

Sharing experiences on effective biodiversity conservation amongst the private sector in India and Japan

Title

BNHS (BirdLife in India) today lead on an event titled **‘Corporates and CBD - Sharing experiences on effective biodiversity conservation amongst the private sector in India and Japan?’**, jointly with BirdLife International and the Japanese Business Initiative for Biodiversity (JBIB) at the CBD COP11. The side event discussed the ways and means in which corporates can play a vital role in conservation, since it has been observed that human activities result in 99.9% of biodiversity loss. Speakers included Mr Makoto Haraguchi, JBIB Advisor; Mr Homi Khusrokhhan, President, BNHS; Dr Asad Rahmani, Director, BNHS; Mr Yoshiaki Shin, Chairman, JBIB; Dr Naoki Adachi, ED, JBIB; Katsuhiko Kaneyoshi, JBIB and MS&AD Insurance Group and Mr AK Agnihotri, DGM, ONGC. Find below some major aspects discussed during the event.

Dependence of humans on biodiversity: Mr Yoshiaki Shin, speaking on the topic said, ‘Humans are dependent on nature, but due to urbanization and industrialization, it is being destroyed. JBIB is working in conserving biodiversity since 2008, with help from businesses. It works to promote dialogue and collaboration between business and its stakeholders. Businesses across borders should work together to conserve biodiversity.’

Trends in business and biodiversity: Businesses have a role to play in biodiversity conservation. Elaborating on this Dr Naoki Adachi said, ‘Ecosystem services are derived from biodiversity. Businesses are dependent on it and they also have impacts on it. Causes of biodiversity loss include habitat change, climate change, invasive alien species, over exploitation and pollution.’

99.9% biodiversity loss is caused by human activities. Businesses need to identify the most crucial ecosystem service to them. There are no standard answers for all. JBIB has till now 39 member companies in Japan, across various sectors, working on biodiversity

conservation.? Businesses can conserve biodiversity in a variety of ways. High impact processes need to be studied and modified, such as procurement, operations and land use. Efficient management and communication is also important. JBIB has created working groups on areas such as business and biodiversity inter-relationship group and land use group. Premises of businesses can be habitats for various native species and the same need to be conserved. Recycling area, buffer woods, roof top gardens are some ways to achieve this.

Spiritual and recreational areas are also important in a holistic approach. There is a need to connect disrupted natural areas due to urbanization. Score cards have been developed at JBIB to assess sustainable work. Activities such as developing a multi-layered vegetation belt score more. JBIB challenges for 2020 include implementation of plans and understanding the complete relation between business and biodiversity.

Implementation includes avoiding development of high conservation value areas. The way forward is to realise that biodiversity is our business and the current business model needs to be changed to a sustainable one. Sustainable development models for India: Talking on the importance of sustainable development models, Mr Homi Khusrookhan said that the good news in India is that there is a realization among corporates that sustainable development is required. The bad news is that there are people who view ?development? as more important than conservation. Sectors such as power, ports, roads, etc are poised for huge growth and simultaneously biodiversity is threatened. Instead of overall GDP growth, per capita GDP growth should be focussed upon. Energy security, land issues, water issues and climate are the challenges facing India, along with biodiversity conservation, including medicinal plants in the age old Ayurvedic system of medicine. Corporates in India need to study their carbon footprint and mitigate it. Conserving resources, recycling, reducing carbon footprint and inventing cleaner processes and inclusive growth are important. For instance, traditional Hindu knowledge silver has anti-bacterial properties. Combining that with burnt rice husk, Tata Group company Tata Chemicals created a water filter that gives 99.9% pure water, without using electricity.

Mangrove conservation ? a case study: With a long coastline, India needs to protect its coastal biodiversity including mangroves. ONGC ? BNHS collaboration in Gujarat and Maharashtra is a classic example of corporate role in coastal biodiversity conservation. Explaining the project, Mr Agnihotri informed that ONGC, along with BNHS, has been successfully restoring vast stretches of mangroves in Gandhar area of Gujarat. Over 17 lakh mangrove saplings have been planted, nurtured and are surviving. This saved the oil and gas wells of ONGC from damage by erosion. This has also provided with employment to about 150 people in the area. Along with restoration, ONGC has also been working in creating awareness about mangrove conservation among coastal communities in Maharashtra and Gujarat, something that was traditionally followed by the locals, before industrialisation and urbanization happened. ONGC and BNHS have been involved with schools and colleges in this endeavour