

CONSERVATION EFFORTS FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

From past last few years, the present Government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a number of proactive measures for the welfare of fauna and flora of the country, something which remained at the backburner during earlier Governments. It has been observed that the efforts of the Government are yielding positive results on ground level, thereby brining a major change in the overall scenario. In this regard, recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with United Nations Environment Programme/ Convention on Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS) organised a meeting of Range Countries to strengthen conservation efforts for migratory birds and their habitats in the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) in New Delhi, which was inaugurated by the Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, Ashwini Kumar Choubey. In the inaugural address, the Minister while echoing Prime Minister's call to adopt LiFE (Lifestyle for environment for environmental protection) made at COP-26 in Glasgow mentioned, "It gives us immense satisfaction that we have taken concrete steps towards his vision with this meeting of the range countries of the Central Asian Flyway to frame an Action Plan. Additionally, adopting a sustainable lifestyle that allows for the co-existence of all life forms, including migratory birds, is critical to ensure their continued existence in the years to come. This aligns with Prime Minister's LiFE movement, which calls for a Lifestyle for Environment for environmental protection, and serves as a reminder of our responsibility towards the planet. Through this meeting, we are taking a significant step towards achieving the common goal of conservation and sustainable development in the Central Asian Flyway." The meeting was attended by the eleven countries of CAF region including Armenia, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Mongolia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, besides the Secretariats of CMS, AEWA and Raptors MOU and representatives of Chief Wildlife Wardens of States, scientific institutions in India, international and national non-governmental organizations and subject experts. The delegates deliberated and agreed on an institutional framework for the Central Asian Flyway, discussed priority areas for implementation, and agreed on a draft roadmap for updating the CMS CAF Action Plan. The meeting was a critical opportunity for CAF Range States to collaborate and exchange ideas and best practices to ensure the sustainable conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. The discussions during the meeting also led to the modalities of an institutional framework mechanism with the aim of developing a coordinated approach to the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. There was an overall consensus in the meeting for further strengthening and formalizing this initiative. The formalization of the Central Asian Flyway initiative was seen as a significant step towards the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. The delegates also undertook a field visit to Sultanpur National Park Gurugram, Haryana to understand the management of bird sanctuary and learn the best practices being adopted in India for management of bird sanctuaries.

Safeguarding confidence & morale of young players

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

Why do such allegations keep coming from the sports world from time to time? Why do women sportspersons remain silent even after being victims of sexual abuse lest their careers be ruined? To ensure that this does not happen in the future and to make sure that the daughters of the country make a career in sports while feeling safe, there should also be a serious consideration to create an effective mechanism within various federations.

Whose government is there or whose was it, it is not an issue. The question is whether there is sexual abuse against women players in every federation from cricket to wrestling. The issue is respect and mental and physical safety of women players. Along with this, the federation has to be made a safe place for the players. If the safety of the daughters is not ensured, then the interest in sports among women players will end. Their morale will drop. Women's participation in sports will decrease. There is a question of the prestige of the country and the dignity of women players. Why talents die in politics, due to active politics in sports, talented players are suppressed, and players are always under pressure from sports officials. The talents of those who work hard in sports remain suppressed; they are finished when they raise their voice. The character of both the board and the government is becoming clear from the investigation after such allegations and Dharna on the board by the medal winners in the highest sports. Where there is a board, there is a government, so was the government able to remove the chairman of the board? Was there a fair investigation? The President of WFI is a parliamentarian and the president of almost all sports boards in India is a political person, so the demand for the president to be a former sportsperson is also gaining momentum for special progress and development in sports. Anyway, sports talents should be seated in such associations and institutions, not politicians. The tenure of office bearers in these institutions should also be fixed and no one should be given office for more than one term. Wrestling is the only sport for India that fetches the maximum number of medals, be it the Olympics or Commonwealth Games. The foundation of the players should not be made of the leaders but of the players only.



There should be senior players in it and not leaders. These are the players of our country who have brought laurels to our country. He has brought the gold medal. This game has hoisted the flag of Indian sports in the world and has given vibrancy to the sports of India and a height to its identity. Its players have been victorious on the strength of their passion. In this way, Indian wrestlers have raised the country's sports flag and pride all over the world, so if the president and coaches of the wrestling federation are being accused of sexual exploitation of women players, then it is defaming India all over the world. It is an infamous stain, a great tragedy. It's a matter of shame. When these players sitting on dharna come after winning medals, then the politicians themselves call them and set everyone's mike and praise everyone for media propaganda, but when these players sit on dharna against the misbehavior being done to them. At that time, politicians who show great readiness can smell snakes, why is it so? This would have been the right thing for the youth of the country. It will be called the country's

misfortune that despite the restrictions of the government, most of the sports associations are occupied by politicians and government officials. There is a lot of corruption in them, which does not allow real sporting talents to come forward. These office bearers are more concerned about their development than the development of sports. Most of their time is also spent pleasing the politicians sitting on the chair and in political manipulation of sports associations. More than players, these officials enjoy facilities and travel abroad. The aggrieved players should also have put solid evidence in front of the court of the country and the country even before the dharna. Still, whatever the allegation is, it is very serious, there should be a fair investigation and if the allegation is proven, severe punishment should be meted out to the nation. Such a law should be made by dissolving the executive bodies of all the boards so that only apolitical and sports backgrounds people should be elected to the sports boards. The most worrying thing is that if women wrestlers, who have increased

the pride and glory of the country, have to struggle even to protect their honor, then the functioning of our sports federations also comes into question. Where the sportspersons of the country should have a sense of pride and respect for their federations and sports organizations, while they have a sense of contempt and rebellion, then it is a matter of shame. Along with this, it should also be seen why such allegations keep coming from the sports world from time to time. Why do women sportspersons remain silent even after being victims of sexual abuse lest their careers be ruined? To ensure that it does not happen in the future and to make sure that the daughters of the country make a career in sports while feeling safe, there should also be a serious consideration to create an effective mechanism within various federations.

Also, after studying the rules of many countries of the world, the rules of trials have been made after the Olympics, and they should be respected. If someone wants to go to the Olympics or such a big competition, then he has to give trials along with other players of the country. The player who has secured the Olympic quota will compete with the winner of the trial in the country. Then from there, the wrestler will be selected for the Olympics. If the Olympic quota holder loses, he will be given another chance. If the wrestlers are doing all this drama by going against this rule, then the truth should come in front of everyone and strict action should be taken against those who violate the rules of the game, no matter how big the player is. India has a long history of neglect of sports and sportspersons. Allegations of the working style of sports federations, favoritism in selection and not getting proper facilities to the players have been made in the past as well, but the latest case is such that not only the wrestling federation but also the credibility and transparency of all the sports federations have raised questions. The accused should have been immediately removed and fair investigation and legal action should have been taken, which did not happen. Due to this, the confidence and morale of the young players of the country would remain above the country and the name of India would be illuminated on the world stage.

Potential & prospects of development of agro-ecotourism in J&K

■ DR BANARSI LAL

Real India, as we know, resides in the villages. Industrialization and development is mostly urban centric. The urban stress has led to growing interest in the rural areas. Agro-ecotourism (AET) is a new concept in the tourism industry. It normally occurs on farms and is associated with the agriculture. It is the symbiotic association of farming sector, tourism industry and farm business. It can create the job opportunities for the rural people. This tourism enterprise possesses immense potential to boost the economic growth especially in developed countries. Environmental consciousness, increasing interest in culture and heritage, improving villages' accessibility etc. are the factors responsible which are shifting the trend towards agro-ecotourism. Under this scheme key geographic regions are identified for the development of agro-ecotourism. The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir has an immense potential for agro-ecotourism due to its unique heritage, culture and natural attractions. Agro-ecotourism can be useful for J&K where about 80 per cent people reside in the villages. It can create new jobs in rural

areas, attract many youths for rural employment and slow down the migration of rural people in the urban areas. Indeed, the economic activity occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services or experiences to cater to the needs of mutual demands. Agro-ecotourism can provide an opportunity to experience the real enchanting and authentic contact with the rural life, taste the traditional food and get experience with the various farming tasks. Agro-Ecotourism is a niche and an emerging market segment of the tourism industry. It is modern concept to boost tourism activity in the farms. It offers scope for integration of farming activities, tourism industry and farm business. Agro-ecotourism is a strategy for long-term tourism development in rural areas that allows visitors to learn about the agricultural situations, local goods, traditional food, agricultural jobs as well as cultural components and traditions of rural people. This tourism enterprise keeps the tourists relaxed and helps to revitalize in the pure natural environment, surrounded by magnificent agricultural setting. It would also provide tourists with an opportunity to be close to where the 75 per cent of

Indians live. Overall, the concept of agro-ecotourism entails visiting a working farm or any agriculture, horticulture or agribusiness operation, for the purpose of leisure, refreshment, recreation, education and active involvement in the activities of the agriculture including agricultural operations, fishing, dining and celebrating local festivals with the farming communities. The development of agro-ecotourism is primarily aimed to give awareness and knowledge on conservation of environment and natural resources in a participatory mode with farmers and to improve the socio-economic status of the farmers. Agro-ecotourism offers an opportunity to integrate different agricultural components such as integrated farming system, organic and natural farming, agro-processing etc.

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most beautiful tourists' destinations in the world. This Union Territory (UT) is characterized by scenic beauty, folded mountains, deep gorges, natural waterfalls, alpine pastures, lush green forests, rich wild life, snow clad fields, carpet green turfs, gushing fountains, lofty skying grounds, charming gardens, cool pollution free

breeze, shimmering lakes, apple orchards, benevolent people etc. J&K possess rich diversity of flora and fauna and there are large numbers of international and domestic tourist destinations throughout the Union Territory. Reasi is one of the most important places in terms of tourism in J&K. Religious places like Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, Shiv Khori Shrine, Dera Baba Banda Bahadur, Baba Aghar Jitto, Siyaad Baba, Nao Devian, Deva Mai, Dhansar Baba etc are in Reasi district and pilgrims from across the globe used to visit these spots throughout the year and pay homage. Bhingarh Fort and Sulla Park are also important tourists' destinations in the district. Reasi is also having the highest bridge in the world. Considering this scope for combining the natural resource available in Reasi district of J&K synergistically with agriculture and tourism activities, it is essential to promote the concept of Agro-ecotourism (AET). The successful Agro-eco-tourism models can act as a sustainable source of income for rural youths and farm women. Diversity of flora and fauna can be sustainably utilized through AET. Apart from core agricultural activities, the animals and fish

components can easily be linked with agro-eco-tourism to effectively blend the natural resources within the system in an integrated manner. However, there are no systematic guidelines for the functioning of AET Models. Projects are needed to investigate and documentation of the status of AET Models in J&K so as to study the sustainability of agro-ecotourism model and to promote the agri-tourism entrepreneurship in J&K.

Agro-ecotourism units in J&K can help to demonstrate and promote the concept of the AET to farmers, entrepreneurs, researchers, students and related stakeholders in a scientific manner. The components from agriculture, livestock and fisheries need to be included in these units. Indigenous and new varieties of field and horticultural crops should be maintained in the units to serve as information to the visitors and to create awareness about bio diversity in the area. Biodiversity parks comprising of different species (herbs, shrubs, climbers, trees etc) need to be demonstrated in these units. Fish pedicure units and a public aquarium complex need to be maintained. Major fisheries resources of J&K can also be displayed in the AET unit. Other important com-

ponents such as apiculture, recycling of biodegradable waste through composting and vermi-composting, organic preparations, nursery and plant propagation activities etc should also be demonstrated. Rabbit units (New Zealand White, Soviet Chinchilla, Black Brown and Grey Giant) and ornamental poultry unit (Belgian mille fleur white, Belgian mille fleur black, Polish cap white and Polish cap black) can also be established. The Institutes are required to carry out systematic research on development of eco-friendly and sustainable AET models to improve the farm income and thus improve the socio-economic status of the farmers of hilly areas. There is need to promote and impart knowledge on sustainable AET practices through awareness, trainings and demonstrations in J&K. Local handicrafts, dishes, eco-friendly products, rural museums etc. can be promoted through agro-ecotourism. It can create job and income opportunities for rural people and strengthen the rural economy of J&K.

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Water crisis looming large

■ G L KHAJURIA

Through it may seem strange, but it is too true that our planet accommodates three quarters of its geographical area with water. However, this water is likely to become a cause of conflict. Boutrous Ghali- the then UN Secretary General over the past many years had very aptly warned further problems relating to water issues will be very much alarming and 'Wars over Water' shall be the impending catastrophe. And so were the predicaments of 'Kofi Annan'- the Secretary General of UNO long back 1995, 'Ismael Serageldin', Vice President, World Bank has rightly opined, "If the wars of this century were causative of oil, the wars for incoming century shall be fought over water."

Water scarcity and that too in its purity has now become a buzz-word and perhaps looming large around the world. It is such naïve to forecast this impending grave scenario for which the environmentalists and the scientists around the world are awfully worried about at this crucial juncture. They undoubtedly emphasized and predicted the ever-growing water scarcity and global warming, a threat to 'Ozone Layer's' puncturing. In a situation like this, nothing can be estimated in the existing world scenario if we look into the matter very closely and seriously. And strange enough are the ways of God-not all predictable face to face with meteorological studies which don't corroborate with the climate changes which we are witnessing in today's world scenario. And now of the late, the Indian meteorologists are awfully worried about squandering significance of EL- Nino in the Monsoonal Forecasting. In Fact, year 2002 was drought-ridden despite EL-Nino being very weak. As per the latest meteorological predic-



tions, the scientists from the 'Indian institute of Science', Bangalore have 'de facto' identified a strong association between previously unknown currents of wind vis-a-vis extreme monsoon events. The studies made through 'Satellite imageries' and data collected spanning 1979-2002, the scientists have come to the conclusion that the equatorial Indian ocean Oscillations' (EQUINOO)- the East West wind current blowing over Indian Ocean is playing a pertinent part in determining the rainfall, as is with ELMINO. In the year 2002, the ever worst drought was experienced by the country and for the last around 125 years, EQUINO was not in favour with Monsoons.

It is awfully astonishing that Egypt in African continent is wholly solely dependent on

river 'Nile' for its day to day needs which has most recently threatened 'Ethiopia' with war threatening if the latter tried to divert water from Blue Nile. And so is the case with 'Suez' where water scarcity is ever-escalating. Environmentalists and scientists around the world claim the truth that Israeli- Palestinian dispute occurs from sharing of water and so is the situation with Iraq and Syria. Now coming to heavily populated cities of the world like Mexico, Beijing, Buenos, Aries, Dhaka and so on whose sole dependency is on ground water whereas water level is sinking down due to global warming. UNESCO'S report says that in 'South-Asia' water-level is sinking by about 3 meters or so each years. Is it not calamitous? And who owes the onus? Surely, with oozing

confidence, man himself. Global warming off-shooting from ever-mounting population, urbanization. Industrial effluence, CFC emissions and multibund manifestations are in togetherness claiming climatic changes as we are witnessing in the prevailing scenario which blame for over 1,50,000 deaths year around where the poor underprivileged are more subjected to. The increase in the deaths estimated by WHO is a tiny fraction of 56 million reported annually around the globe for all reasons and the WHO has further warned that by 2030, death toll shall rise to 3,00,000 deaths annually.

'Global warming' has another dreadful impact over the bio-sustaining life on land seas which is retro-naturing the pristine climate conditions. Not only that this warming is thinning the 'Ozone Layer' the only natural shield which provide protection to bio-diversity. And God forbid, If it is punctured, there shall be holocaustic consequences for all men, its flora and fauna which will become subject to the most dreaded diseases like cancer and the like, the planktons decimation, so to say this may char or burn to cinder all living being over thisbio sustaining globe. Surprisingly enough as per latest findings, the global average temperature has been witnessed one degree per hundred year over the last century but for the last quarter of the century, an abrupt rise of 2-3 degree has been noticed. This signal of apocalyptic nature which all nations of world must take care of European scientists have thus warned Greenland's icy mountains and the islands entire Ice Cap is under the risk of disappearance in the next 1000 thousand years or so because of global warming. And so with greater Himalayas where the glaciers are melting as elsewhere. This will

further lead to the submergence of the coastal regions and islands too. Recently a US researcher has suggested that west Antarctica ice sheet has been melting and constantly contributing water to the ocean for the last ten years. And if such melting goes on at such a pace, an area around 3,60,000 sq miles shall disappear within a period of seven hundred years or so.

This is a world-wide scenario and nearing home the situation is yet too alarming. Here the problem is accruing from sharing of water of Indus, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The problem is basically arising out in the three adjoining states viz. Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. Whereas the resolution passed by the Punjab assembly has alarmingly stirred the issue especially as far as Rajasthan is concerned this evokes interstate sharing of waters. In other way around, this has threatened several million people of desert-ridden state which gets water from Indira Gandhi Canal. 'Indus River Water Treaty' in its clear terms gives unambiguous right to use the water of Ravi, Beas and Satluj rivers to Rajasthan for irrigational purposes in their arid lands. In the late eighties, the then premier of India, Indira Gandhi had worked out sharing of Ravi, Beas, Satluj waters but ironically Rajasthan has not received its share of 8.6 MAF water. Anyhow, for the best survival of mankind over this bio-sustaining globe, it is utmost pertinent to face the apprehending challenges of 'Wars Over Water'. The entire world therefore, should under one umbrella make workable strategies for sustainable management and development to avert the impending catastrophe accruing thereof.

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