

Biodiversity and environmental governance: role of mass media



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As we celebrate 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, a sad realization dawns that even amongst the educated the term biodiversity suffers from a lack of absolute clarity. Biodiversity is the degree of variation of life forms within a given ecosystem or an entire planet. It is a measure of the health of biological systems. Industrialization has caused a major dent in biodiversity due to loss of plant and animal habitat.

India, with its tropical monsoon type of climate has a rich biodiversity but as everywhere else in the world it faces degradation. With our Vedic heritage of venerating forces of nature as Jal, Vayu, the common man values affinity with environment but with rapid urbanization and industrialization there is untold damage done to the environment- the flora and fauna. Celebrating World Sparrow Day is a leading indicator of the massive damage. Such efforts come from governments across the world and have acquired crucial importance in good governance.

Here the role of mass media news papers, television, radio is important as by highlighting major policy decisions on environment, they spread awareness and provide feedback. Recent decisions by ministry of environment and forests to close the Loharinag Pala project on the river Ganga or the refusal to permit bauxite mining in Niyamgiri Hills in Orissa are cases in point highlighted by the media. Mass media is clearly scripting a new role for itself as the Fourth Estate.