

### **International Biodiversity Day 2005**

Sunday May 22, was the International Day for Biological Diversity. Each year celebrated to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. Biological Diversity is defined as: Life on earth: the variety of all plants, animals and microorganisms.

Celebrating the day also marks the signing of the International Convention on Biological Diversity by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Earth Summit (aka the Rio Summit) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, dedicated to promoting sustainable development. Thought as a practical tool for translating the principles of Agenda 21 into reality. The Convention recognises that biological diversity is about more than plants, animals and micro-organisms and their ecosystems. It is also about people and our need for food security, medicines, fresh air and water, shelter, and a clean and healthy environment in which to live. Biodiversity is the source of the essential goods and ecological services that make up the source of life for all. The celebration each year of the International Day for Biological Diversity is an occasion to reflect on our responsibility to safeguard this precious heritage for future generations.

Sadly, the earth's biological foundation is eroding at a rate unequalled in at least 65 million years.

Globally, species have been disappearing at 50-100 times the natural rate. Based on current trends, an estimated 34,000 plant and 5,200 animal species – including one in eight of the world's bird species – face extinction. Only a fraction (1.6 million species.) of the world's total number of about 30 million species, science identified. Global warming is already changing habitats and the distribution of species.

#### **This year's theme is: Biodiversity: Life Insurance for our Changing World**

An added focus for 2005 is the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. More than 1,300 scientists in 95 countries took the study into the effects of human practice of the world's ecosystems. The biodiversity synthesis launched the report of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. This five-year programme, pioneered by the UN Secretary-General, studied the correlation between ecosystems and human well-being. The reports findings underline the gravity of biological diversity in providing concrete services on which human life depends, including all-important security and provisioning works.

Growing human populations and expanding consumption are placing great pressure on biological Diversity. This year's theme for Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), reminds us that, also providing the physical conditions for all life, biodiversity also plays an important role in protecting life and making it resilient to the pressures brought about by change.

#### **Biodiversity in context to Bangladesh:**

Excerpt from Biodiversity Conservation and Bangladesh by Ainun Nishat IUCN- the World Conservation Union

(Bangladesh Country office) states, it is the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Diversity in genes, species and ecosystems has contributed to the productivity of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and industry. Wild species provide people with food, dyes, fibres, building materials, and medicinal plants, while home gardens and agricultural plots plant with distinct domesticated crop varieties. Over the last 100 years, Bangladesh have lost about 10% of its mammalian fauna, 3% avifauna, and 4% reptile species.

All together, there are 10 species of mammals, 2 species of birds and 1 species of reptile are nationally extinct.

IUCN Bangladesh has identified 58 species of fish, 8 species of amphibians, 63 species of reptiles, 47 species of birds, and 43 species of mammals in the country threatened under different degree of risk of extinction.

Illegal harvesting and export of medicinal plants and other economically valuable species such as reptiles and amphibians affect many ecosystems and habitats.

Over-fishing of commercial fish species in the riparian and coastal wetlands, as well as poaching and sport hunting of large mammals and birds are causing populations of many species to decline. With more than 130 million people and a population growth rate of 1.6%, the pressure on the nation's natural resources is intense.

Pollution of Bangladesh's soil, air, and water has escalated over the last two decades and makes up a significant threat to biological diversity.

Educating people and raising awareness of biological diversity and the need to conserve is important.

Global warming is already changing habitats and the distribution of species. Scientists warn that even a one-degree increase in the average global temperature, if it comes rapidly, will push many species over the brink. Disturbing biological diversity could seriously disrupt our food production.

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**Resource Box**

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