

Text of PM's address on the occasion of World Environment Day 2018 at VigyanBhawan (5th June 2018)

Prime Minister's Office

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My Ministerial Colleagues Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Shri Manoj Sinha

Executive Director, United Nations Environment Program

Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

Other Distinguished Dignitaries from India and Abroad

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the one point three billion people of India, I am delighted to welcome you all to New Delhi.

On the side-lines of this event, I hope the delegates joining us from abroad, shall have some time to see the history and splendour of Delhi.

We are proud to be the global host for World Environment Day, 2018.

As we celebrate this important occasion today, we recall our ancient ethos of universal brotherhood.

This has been expressed in the famous Sanskrit phrase— VasudhaivaKutumbakam – the world is one family.

The same ethos was reflected in the doctrine of trustee-ship, advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. He had said that 'Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed.'

Our traditions have for long stressed the importance of living in harmony with nature.

This is reflected in our reverence of the elements of nature. It is reflected in our festivals, and in our ancient texts.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

India is the fastest growing economy in the world today. We are committed to raising the standards of living of our people.

We are also committed to ensure, that we do so, in a way that is sustainable and green.

In this direction, we have given forty million new cooking gas connections in the last two years.

This has freed rural women from the misery of poisonous smoke.

It has also eliminated their dependence on firewood.

It is the same commitment, which has seen over three hundred million LED bulbs being installed across India. Besides saving electricity, this has also prevented huge additional amounts of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere.

We are engaged in a massive push towards renewable energy generation. We have targeted generation of one hundred and seventy-five GigaWatts of solar and wind energy by 2022.

We are already the fifth largest producer of solar energy in the world. Not only this, we are also the sixth largest producer of renewable energy.

We aim to provide an electricity connection to every household, which will further reduce dependence on environmentally degrading forms of fuel.

We are reducing dependence on fossil fuels. We are switching sources of fuel where possible. We are transforming cities and public transportation.

We are a young Nation. To generate employment, we are working towards making India a global manufacturing hub.

We have launched the Make in India campaign. While doing so, we are laying stress on zero defect and zero effect manufacturing. This means manufacturing that is without defect, and which does not harm the environment.

As part of the Nationally Determined Contributions, India is committed to reducing thirty-three to thirty-five percent of emission intensity of its GDP during 2005 to 2030. We are on track to meet the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution.

According to the UNEP Gap Report, India is also on track to meet its Copenhagen Pledge. We will reduce the emissions intensity of India's GDP by twenty to twenty-five percent over 2005 levels by 2020.

We have a robust National Biodiversity Strategy. With only two point four percent of the world's land area, India supports seven to eight percent of the recorded species diversity. At the same time, India supports nearly eighteen percent of human population. Our tree and forest cover has also increased by one percent in the last two years.

We have also done well in the field of wildlife conservation. The population of tiger, elephant, lion rhino and other forms of wildlife is on the rise.

We also recognize the need to tackle the issue of water availability, which is becoming a major challenge in India. We have launched the massive Namami Gange initiative. This programme, which has already started giving results, will soon revive the Ganga, our most precious river.

India is primarily an agrarian country. Continued availability of water for agriculture is of importance. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana has been launched to ensure that no farm goes without water. Our motto is 'More crop, per drop.'

We have also launched a massive campaign to ensure that our farmers convert agricultural waste to valuable nutrients instead of burning them.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

While much of the world focuses on Inconvenient Truth, we have moved on to Convenient Action.

It was this call for Convenient Action that led India, along with France, to form the International Solar Alliance. This is perhaps, the single most important global development, towards the cause of environment, after the Paris Conference.

About three months ago, leaders from over 45 nations, and Heads of International Organizations, gathered here in New Delhi, for the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance.

Our experience shows that development can be environment friendly. It need not come at the cost of our green assets.

Friends.

World Environment Day seeks to address a very significant challenge this year.

Plastic now threatens to become a menace to humanity. A lot of it never makes it to the recycling bin. Worse, a lot of it is non-bio-degradable.

Plastic pollution is already having a deadly impact on our marine ecosystem. Scientists and fishermen alike have pointed to signs of trouble. These include declining fish catches, warming ocean temperatures, and vanishing habitats.

Marine litter especially micro-plastic, is a major trans-boundary problem. India is preparing to join the “Clean Seas Campaign” and make its contribution towards saving our oceans.

Plastic pollution is now entering into our food chain. In fact, micro plastics have now even entered basic food like salt, bottled water and tap water.

Friends.

The per capita plastic consumption in India is much lower than in many parts of the developed world.

Our national mission on cleanliness and sanitation - Swachh Bharat Abhiyan - has a special focus on “plastic waste management.”

A short while ago, I visited the Exhibition set up by the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change. It showcases some of our success stories. Among its participants are United Nations, Union and State Governments, industry, and non-government organizations. I hope they continue to do exemplary work in curbing plastic pollution.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Environmental degradation hurts the poor and vulnerable, the most.

It is the duty of each one of us, to ensure that the quest for material prosperity does not compromise our environment.

As part of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the world had agreed to the theme of “Leave No One Behind.” This is not possible without ensuring that we all come together to protect what

Mother Nature has given us.

Friends.

This is the Indian way. And we are happy to share it again with the international community on the auspicious occasion of World Environment Day.

In conclusion, as global host of World Environment Day 2018, I reiterate our commitment to sustainable development.

Let us all join together to beat plastic pollution and make this planet a better place to live.

The choices that we make today, will define our collective future. The choices may not be easy. But through awareness, technology, and a genuine global partnership, I am sure we can make the right choices.

Thank you.

AKT/HS

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