



Environment Minister attends World Wildlife Day Celebrations at National Zoological Park

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Emphasising that India has always been at the forefront of conservation of wildlife, Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Anil Madhav Dave, said that common people too had been protecting the forests and wildlife even before India got its independence. Addressing the World Wildlife Day celebrations at the National Zoological Park here today, Shri Dave said that the number of lions in Gir stands at 522. "India has the highest number of tigers in the world and other species such as one-horned rhinoceros. Conservation of wildlife is our collective responsibility and duty", the Minister added. He also urged the gathering to fight all obstacles to wildlife conservation.

Earlier, a symbolic ceremonial burning of the seized wildlife articles was organized at the National Zoological Park to mark the occasion. Some of the articles incinerated include - 100 leopard skin, 5 tiger skin, 2 lion skin, 1451 snakes skin, 10 elephant tusks and 30 kg tiger bones. The articles will continue to burn for three days. A committee has been formed to oversee the burning. State Governments have also been requested to organize inviolable programmes, including symbolic incineration of seized wildlife articles on the occasion. The theme for this year's celebration of World Wildlife Day is "Listen to the Young Voices".

The Government has been providing financial assistance to State Governments to supplement their share for the purpose of habitat improvement and conservation of wildlife. Some of the assistance is through dedicated "Projects", namely, Project Tiger and Project Elephant. The budgetary allocation for wildlife conservation has been enhanced from Rs. 346.38 crore in 2015-16, Rs. 475 crore in 2016-17 and Rs. 522.50 crore for 2017-18.

Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, in association with Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, National Zoological Park, National Museum of Natural History, Environmental Information System (ENVIS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), TRAFFIC, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) and Sulabh International organised various competitions for school/ college students including 'Divyang' students at the National Zoological Park. Films on different aspects of wildlife conservation and illegal trade are also being screened since February 27, 2017 at the Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh, New Delhi, for school students to raise awareness among them regarding the importance of wildlife conservation.

India is renowned for the conservation of animals and birds. Wildlife is an integral part of our life. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government for the planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing the implementation of India's environmental and forestry policies and programmes. Not only the animals and birds, forests are also worshipped in the form of 'Sacred Groves'. Several communities like Bishnois of Rajasthan, the Maldhari communities of Gir in Gujarat have contributed immensely towards the conservation and protection of wildlife. The exemplary role played by the millions of people residing in the vicinity of forests is laudable and has resulted in increased populations of endangered animals like tigers, elephants, rhinos and other species.

Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy, Ms. Mary Kay Carlson, Additional Director General, MoEF&CC, Dr. Anil Kumar, officers of MoEF&CC, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) and students from Delhi schools were also present on the occasion.

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