have increased from 26 in 2014 to 85 in 2024.
vi. There are 55 Tiger Reserves in India and tiger population has increased from 2226 in 2014 to 3682 in 2022.
vii. India's Project Lion has fostered a growing lion population in the Gir Landscape—from 284 in 1990 to 674 in 2020.
viii. India has reintroduced Cheetah in the Indian habitat through the world's first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation project.
ix. With 33 Elephant Reserves, India holds by far the largest number of wild Asian elephants, estimated at about 30,000 or nearly 60% of the population of the species.
x. India's leopard population is estimated at 13,874 individuals, representing stable population in comparison to the similar area being sampled in 2018 with 12,852 individuals.
xi. The Namami Gange Programe to rejuvenate River Ganga and its tributaries has been recognised as World Restoration flagship project by UN which reflects the commitments of Government towards conservation, rejuvenation and development of natural ecosystems and its services.

(c) India has already submitted its National Targets under the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans on 10th September, 2024 and also submitted its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) on 31st October, 2024 on the Convention on Biodiversity Portal during the recently concluded CBD COP at Cali, Colombia. Both the National Biodiversity Targets and the Action Plans are fully aligned with the goals and targets set under the Kunming Montreal Global Diversity Framework (KMGBF). KMGBF is to be implemented in accordance with the national circumstances, priorities and capabilities.

India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) envisages protecting terrestrial and marine areas, restoring degraded ecosystems and reducing biodiversity threats through pollution control as also invasive species management. India emphasizes species

conservation, sustainable resource use, wildlife corridors to reduce fragmentation, and community engagement in biodiversity governance.

(d) India has submitted its Long Term Low Emission Development Strategy (LT-LEDS) for reducing GHG emissions to UNFCCC in November 2022 highlighting strategic low-emissions development transitions for the country. The LT-LEDS was prepared in the light of India's right to an equitable and fair share of the Global Carbon Budget, which is the practical implementation of Climate Justice. The key elements of the strategy include- Low carbon development of electricity systems consistent with development; development of an integrated, efficient, inclusive low-carbon transport system; promoting adaptation in urban design, energy and material-efficiency in buildings and sustainable urbanisation; promoting economy-wide decoupling of growth from emissions and development of an efficient, innovative low-emission industrial system; CO_2 removal and related engineering solutions; enhancing forest and vegetation cover consistent with socio-economic and ecological considerations; and developing strategy on economic and financial aspects of low-carbon development. Some of the initiatives include the Smart Cities Mission (SCM), National Action Plan of Climate Change (NAPCC) promoting climate-resilient and sustainable urban development.

The Adaptation Communication submitted to UNFCCC in 2023 outlines the actions taken for adaptation to climate risks and challenges, and future strategy for the same. India has developed an integrated approach, ranging from food security, energy use efficiency, and water management aiming to address these issues simultaneously through appropriate policies and initiatives.

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