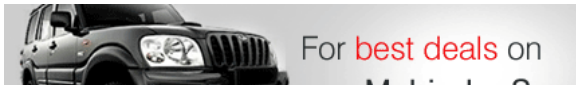


India keen to play lead role in Nagoya meet

23 May 2010, 0204 hrs IST, ET Bureau



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NEW DELHI: India will play a proactive role in ensuring that an international protocol on biodiversity to provide access and benefit sharing (ABS) is finalised at Nagoya, Japan in October this year. New Delhi is also keen to take on a leadership role in bringing about convergence of biodiversity and climate change.

Environment minister Jairam Ramesh said that there was a need to converge it with biodiversity "as both can't be seen in two different perspectives".

At the tenth Conference of Parties (CoP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to be held in Nagoya, one of the major items for consideration is the adoption of an international protocol on access and benefit sharing (ABS). India and other developing countries are pushing for an international legal framework for use of biological resources. The agreement will deal with the issue of biopiracy. The rich countries oppose an international legal framework for use of biological resources. "The Nagoya meet, to be attended by 193 members, is crucial for developing nations like India which is seeking a single legally binding international pact to deal with access to and benefit sharing of bio-resources, a move vehemently opposed by the rich countries," Mr Ramesh said.

The Nagoya meet will be preceded by a negotiating meeting in July in Montreal. "We now have a negotiating text prepared by the Canadian and Colombian chairs. The text, a slim one of 31 articles, will be discussed at the July meeting. We want this negotiating text to become the negotiated text," environment minister Jairam Ramesh said. Speaking at a function organised by TERI and UNDP to mark the international biodiversity day, the minister said that he had assured the Japanese ambassador for biodiversity that India would play a proactive role at Nagoya. "The developed and developing nations have divergent views on various issues such as sharing of biological resources. But we would work with the international community to minimise the differences at the meet," Mr Ramesh said.

Seeking a leadership role for India, the environment minister said that India must take voluntary unilateral action "as it is in our interest for the welfare of our people." India has been taking steps at the national and bilateral level to protect its biodiversity. Besides the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, and the national Biodiversity Authority, India has also put in place a traditional knowledge database — the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)**. Managed by the **CSIR, TKDL** is a computerised database of documented information available in Indian texts, relating to Indian systems of medicine.

Over 10 years, more than 2 lakh formulations of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Yoga have been documented under the **TKDL**. "TKDL is an effort to protect our traditional knowledge, mainly traditional medicine and yoga postures from misappropriation through patents granted abroad as had happened with the use of neem and haldi (turmeric)," the minister said. Some 2,000 patents related to the Indian system of medicine are granted every year by the US Trade and Patents Office, European Patents Office (EPO) and other overseas patent offices. Mr Ramesh said that efforts by **TKDL** have been successful in ensuring that pharmaceutical company Astra Zeneca gave up its six year long effort to get a patent on Terminalia arjuna or Dhananjay tree.

The **TKDL** has embarked on digitising oral knowledge through the People's biodiversity Register. Work on this front has begun in Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. "next to the Amazon, India faces the grave threat of its bioresources being taken up without the local communities benefitting," Mr Ramesh said. In keeping with New Delhi's attempt to tailor a leadership role for itself, India has proactively developed a link between climate change and biodiversity by undertaking a "four by four"

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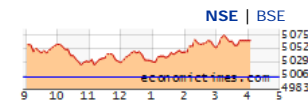
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assessment. The study is being done by Indian Network for Comprehensive Climate Change Assessment in the sectors of agriculture, forests, water and health, and regions of Himalayas, Western Ghats, North-East India, and Coastal regions, measuring the impact of climate change.

Mr Ramesh also said that the 11th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) will be held in 2012 in New Delhi which not only shows India's role as a major mega-diverse country, but also its commitment to playing a leadership role in biodiversity conservation. "The event will mark the 20th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit held in 1992 and will be called the "Rio+20" CBD Conference," the minister said.

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