

promises offered by foreign universities/institutes on one hand, which are totally overlooked by our politicians, intellectuals as well as decision makers on the other. What can a student do when he is not assured of brighter prospects after his Ph D or a post-doctoral stint abroad when he is back in this country? This leads to a feeling of insecurity, anxiety or uncertainty about the future, which finally renders the career prospects of bright enthusiastic students in jeopardy. The educational system in India has tremendously discouraged and miserably failed to understand, realize or appreciate the problems, sentiments and visions of young researchers, as a result of which most of us are inclined to move abroad despite the desire to work for our people. We firmly

believe that the present educational system needs restructuring, with an optimistic approach to motivate the most learned community of this country to work and contribute to the Indian society in a holistic and integrated manner. In this respect we highly appreciate the objectives stated by Lakhotia¹, whereby he has clearly pointed out the loopholes responsible for dilapidation of the educational system in the country. We conclude by quoting Lakhotia's comments: 'We have already paid a heavy price for inaction. Let us not permit ourselves to be put over the precipice from where we can never rise again'. Indeed who else better than Lakhotia can realize the circumstances, for he has contributed so much to the excellence of teaching and research in the country.

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HRIDIP KUMAR SARMA^{1,2}
BIBHUTI PRASAD LAHKAR¹
MD. FIROZ AHMED¹
BIBHAB KUMAR TALUKDAR^{1,*}

¹*Aaranyak, A Society for Biodiversity Conservation in Northeast India, Samanwoy Path, Survey, Beltola, Guwahati 781 028, India*

²*Molecular Microbial Ecology Laboratory, Department of Forestry, North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology, Nirjuli 791 109, India*

*e-mail: bibhab1@sancharnet.in

Assessment of biodiversity loss

In one of their outstanding decisions in 2004, the 188 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) approved eight indicators for immediate testing in order to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss significantly by 2010. Two of these measure threats to biodiversity (nitrogen deposition and water quality), two measure responses (protected area coverage and international funding for conservation) and one measures cultural context (language diversity). The other three indicators to assess the progress towards 2010 target are habitat indices, population indices, and the marine tropic index¹.

Apart from above-mentioned factors, there are many more important indicators including climate change reported to be responsible for change in biodiversity^{2,3}, yet they have not been taken into account by the CBD. A study published in *Science* pointed out that from 1982 to 1999 global changes in climate have eased several critical climatic constraints to plant growth, such that the net primary production (NPP) increases by 6% globally, and the ecosystems in all tropical regions accounted for 80% increase in the NPP. This increase is due to increase in air temperature, cloudiness, changing monsoon dynamics, increasing incident of solar radiation and other climatic constraints⁴.

Since there is scarcity of multidisciplinary approaches in assessing the natural and human-induced effects on biodiversity, the satellite-based estimates of the NPP by Nemani *et al.*⁴ have overlooked effects of biodiversity conservation and protected areas network over past three decades. At present, the global network of protected areas covers 11.5% of the earth's land surface, which surpasses the 10% target proposed a decade earlier⁵. Obviously such a large coverage of protected areas would have been helpful in safeguarding the various types of natural forests, which were over-exploited earlier and now would be responsible for increasing NPP. Besides, the advent of green revolution and plantations of various tree species over the past three decades in world's terrestrial ecosystem, of course, would have increased the NPP. Nemani *et al.*'s⁴ study was carried out after about a decade of protected areas network's introduction, which logically also indicates the effects of protected areas networks and other conservation policies such as plantations.

The concluding remark of Nemani *et al.*⁴ that the climatic constraints or increase in CO₂ are responsible for increase in NPP across the global terrestrial ecosystems without assessing the other causal factors including effects of several years of forest

protection seems to be premature. On the other hand, another study on the tropical forests concludes that in warm years the trees are growing more slowly and more are dying⁶, which may lead to the low NPP. Hence, in the march towards achieving the target of 2010, a multidisciplinary approach with focused aim would have been more effective as evident by the glimpses of past research carried out in isolation with a single discipline.

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CHANDRA PRAKASH KALA

G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, Kosi-Katarmal, Almora 263 643, India, e-mail: cpkala@yahoo.co.uk