

What our Government needs to do urgently to protect biodiversity and forests:

1. Stop coal crimes and Constitute Moratorium on new coal allocations: A Greenpeace mapping exercise of 13 coal fields in central India shows that these alone could wipe out 1.1 million hectares of forest and fragment the Indian Tiger's largest contiguous landscape threatening the endangered tiger to extinction. Furthermore there will be thousands of tribal and traditional forest dwelling families who will be evicted and lose their livelihood. There needs to be an immediate moratorium on mining in the forests till there is criteria to identify which areas further mining can be undertaken. The Environment Ministry has already cleared projects in excess of the planned capacity addition for the 12th Five year plan.

2. Sustain diversity in ecosystems: It is crucial that sustain diversity in ecosystems, seeds/livestock, knowledge etc as this provides resilience against the uncertainties of climate change related impacts. For instance a greater diversity of seeds in farming offers the possibility of at least some crops being viable even when there is drought, or excessive rainfall, or disease affecting some crops. Agricultural schemes need to build this in, both in their R&D (which should happen with farmers and using traditional knowledge as much as modern).

3. Conservation of forests/grasslands and wetlands is crucial for both mitigation and adaptation, both for people and for wildlife. Climate issues need to be built into post-FRA title governance and management, into other forest-related schemes, into watershed programmes (most states have huge budgets for this but do not take action), and into the management of wetlands for irrigation/fisheries/conservation.

4. Energy schemes need to change radically shifting from our suicidal dependency on coal to focus more and more on decentralised renewables, which have less climate impact, and are able to withstand climate vagaries.

Clean, affordable and quality electricity for all - Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana: The fastest way to deliver quality access to people in rural areas is not through adding more power to the grid which actually only goes to people in cities and to industry, but through Decentralised Renewable Energy systems. This will provide people access to quality energy services that they have control over. DRE will not only help faster and cheaper access but also boost local rural economy. For example, solar powered pump sets in Bihar is now allowing farmers to move from expensive diesel motors to solar water pumps that are helping them pump water at will and increase yield manifold.

Telecom Towers and IT services - shifting to clean energy: The telecom and IT revolutions have changed lives across the country and this industry that is constantly upgrading and shifting to newer smarter technologies should also shift to cleaner, cheaper, greener energy choices. According to conservative calculations by Greenpeace, the telecom sector can save Rs 80, 000 crores by shifting to renewable energy by 2020 and will lessen the burden of the oil subsidy that is currently costing the national exchequer dearly.

Lets do this !