



Delegations from India and Bhutan discuss climate issues during a meeting in New Delhi on July 12, 2024.

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A delegation from Bhutan, led by Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Gem Tshering, met with India's Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Kirti Vardhan

Singh in New Delhi on Friday (July 12, 2024) to discuss environmental concerns and the potential for collaboration in some critical areas.

The meeting, held in New Delhi, centred on crucial issues such as air quality, climate change, forests, natural resources, wildlife, and renewable energy sources. This bilateral discussion underscored the shared environmental concerns and the commitment of both nations to sustainable development.

Singh expressed his gratitude to the Bhutanese Minister for Bhutan's participation in the International Big Cat Alliance, an initiative spearheaded by India to protect big cats globally. He highlighted the strong ties between India and Bhutan, noting their shared geography, ecosystem, and democratic values. He emphasized that climate change is a pressing issue that affects both countries and requires collaborative efforts to address effectively.

Tshering shared insights on Bhutan's environmental initiatives, including the successful hosting of the Sustainable Finance for Tiger Landscape Conference in April 2024 in Paro. He proudly mentioned Bhutan's status as a carbon-negative country, largely due to its reliance on hydropower for energy. Bhutan's commitment to maintaining its carbon-negative status serves as an inspiration for other nations striving for environmental sustainability.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in several areas. Climate change, air quality, forest management, wildlife conservation, and capacity building in the field of environment and climate change were identified as key areas for collaboration. The Indian delegation suggested holding a Joint Working Group Meeting to develop a structured plan for

these initiatives, demonstrating a proactive approach to tackling environmental challenges.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of renewable energy sources. Bhutan's significant hydropower resources were recognized as a vital component of its energy strategy. India's expertise in renewable energy technologies, such as solar and wind power, presents opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration. This partnership aims to enhance energy security and reduce carbon footprints in both nations.

The meeting builds on the longstanding partnership between India and Bhutan. In 2023, Bhutan's Foreign Secretary, Aum Pema Choden, visited India and engaged in discussions with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. These talks reinforced India's support for Bhutan's development aspirations and underscored the progress in bilateral cooperation across various sectors, including energy, cross-border connectivity, and economic ties.

The 13th Five Year Plan of Bhutan, discussed during the India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks, outlines the nation's developmental goals. India's commitment to partnering with Bhutan based on these priorities reflects the deep-rooted relationship between the two countries. This bilateral partnership extends to newer areas such as digital development, science and technology, and skill development, further strengthening the ties between the two nations.

Both India and Bhutan face similar environmental challenges, making their collaboration essential. Air quality management, for instance, is a critical issue for both countries. Urbanization and industrialization have led to deteriorating air quality in many regions. Collaborative efforts to monitor and improve air quality can lead to significant health benefits for

the populations of both countries.

Forest conservation is another shared priority. Bhutan, with its vast forest cover, plays a crucial role in regional biodiversity. India's experience in forest management and conservation can complement Bhutan's efforts, leading to improved forest health and resilience. Joint initiatives in wildlife management, particularly for species that traverse national boundaries, can enhance conservation outcomes, and protect biodiversity.

The bilateral meeting concluded with a commitment to continue working together to address these pressing environmental issues. The proposed Joint Working Group Meeting will serve as a platform to develop concrete plans and actions. Both sides expressed optimism about the positive outcomes of this enhanced cooperation.

The collaborative efforts between India and Bhutan demonstrate the importance of regional partnerships in addressing global environmental challenges. By leveraging each other's strengths and experiences, both nations aim to achieve sustainable development and environmental conservation goals. The meeting in New Delhi marks a significant step forward in this enduring partnership, promising a greener and more sustainable future for both countries.

As the world grapples with climate change and environmental degradation, the example set by India and Bhutan serves as a beacon of hope. Their commitment to collaboration and sustainable practices underscores the importance of unity and shared responsibility in protecting our planet for future generations.