

World nature conservation day: how corporate India is learning to become eco-conscious

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Environment versus development is a long-standing argument that has acquired a lot of attention in recent years. Time and again, we have learned that the co-existence of nature and man is the only way forward, yet environment and development seem to be on opposite sides of the fence. The conversation about conservation needs a change.

We need to construct roads and clean up rivers at the same time. We must keep up with technological advancements while aiming to increase our green cover. We need to build more homes for our communities, as well as better natural habitats for our wildlife.

We live in an era when urbanization and growth are sweeping the world at such breakneck speed that the need to maintain a healthy environment appears to have been overlooked. Companies must indeed adapt to changing urban needs to survive. However, it is also critical to recognize that progress should not come at the expense of disturbing ecological balance.

To raise awareness about the dire state of our environment, the United Nations (UN) created 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that must be met by 2030. While individual activities are important in bridging the rising gap between humans and the environment, huge enterprises and start-ups must also contribute to environmental protection.

India barely achieved 2.8 per cent of its plantation target, according to the Economic Survey 2020-21. The government would have to go above and beyond to achieve its long-term goal of 33 per cent forest and tree cover (based on geographical area).

Growing air pollution in India's cosmopolitan cities is also aggravating the country's environmental situation. The status of air pollution in Delhi and the National Capital Region (NCR) has deteriorated to the point where respiratory disorders are on the rise.

Climate change, pollution, environmental degradation, and global warming are all on the rise as a result of our disregard for the environment in the pursuit of advancement.

We have to work towards building an ecological civilization to ensure that development and nature can co-exist harmoniously. For this, adjustments in our way of life have to be made in response to global climate disruption and social inequalities. To create an environment-conscious society, an attitudinal shift is needed, from modifying and conquering nature to regulating people's behaviour and rectifying our mistakes. The insensitive approach towards the environment needs to be replaced with ideas that promote economic and ecological development simultaneously. The environment should not be seen as an impediment to growth. Natural resources should be conserved to complement our social and cultural environment.

HOW COMPANIES CAN DO THEIR BIT

Many companies are now actively looking for enterprises that can help them incorporate the SDGs into their policies and activities. Grow-Trees.com, for instance, is one such organization that has helped several individuals and businesses in contributing to environmental issues and moving closer to achieving sustainable development goals.

A large number of companies can offset their carbon emissions by planting trees. According to a 2010 research conducted by the University of Technology, Sydney, employees observed a considerable decrease in stress levels when plants were introduced in their workspace. There was a 37 per cent drop in reported tension and anxiety, a 58 per cent decrease in despair or dejection, a 44 per cent decrease in anger and hostility, and a 38 per cent drop in fatigue. The increasing environmental problems and the complex issues surrounding climate crisis have prompted many businesses to recognize that we cannot step on the environment to meet our egotistical wants.

In addition to carbon offsetting, companies can also work sustainably to lower carbon emissions. Sustainable gifting not only helps sequester a significant amount of carbon from the atmosphere but also provides a chance to encourage and inspire others to decrease their carbon footprint by making conscious choices. For instance, when you gift a plant on a special occasion, you are not only eliminating waste but also emphasizing the importance of living an environmentally conscious lifestyle.

As a part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR), businesses can also adopt many projects to restore diminishing biodiversity. Several companies have adopted plantation projects in many regions of India and collaborated with us to do their bit for the environment and enhance their green image.

If we start with ourselves, we can make the world a better place to live in. To emphasize the significance of sustainability and green efforts, large businesses can begin by making minor modifications in their offices. For instance, you can set 'green goals' for your team and reward your team members for meeting them by planting a tree in their name or you can push each department to reduce their carbon footprint via recycling and energy conservation. Furthermore, simple actions such as turning off gadgets when not in use, choosing sustainable items, decreasing paper consumption, and even optimizing the use of natural light in your workplace can make a huge difference to the environment.

In my opinion, one of the primary factors for growth to go awry is a lack of understanding of the severity of the environmental challenges we face today. Several public awareness campaigns and environmental initiatives are being undertaken because somewhere along the way to progress, we grew comfortable with hurting our environment. We need to educate people on the importance of co-existing with nature so that we don't repeat mistakes from the past and leave a better world for the future generations.

It's time to stand up for the environment that has protected, supported, and provided for human needs for generations.