



**Ministry of Environment and Forests**

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



सत्यमेव जयते

**ONE YEAR ON:**

**A SUMMARY OF THE MINISTRY'S MAJOR INITIATIVES ON  
ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND WILDLIFE IN 2009-2010**

**June, 2010**



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### I. Introduction:

It has been the continued endeavour of the Ministry of Environment and Forests to strengthen the policy and regulatory frameworks that govern the environment and forests of the country. Over the last one year, various measures, both institutional and legislative, have been initiated or given a renewed impetus. Numerous initiatives have moved from the conceptual stage to implementation, while many other new concepts have been introduced.

The legislative bedrock of the work of the Ministry is based on three laws: The Environment (Protection) Act 1986, The Forest (Conservation) Act 1980 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. These three flagship laws are overarching umbrella legislations that provide the Ministry with the requisite authority to undertake all manner of conservation and protection actions. Besides these laws, the National Conservation Strategy and Policy Statement on Environment and Development, 1992; National Forest Policy, 1988; and the National Environment Policy, 2006 also guide the Ministry's work.

### II. Key Achievements in 2009-10

In the first year of the UPA-II, a number of initiatives have been launched or given renewed impetus. Some salient initiatives are described below.

#### [A] National Green Tribunal

1. A Bill to set up a National Green Tribunal (NGT) has been passed by the Lok Sabha on 30th April 2010 and by the Rajya Sabha on 5th May 2010.
2. This Bill establishes specialised tribunals to decide all manner of environmental cases. These will be staffed both by judicial as well as expert/scientific members in equal number.
3. The NGT shall have the original jurisdiction as well as appellate jurisdiction to adjudicate the environmental disputes of civil nature brought by anyone relating to protection of environment, forests and other natural resources including giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property.

#### [B] Climate Change

1. Announced India's intent to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 20-25% between 2005 and 2020, thus making a major contribution to mitigating climate change.
2. Expert Group on Low Carbon Strategy for Inclusive Growth constituted under the Planning Commission to develop a roadmap for Low Carbon development.
3. Hosted Delhi High-level Conference on "Climate Change: Technology Development and Transfer", that adopted the 'Delhi Declaration', which became a key input to the international climate negotiations.
4. Released India's GHG Emission profile – a summary of 5 independent studies – which show that India will remain a low emission economy even in the year 2030.
5. Convened a Ministerial Meeting of BASIC countries – Brazil, South Africa, China and India – to discuss collaboration in Climate Change negotiations and broader collaboration.



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6. Launched the Indian Network for Climate Change Assessment (INCCA), in October 2009, as a network-based programme to make science, particularly the “3 Ms” – Measuring, Modelling and Monitoring – the essence of our policymaking in the climate change space. It brings together over 120 institutions and over 220 scientists from across the country.

### **[C] Compensatory Afforestation Management (CAMPA)**

The Supreme Court had directed the creation of a Compensatory Afforestation Fund in which all monies received from user agencies towards compensatory afforestation, calculated as Net Present Value (NPV), shall be deposited. However, for seven years between 2002 and 2009 the fund could not be accessed by any of the States because of a disagreement on the manner of its disbursement:

1. To resolve the deadlock the MoEF moved the Supreme Court to give effect to an Ad Hoc Authority (CAMPA) that would in the interim period monitor the discharge and use of funds. It was ultimately agreed that this body would give over control to the state CAMPAs.
2. By the end of January 2010, following national-level sessions on the disbursement and use of CAMPA, 22 States/UTs have operationalised their accounts.
3. Out of the received amounts of approximately 13,000 crore in the ad hoc CAMPA, the State CAMPAs have so far been allocated approximately Rs. 1,000 crore.

### **[D] Mission Clean Ganga**

1. The ‘Mission Clean Ganga’ Initiative was launched with the first meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) held on 5th October 2009 under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. It was decided that under ‘Mission Clean Ganga’, no untreated municipal sewage and industrial effluents will flow into the river Ganga by year 2020. The allocation for the NGRBA was doubled to Rs. 500 crore for the financial year 2010-11.
2. New projects worth Rs 1,394.11 crore were cleared, including that of Uttar Pradesh (Rs 800 crore), Bihar (Rs 440 crore), West Bengal (Rs 105 crore) and Uttarakhand (Rs 45 crore). These include projects for development of sewer networks, sewage treatment plants and pumping stations, electric crematoria, community toilets, development of river fronts, resuscitation of canals, and public campaigns.
3. These measures signify the importance and urgency attached to the River Ganga which enjoys an important place in our culture and is central to the livelihoods of millions of our people.
4. In addition to these measures, we are negotiating a major loan of about US\$ 1Bn with the World Bank to clean the River itself which is progressing rapidly on track.

### **[E] Coastal Regulation Zone**

MoEF has drafted comprehensive amendments to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification of 1991. These amendments seek to improve the present provisions for protection and regulation for the use of the land within 500mts of the coast and 100mts along the tidal influenced water bodies.



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1. Minister E&F, chaired consultations in various coastal states to hear the concerns of all affected stakeholders. A committee was also constituted under the chairmanship of Dr. MS Swaminathan to address the shortcomings in the 1991 Notification.
2. MoEF has thereafter prepared a comprehensive set of Amendments to strengthen the CRZ Notification, 1991. Special protection status has been given to Navi Mumbai and Greater Mumbai, Kerala, Sunderbans and Goa.
3. The draft notification is currently on the Ministry's website in various languages to elicit comments and views from the general public.
4. At the same time, a major programme – Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project – is being launched with the support of the World Bank. This envisages spending Rs.1,155 crore over a period of 5 years for mapping the national coastal hazard line, and setting up of a Centre for Sustainable Coastal Zone Management in Chennai. The Project will also undertake pilot projects in coastal zone management in Gujarat, West Bengal and Orissa.

### **[F] Initiatives for the Rights of Forest Dwellers**

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, keeping in mind the need for ensuring compliance with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, has undertaken various measures in 2009-2010:

1. The MoEF issued a circular dated 30th July 2009 to all states directing that while forwarding/submitted proposals for diversion of forest lands for non-forest purposes, proper care for observation of all the rights of the forest dwellers under the FRA will be taken, failing which permission for diversion will not be granted.
2. On 11th February 2010, the MoEF jointly with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, constituted a high-powered committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. N.C. Saxena to look into the issues concerning the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006.

### **[G] Pollution Control**

1. Developed a Comprehensive Environmental Pollution Index (CEPI) for environmental assessment of 88 industrial clusters in the country, as part of a study by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). CEPI which combines effects of air, water and soil pollution is intended to be used as an early warning tool for categorizing industrial clusters/areas in terms of severity of overall pollution levels. Based on this assessment, 43 industrial clusters have been identified as critically polluted. Preparation of action plans for remediation of these critically polluted clusters is in progress.
2. Revised National Ambient Air Quality Standards 2009 were released by the Ministry. As per these norms, the residential and industrial areas will have the same standards. The new standards include limits for benzene, ozone, benzopyrene, arsenic, nickel and ammonia which were not covered in 1994 standards.

### **[H] Issues of Genetically Modified Food Crops**

1. The Genetic Engineering Approvals Committee (GEAC), established under the Ministry in October 2009, assessed the case for large-scale trial and environmental release of Bt Brinjal, the first GM food crop in India. Given the important policy implications of the decision at the national level, it decided its recommendation for environmental release may be put up to the Government for taking final view on the matter.



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2. Subsequently, based on the views of various stakeholders during public consultations organized across the country, and adopting a cautious, precautionary principle-based approach, a moratorium has been imposed on commercialisation of Bt Brinjal, until independent scientific studies establish the safety of the product from the point of view of its long-term impact on human health and environment (including the rich genetic wealth of Brinjal existing in our country).

### **[I] Renewed Impetus to Science**

The Ministry was envisaged as a science-based Ministry. Over the years, the scientific focus of the Ministry has been eroded. This is now being renewed. A number of initiatives have been put in place this year

1. A Global Advisory Network Group on Environmental Sciences (GANGES), a new forum, comprising the world's leading environmental scientists of Indian origin, established to advise the Government of India on the country's environmental sciences agenda.
2. A National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme to provide our most promising young scientists the opportunity to do cutting-edge research on critical environmental issues in collaboration with leading institutes and scientists in India and the world. This will help create a cadre of top-class Indian Environmental Scientists for the future.
3. An Expert Committee to Enhance the Scientific Capacity of MoEF, to take a fresh look at the scientific manpower and infrastructure in the Ministry so that they remain cutting-edge.
4. An Action Plan to enhance Forestry Sciences following a special meeting of the Minister with over 100 Indian Forest Service Officers with PhDs. A number of decisions related to upgrading the scientific capabilities of India's forestry establishment were taken.

### **[J] Western Ghats**

1. Given the environmental sensitivity and ecological significance of the Western Ghats region and the complex interstate nature of its geography, as well as the possible impacts of climate change on this region, the Ministry has constituted the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel under the Chairmanship of Prof. Madhav Gadgil. The Panel will assess the current status of ecology of the Western Ghats region, demarcate areas which need to be notified as ecologically sensitive zones, and recommend the modalities for the establishment of Western Ghats Ecology Authority under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 which will be a professional body to manage the ecology of the region and to ensure its sustainable development with the support of all concerned states.
2. Convened a meeting of MPs from the Western Ghats on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010 and agreed to set up a Parliamentary Forum in the Western Ghats.

### **[K] Himalayas**

1. Launched Phase II of the Himalayan Snow and Glacier Monitoring Programme through the Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad, to continue the monitoring of seasonal snow cover for the Himalayas and monitoring the retreat/advance of the glaciers in representative basins.
2. Launched the Report titled "Governance for Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem (G-SHE): Guidelines and Best Practices", putting together key guidelines related to the governance and management of the Himalayan ecosystem along with case studies. A



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meeting of the Chief Ministers of Himalayan States was also held which led to the Shimla Declaration in which they agreed to coordinate for environment protection and pursuing sustainable growth.

3. Released a Discussion Paper titled “Himalayan Glaciers: A State-of-Art Review of Glacial Studies, Glacial Retreat and Climate Change” which summarises the state of knowledge on Himalayan Glaciers.

### **[L] Sunderbans**

1. The Sunderbans would be a key component of the proposed Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project with an allocation of Rs. 191.20 crore for various initiatives in the region. These include allocations for ecotourism, coastal erosion protection, livelihood improvement of village communities, and construction of cyclone shelters etc.
2. A joint Indo-Bangladesh Forum on Sunderbans is being established to jointly address issues of the region, recognising that the entire Sunderbans region is one ecosystem – 40 per cent of which is in India and the remaining 60 per cent in Bangladesh.

### **[M] Transparency in Environmental and Forestry Clearances**

1. There has been a determined effort to bring greater transparency and professionalism in the granting of environmental and forestry clearances. The status of all pending cases is now available with relevant details on the MoEF website. Environmental appraisal committees have been reconstituted to ensure that there is no conflict of interest. Regular monitoring of pending cases in crucial sectors is taking place with the ministries concerned. This is already having impact.
2. 14 strategic defence roads have been given final forest approval, another 11 have been given first-stage approval and a further 10 have been cleared by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife.
3. Nine major coalfields have been taken up for identification of prima facie “go/no go” areas for coal mining from the point of view of forestry clearances. Coal mining projects will get environmental approval based on the ultimate production capacity thereby obviating the need for repeated clearances when expansion takes place.
4. A system of mandatory accreditation of EIA/EMP consultants has been introduced by the MoEF to improve the quality of impact assessment reports submitted by project proponents.

### **[N] Website**

As part of a continuous and ongoing process to bring more transparency and citizen-friendliness into its functioning and, to becoming a more accountable and transparent ministry, MoEF launched a new website with a brand new interface on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

1. The Website provides a comprehensive online database for all documents and reports published by the Ministry across all divisions. Press Statements are issued through the medium of the website. Draft legislations and rules are regularly put up for inviting comments.
2. The Website is updated on a real time basis i.e. information is disclosed on the Website as soon as it is discussed. Queries received from users are addressed by a dedicated web team.



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### **[O] Wildlife**

1. Tripartite MoUs with all tiger states, to ensure reciprocal commitments to address ecological and administrative issues have been signed, with the Central Government, State Governments and Field Directors as signatories with clear responsibilities.
2. Guidelines for the Special Tiger Protection Force have been revised to include role for local communities in protection and conservation of Tiger Reserves.
3. In principle approval for 4 new Project Tiger Reserves has been granted – Ratapani (MP), Sunabeda (Orissa), Pilibhit (UP) and Sahyadri (Maharashtra)
4. Special crack-teams have been sent for improving the status of tiger reserves affected by left-wing extremism.
5. MSTRIPES, a state of the art monitoring programme for tigers, to ensure better protection and forecasting of the ecological status in the surrounding areas has been launched.
6. TigerNet, a website for real-time monitoring of tiger crime has been launched and all such information is being put in the public domain.
7. STRIPES, an outreach journal of the NTCA was launched in November-December 2009 that reports on the status, challenges and achievements of tiger conservation initiatives and, includes perspectives from a range of stakeholders.
8. Several steps taken to strengthen the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and increased resources have been provided for the organisation.

### **[P] Finance Commission Grant**

The Thirteenth Finance Commission has provided Rs. 5,000 crore as 'Forest Grant' to States for five years starting 2010-11 for forest protection and development. The grant is linked to the extent of standing forest in each state and essentially rewards states for maintaining the forest cover. The criteria used for providing the grant to states are (i) total forest area of the state, (ii) share of forested area greater than the national average, and (iii) the quality of forest as measured by density. All data on forested areas and on the forest density are as defined and quantified in the State of Forest Report, 2009.