

PUNJAB STATE COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Sub: Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of Punjab Biodiversity Board held under the chairmanship of Sh. Bikaram Singh Majithia, Minister for Science, Technology & Environment, Govt of Punjab on March 10, 2008 at 12:30 p.m. in Punjab Bhawan, Sector-3, Chandigarh.

PRESENT:

Experts:

1. Dr. R.C. Sobti,
Vice-Chancellor,
Panjab University,
Chandigarh.

Ex-officio Members:

2. Sh. A.S. Chhatwal, IAS,
Secretary to Govt. of Punjab,
Science, Technology & Environment.
3. Sh. B.S. Sidhu,
Director, Agriculture, Punjab,
Chandigarh.
4. Sh. M.S. Dhillon,
Chief Conservator of Forests, Punjab
Chandigarh
(Representing PCCF)

NGOs:

5. Dr. Anjana Pant,
Sr. Coordinator,
WWF-India, New Delhi.

Special Invitees:

6. Sh. Pawan Kumar
Deputy Director
Department of Finance, Punjab
7. Sh. Sumit Kumar
Deputy Director
Department of Planning, Punjab.

PSCST :

8. Dr. N.S. Tiwana,
Executive Director, PSCST,
Chandigarh.
9. Dr. (Mrs) Neelima Jerath,
Addl. Director (Env.), PSCST,
Chandigarh.
10. Dr. Satnam Singh Ladhar,
Joint Director (Env), PSCST.
Chandigarh.
11. Dr. S.K. Saxena,
Principal Scientific Officer (Env), PSCST
Chandigarh
12. Mr. Gurharminder Singh
Scientist, PSCST
Chandigarh

The second meeting of the Punjab Biodiversity Board was held under the chairmanship of Sh. Bikaram Singh Majithia; Science, Technology & Environment Minister, Govt of Punjab on March 10, 2008.

Welcoming the Chairman and members, Sh.. A.S. Chhatwal, Secretary, STE informed that the Board had been set up in 2004 as a Statutory Body u/s 22 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002. It had been re-notified in Aug.,2007.

Dr. Neelima Jerath, Addl. Director-Env, PSCST provided background information on the Biological Diversity Act and its importance. She informed that Amritsar was the hub of medicinal plants traded in north-west India and biological materials worth approx. 200 millions were traded from the area which included both, wild & cultivated species.

Dr. R.C. Sobti, Vice Chancellor, Panjab University pointed out that assessment of biological resources was the first step towards its conservation and equal emphasis needed to be provided to the study of microbial diversity besides macrophytes. Further, for the state of Punjab conservation of diversity in the agriculture and animal husbandry sectors was equally, if not more, important as the conservation of wild flora and fauna. He suggested that gene bank facilities be used to promote ex-situ conservation of the state's biological resources. Dr. B.S. Sidhu, Director, Agriculture also emphasized the need to protect biodiversity

in the agricultural sector in Punjab since the economy of the state was dependent upon agriculture and the state could not afford any event of total crop failure. Greater diversity in the fields would ensure better food security for the state and the country.

Dr. Anjana Pant, Senior Coordinator, WWF emphasized on the importance of protection of traditional knowledge linked to biological resources. Additional Director-Environment gave examples of the 'Basmati patent' and the patent on 'wound healing properties of Turmeric' (which is a part of our traditional knowledge system) granted by USPTO which had been revoked as a result of efforts of the Government of India. She informed that Govt. of India was recording all traditional knowledge in form of a 'Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)'. The Biological Diversity Act also addressed the IPR issue and could be used as a tool to prevent biopiracy in the country.

AD-Env also presented some examples of biodiversity loss in the state and gave a brief overview of the Biological Diversity Act and the status of financial structure and human resources available with other State Biodiversity Boards.

Dr. N.S. Tiwana, ED-PSCST pointed out that though Punjab was one of the pioneers in setting up its Board yet it had lagged behind due to lack of state support, whereas several other Biodiversity Boards had taken up many activities to conserve their biodiversity with State support (for infrastructure, human resources and state specific activities) and Central support (for activities beneficial to the state). These included State Biodiversity Boards of Karnataka, Kerala, MP, West Bengal, etc.

A film titled 'Securing our Future' produced by the PSCST jointly with the Board, under the UNESCO project, was also screened and was appreciated by the members.

The following agenda items were discussed and decisions taken:

2.1 Confirmation of minutes of the 1st meeting of Punjab Biodiversity Board held on 18/01/2006

Confirmed.

2.2 Follow up actions on minutes of the 1st meeting of Punjab Biodiversity Board held on 18/01/2006

Noted.

2.3 Workshop on 'Facilitating Formation of State Biodiversity Boards & Biodiversity Management Committees in Northern India'

Noted. It was pointed out that as per recommendations of the workshop, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) was required to identify agency to be designated and empowered to take cognizance of offences in the field. Secretary, STE suggested that either block level officers or field officers of Department of Agriculture & Department of Forests & Wildlife, who were already aware of legal procedures, could be entrusted with this task. It was felt that many of these officers might not be aware of issues related to biodiversity conservation and ramifications of the Biological Diversity Act, hence they may be properly trained and motivated by the Board. ED-PSCST suggested that the issue be taken up with NBA for early notification.

2.4 Joint Project with UNESCO on 'Capacity Building for promoting Environmental Sustainability through Biodiversity Conservation'

AD-Env informed that the kit developed by PBB and PSCST with UNESCO had been released by Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO during his visit to India in Nov.,2007. Field visits to 25 villages, 2 training programs and 25 camps had been organized under the project in Hoshiarpur & Gurdaspur districts. The kit was appreciated.

2.5 Training Program for Master Trainers on 'Conservation of Biodiversity in Punjab and Implementation of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 in Punjab'

Noted. STE Minister pointed out that this was one of the most important activity of the Board because training of teachers & students would have a multiplier affect.

2.6 Celebration of International Biodiversity Day (IBD)

Noted.

2.7 Constitution of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)

Members were informed that 31 BMCs have been set up in biodiversity rich areas in Shivaliks under the UNESCO project. These BMCs now needed to be strengthened by providing funds for their activities, as well as, training

on implementation of Biological Diversity Act in the field for which adequate funds would be required. The STE Minister suggested that more such BMCs be set up in biodiversity rich areas. Members were also apprised of the need to prepare Peoples' Biodiversity Registers, the procedure for which was being finalized by NBA.

2.8 Study of varieties of sucking mango in district Hoshiarpur

It was decided that PAU be recommended to take up preservation of mango varieties recorded from Inami Baag and neighbouring areas at the Fruit Research Station, Gangian. Members also approved that once the varieties were established in the Fruit Research Station, it be notified as a Biodiversity Heritage site. In the meanwhile owner of Inami Baag be persuaded to preserve and maintain the Baag till such time.

2.9 Punjab State Biological Diversity Rules

The Minister was of the opinion that since Biological Diversity was a specialized subject, the Chairman of the PBB should be an expert eminent (Scientist) who has a clear understanding and passion for the subject. Further, the Rules need not specify age of Chairman and draft be modified accordingly. The Rules were approved subject to the above change.

2.10 Creation of Posts in Punjab Biodiversity Board

S,STE agreed to take up the matter with Secretary, Finance for inclusion of the above posts in the State Non Plan Budget.

2.11 State Biodiversity Fund

Representative from Finance Department informed that the proposal had been cleared by them and the AD should be approached to get the funds released from the Finance Department at the earliest.

2.12 Publications of Punjab Biodiversity Board

Noted.

2.13 R&D Projects received

Noted.

2.14 Annual Report & Statement of Account for 2005-06 & 2006-07

Ratified.

2.15 STE Minister pointed out that the Board needed to focus its activities in the following areas:

- Awareness of local populations on importance of biodiversity and its linkages with their day-to-day life and livelihoods.
- Education of students to develop a respect for all biological resources in their formative years and training to teachers to build up an ethos towards conservation, to have a multiplier effect on society.
- Regulation of access to biological resources of the state for commercial utilization and ensuring their equitable benefit sharing with local population.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair