

HYDERABAD

## 'Environmental protection must for human rights'



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### SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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### Supreme Court too plays a vital role in the matter: Justice Joseph

Supreme Court Judge Kurian Joseph said environmental protection had become a matter of great concern for human rights and the right to live with dignity.

Addressing a gathering of corporate delegates at the 19th Annual World Congress on Environment Management here on Friday, Justice Joseph enunciated various constitutional provisions towards protection of the environment, forest and wildlife, and the state's responsibility to safeguard the same for public good.

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safeguard forests and wildlife, and the fundamental duties as laid forth in Article 51(a)

enjoined the citizens to protect the environment.

The Supreme Court too played a vital role in protection of the environment, Justice Joseph said, citing various judgments by the apex court where it had recognised the relation between Article 21, pertaining to the right to life, and the environment. Article 47 further imposed the responsibility of public health on the State, which was closely linked to the environment.

## Wide ambit

The word, environment, was a broad spectrum in nature, which included in its ambit hygiene and ecological balance too, hence the State had the duty to maintain hygienic environment to ensure public health.

Any act causing environmental, ecological, water, and air pollution should be regarded as violation of the right to life with dignity set forth by Article 21. It was impossible to live with dignity without hygienic environment, justice Joseph said. Hence, it should be considered constitutional imperative of state governments and municipal authorities to protect and safeguard the environment.

Citing cases where the Supreme Court refuted the opposition between development and ecology and stressed sustainable development, Justice Joseph said the National Green Tribunal was set up for this very purpose of effective and expeditious disposal of cases related to the environment and forests. Yet, the purpose of the NGT was not punitive measures for polluters.

## Green Tribunal

“The tribunal helps you to acknowledge your duties,” he said to the heads of companies.

The cardinal principles guiding the tribunal were sustainable development, principle of natural justice and the stipulation of ‘polluter pays’.

Speaking of Paris Agreement, and its aim of bringing down global temperatures to pre-industrialisation levels, Justice Joseph said climate justice was the need of the hour, as climate change played into existing inequalities. He lauded the initiatives such as Swachh Bharat, which were important for sustainable development goals. Later, he distributed the Golden Peacock awards to corporates, in the categories of ‘Eco-Innovation’, ‘Environment Management’, ‘Energy Efficiency’, and ‘Occupational Health and Safety’. A total of 47 awards were given away.

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