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## India, China to collaborate on environment

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*Joint expert working group to combat global warming through reforestation*

BEIJING: India and China have agreed to set up a joint expert working group on the environment, which will explore how the two countries can combat global warming through reforestation.

China adds an estimated four million hectares of forest cover every year, while India adds around one million hectares.

India will look to learn from China on how to accelerate reforestation as a way to mitigate the impact of climate change, Union Minister for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh said on Wednesday.

“We estimate that our forests capture 11 per cent [of carbon emissions], and in China it is around six per cent,” Mr. Ramesh said. “We will explore how we can work together in expanding the sink potential [or carbon capture] of forests and in afforestation management.”

He said India will seek Chinese help in using satellite technology to measure progress in afforestation projects.

## Illegal animal trade

The joint working group, which will meet in the first week of November, will also explore the sensitive issue of how the two countries could better work together in clamping down on the illegal trade of animal parts.

## Poaching

Much of the poaching of wild tigers in India is driven by Chinese demand, and Indian officials on Wednesday asked the Chinese to co-operate more in clamping down on the trade in tiger parts, which is routed to China through Nepal and Myanmar.

China, in turn, asked India to do more to clamp-down on the poaching of Tibetan antelopes. "Chinese officials said they felt the same way regarding Tibetan antelopes [as India does on tigers]," Mr. Ramesh said.

Tibetan antelopes are poached for their wool, which is used to make highly prized shatoosh shawls, and the illegal trade in shatoosh and tiger parts often takes place simultaneously.

"There is clear evidence that the trade on shatoosh and tiger parts is in the form of barter," said Samir Sinha of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-India, who works on illegal traffic in animal parts.

"We don't know if the Chinese only raised this issue as a counterpoint [to clamping down on tigers], but the bottom line is if the two countries can find a way to work together to stop trade, this is a positive step forward," Mr. Sinha said.

The Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Glaciology and China's Careeri centre were on Wednesday scheduled to sign a landmark agreement on sharing data on glacial research.

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Mr. Ramesh, however, said the deal will be signed in the last week of October, as part of a larger framework agreement on environmental research between the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Indian government's Department of Science and Technology.

The agreement will for the first time give India access to research on Tibet's glaciers. In recent years, concern has grown over the pace of melting of the glaciers, which are the source of many of the subcontinent's rivers.