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PM announces \$50m for biodiversity protection

Fund To Enhance Capabilities To Attain CBD Targets

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday announced a \$50 million fund for biodiversity conservation in India and said that India had earmarked funds to promote similar capacity building in developing countries. The PM was in the city to inaugurate the high-level segment of the ongoing conference of parties (CoP-11) on the convention of biological diversity (CBD). His announcement, however, failed to bring cheer to activists who pointed out that the seemingly princely amount was just 0.1 % of the coal scam figure.

► 'Integral to India's ethos': P5

PM said that the \$50 million funding will be used to enhance the technical and human capabilities of the nation and state-level mechanisms to attain CBD objectives. "We have also earmarked funds to promote similar capacity building in developing countries," Manmohan Singh added while also launching the



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addresses CoP-11 meeting on Tuesday

'Hyderabad Pledge' on protecting biodiversity.

He also confirmed India's stand on the Nagoya Protocol on access

and benefit sharing and said that his government had recently ratified it and formalized its commitment to the protocol. As the chair of the convention, the Prime Minister urged other parties to do likewise noting how concerted global action, in this area, was imperative and could not brook delay. "Despite global efforts, the 2010 biodiversity target that we set for ourselves under the CBD was not fully met. This situation needs to change," Manmohan Singh said adding that the real critical issue was the mobilization of necessary financial, technical and human resources.

He even showered generous praise on the "densely populated country" for having designated a total of 605 protected areas covering approximately 4.74% of the total geographical area of the nation. Stressing on special programmes for endangered species initiated by his government, Manmohan said how it had helped in increasing the number of tigers from an estimated 1,411 in 2006 to 1,706 in 2010.

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'Biodiversity protection integral to India's ethos'

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Hyderabad: While activists cried foul over India's commitment to 'green' issues and protection of forest dwellers who they claimed were increasingly being displaced to make way for "state sponsored corporate plunder of the forests", the Prime Minister maintained that protection and promotion of biodiversity was an integral part of the country's ethos.

Lauding the traditional knowledge of India he said his government had adopted a unique approach, in the form of a traditional knowledge digital library, to protect this data that had recently become restricted in its use because of the modern intellectual system.

"This data base has 34 million pages of information in five international languages in formats easily accessible by patent examiners," the Prime Minister added.

"India's ratification of the Nagoya Protocol sends out a powerful message of

support for this new legal instrument and its significance to many countries, particularly biologically-rich developing countries," said Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, executive secretary, CBD.

While flagging off the high-level segment, Dias called upon parties to look at expenditure on biodiversity not as costs but as investments that would pay back with significant environmental and economic benefits.

Minister of environment and forests, Jayanthi Natarajan too stressed the need for delegates to arrive at a consensus on resource mobilization by the end of the summit on October 19.

Greenpeace representatives rued that the funds earmarked for biodiversity protection were a mere 0.1% of the coal scam figure in India. "The PM's speech can only be described in two words: hypocrisy and failure," said Vinuta Gopal, Head of Climate and Energy Campaign, Greenpeace India.