

PRIME MINISTER CONFERRED CHAMPIONS OF EARTH AWARD 2018 FOR POLICY LEADERSHIP

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Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Prime Minister conferred Champions of Earth Award 2018 for Policy Leadership

“Climate and Calamity have a direct relation with culture”, says Prime Minister

“Prime Minister has dedicated the award to Indian value system”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan

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The Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, was today conferred the Champions of the Earth Award 2018 for Policy Leadership by UN Secretary General, Mr. Antonio Guterres at a ceremony at Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra, here today. Executive Director, UN Environment, Mr Erik Solheim, Union Minister for External Affairs, Ms. Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, were present on the occasion.

In his address, the Prime Minister said that the award is for all those unknown faces, who work in far-flung settlements, mountainous regions, tribal areas for years. He emphasized that the award is an honour for the India's continual, new, eternal and ancient tradition and is the reflection of our commitment for sustainable energy. He also congratulated the other laureates of the award in other categories. Mr. Modi underlined that climate and calamity have a direct relationship with culture and till the concerns over climate become a part of culture, it will be difficult to escape calamities. Stating that India's sensitivity towards environment is today being acknowledged the world over, Mr. Modi underlined that in India, nature has been considered a living entity as well as a being that co-exists. He referred to the Clean Air campaign to sensitise ground-level functionaries and general public to enforce the habit of environmental protection.



The Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi receiving “Champions of The Earth” award

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary General, United Nations, Mr. Antonio Guterres said “today we recognise a statesman, who embodies the true meaning of leadership.” Mr. Guterres praised the sensitivity towards nature and environment being a part of Indian tradition. “I must confess that the impact of Prime Minister Modi’s decisions has already reached the executive office of United Nations. Prime Minister Modi decided that India should restrict the use of single use plastic in less than five years. In the office of United Nations, I have decided that there is no single use of plastic”, the UN Secretary General said. He said that climate action is the right approach from the point of view of environment, economy and development.

In his remarks, Executive Director, UN Environment, Mr Erik Solheim stressed that the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, has been providing political leadership, vision and dedication that is lacking in the world. Mr. Solheim praised India’s efforts for increase in the number of tigers, increase in forest area and in the field of solar energy. “It is ambitious leaders like him that will propel us forward in the fight to keep our natural environment healthy, accessible and sustainable for all. For this, I am immensely inspired and grateful”, Mr. Solheim said. “Prime Minister Modi has shown the kind of leadership and ambition our planet needs right now. There is the bold pledge to end single-use plastic in five years’ time, something that could well be the start of a global wave of action that saves our oceans. India is leading the world into a solar-powered future, proving that a clean, low-carbon economy is also great for business. Our planet needs more champions like him”, he added.

In her address, Union Minister of External Affairs, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, emphasized that in our country, Earth is not seen as a planet, but revered as Mother Earth. She stated that the Government's goal is to strive for environmental protection along with development. Quoting Sanskrit 'suktas', Ms. Swaraj extolled the virtues of ancient Indian philosophy and thought towards the protection of nature and environment. She underlined that in the West, when buildings are constructed a ground-breaking ceremony is conducted, whereas in India, 'Bhoomi Pujan' (worship of the earth) is performed.

Addressing the gathering, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, said that the Government has introduced several policies and programmes under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. "Today, our villages are becoming cleaner and deaths due to diarrhoea are history. That speaks volumes for Modi ji's vision in nurturing environmental health", he added. The Minister pointed out that the Prime Minister, in keeping with the Indian tradition of renunciation, has already announced that he is dedicating the award to the Indian value system. "Yesterday was the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Decades ago, Bapu dreamt of a Swachh Bharat. Today, his dream is being brought to reality by a man as humble, as committed and as brave as him. Our beloved Prime Minister Modi ji is inspiring 130 crore Indians to achieve the goal of Swachh Bharat and making remarkable strides in cleanliness and sanitation, in environmental protection and upliftment of the poor and downtrodden", Dr. Vardhan said.

Outlining some of the programmes undertaken under the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi ji, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated that rightly the UN has recognized our Prime Minister as a statesman with exemplary devotion and commitment to uplift the poor, strengthen public health and protect the environment through numerous initiatives launched in the last four years.



Dr. Harsh Vardhan addressing the gathering

Referring to the "Green Good Deeds" - a societal movement to protect environment and promote good living in the country and bringing focus on involvement of citizens through small actions like saving energy, conserving water, planting trees, the Environment Minister urged the people to undertake one Green Good Deed every day. "The youth has also taken inspiration from Modi ji and are leading the change, making responsible choices to ensure that they do all that they can to reverse climate change", Dr. Vardhan stated.

The Minister also highlighted Swachh Bharat Mission as one of the world's biggest people's movement and said that Prime Minister Modi ji has been inspiring 130 crore Indians to achieve the goal of Swachh Bharat and making remarkable strides in cleanliness and sanitation, in environmental protection and upliftment of the poor and downtrodden. "As many as 25 States have become Open Defecation Free (ODF) and so have 5 lakh villages.

Dr. Vardhan said that the Government has pledged to eliminate single use plastic by 2022. He stressed the decision to leapfrog from BS-IV to BS-VI emission norms by April 2020, which was to be earlier adopted by 2024 and push for e-vehicles, stringent fuel emission norms, expansion of mass rapid transit systems and green ports.

The Minister stated that internationally, the Prime Minister, Mr. Modi led the launch of International Solar Alliance jointly with France, to make solar energy efficient,

affordable and bringing energy security in member countries. "68 nations are now members of ISA, which is now a treaty-based international government organisation.

Several Cabinet Ministers, ambassadors, representatives of diplomatic missions and senior officers as well as officials of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and other Union Ministries were among those present in the gathering.

Champions of the Earth Award

Champions of the Earth is the highest UN honour in the field of environment. The award recognizes outstanding figures from public and private sector as well as civil society, whose actions have brought about a positive impact and a transformation on environment. The Champions of the Earth award was launched in 2005. The award is presented in five categories – Lifetime Achievement, Policy Leadership, Action and Inspiration, Entrepreneurial Vision and Science & Innovation. Since its inception thirteen years ago, the awards have recognized 84 laureates.

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