

India ranks 24th in the first Environmental Democracy Index

PTI | May 21, 2015,



India ranks 24th in the first Environmental Democracy Index

WASHINGTON: India has ranked 24th out of 70 countries in the first Environmental Democracy Index that is topped by Lithuania and evaluates nations' progress in enacting laws to promote transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in environmental decision making. Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, the US, South Africa, the UK, Hungary, Bulgaria, Panama and Colombia are the top 10 nations in the list launched by Washington-based World Resources Institute (WRI) and Access Initiative on Wednesday. The index evaluates environmental democracy in 70 countries, including 75 legal and 24 practice indicators, based on recognised international standards.

"With a number of critical moments in environment and sustainability in 2015, advancing good governance and environmental rights are essential. This index is a powerful lever that will help governments to become more transparent and ordinary citizens to advocate for more rights," said Mark Robinson, global director, Governance, WRI.

"For the first time, we have an objective, common index to understand the state of environmental democracy for countries around the world, which is essential to strengthen laws and public participation around environmental issues,"

he said. According to the report, 93 per cent of the assessed countries have established the right to environmental information. However, almost half of these countries (45 per cent) do not have strong protections to ensure that access to information is affordable and timely, it said. "Environmental democracy isn't just about making environmental information available to the public; that's an essential first step, but governments must also allow citizens to be a meaningful part of the environmental decision-making process," said Avi Garbow, general counsel, US Environmental Protection Agency.

The vast majority of countries assessed (79 per cent) earned only fair or poor ratings for public participation, the report said, adding that many nations lag on providing citizens basic environmental information. Nearly half (46 per cent) of the countries assessed do not provide any ambient air quality data online for their capital cities.

In 73 per cent of the countries, courts will hear environmental cases. But very few countries assessed have assistance for marginalized groups, the report said. Only 14 per cent of the countries have legal mechanisms that help women access courts to obtain redress when their environmental rights are violated, it added.

Source:

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/the-good-earth/India-ranks-24th-in-the-first-Environmental-Democracy-Index/articleshow/47368151.cms>