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# Indian High Commissioner: Balance development and preservation

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Malay Mishra Indian High  
Commissioner to T&T

As Trinidad and Tobago stands on the cusp of developing a comprehensive environmental policy, our multimedia series 'Cleaning Up The Mess' continues to showcase best practices worldwide. Today, we present the first of a two-part guest column by his Excellency Malay Mishra, Indian High Commissioner to T&T, who explores the perennial dilemma faced by developing countries: balancing environmental preservation with development. Living in harmony with nature and concern for the environment is vividly enshrined in India's' oldest scriptures, the Vedas.

The Rigveda, the most ancient of the Vedas, the repository of knowledge and code for a civilized way of life, has in meticulous detail, laid down precepts for interacting with nature. It is therefore no surprise that India follows a systematic policy of proper usage of the environment coming down from the days of yore.

In 2006 The Indian Government passed a National Environmental Policy which gathered previous legislation on the environment including conservation, development, pollution, agriculture, population, and water preservation under one umbrella act.

The dominant theme of the policy was to change the old premise that development and jobs come at the expense of the environment. The new policy which partners with all stakeholders, from science and international development agencies to public and private sectors, seeks to ensure that people dependent on particular resources carve out a livelihood from the environment in sustainable way, and minimise degradation of the resources. India hosted a conference on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference at Cancun in Nov 2010, where the critical issue of equity and equitable access to carbon space was emphasised.

Addressing the conference, India's Minister for Environment and Forests, Jairam Ramesh, noted that "equitable access is not the right to pollute, but the right to sustainable development." Developed nations had grossly over-occupied the available

space, given that their emissions since 1850 amounted to almost 74 per cent of the total carbon stock due to fossil fuels in the atmosphere. But since the future budget for the world was only 300 Gigatons of carbon from 2010 to 2050, most developing countries would not be able to attain even 50 per cent of their fair share of carbon space in terms of per capita accumulated stock of emissions.

In the interest of equity, developed countries need to cut emissions immediately and sharply, and compensate developing countries through finance and technology transfer for their deficit in carbon space. At Cancun, India offered voluntarily reduction in carbon emissions while keeping her commitment of never excluding the rate of global emission. Speaking at the 11th Delhi Sustainable Development in February 2011, India's Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, said that "modern societies cannot get away from the fact that if they damage the environment in the pursuit of material gains today, they do so by risking the well being of future generations to come."

The challenge for India has been to mesh sustainable development with inclusive growth. Since the bulk of India's energy comes from coal, a 'clean coal' development strategy is in place and a limit of five per cent on the use of coal, both domestic and imported, was introduced in 2010 to build the corpus of a National Clean Energy Fund. Another aspect of sustainability is the management of common pool resources. In India, as in many other developing countries, indigenous tribes, cattle rearing groups, as well as cultivators use and access common pool resources like forests, water bodies, pastures and farmland without clearly defined property rights.

In India, landmark legislation, the Forest Rights Act, was introduced in 2006 seeking to preserve the rights of millions of tribal and other forest dwellers by restoring to them both individual rights to cultivated forest land and community rights over common property resources."

**Continued next week**

***Join Ira Mathur this Sunday on [Cleaning up the Mess](#), on CNC3 at 10.30 am and 6 pm for a rerun for our first interview on this series with Housing and Environment Minister, Dr Roodal Moonilal. Send in your photos and comments to [cleaningupthemess@guardian.co.tt](mailto:cleaningupthemess@guardian.co.tt) [3] and join our facebook page on <http://www.facebook.com/cleaningupthemess?ref=ts>***

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