

Today is Earth Overshoot Day

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It marks the point at which the world consumes all the natural resources produced in a year

New Delhi, August 1:

Humanity is consuming natural resources faster and faster, if we were to look at the history of Earth Overshoot Day (EOD). First calculated by economist Andrew Simms, EOD represents the day, each year, when the world goes into deficit spending — ecologically speaking. The day, this year, is Wednesday, August 2.

Simply speaking, the day the world completely consumes all the natural resources produced that year is EOD, or the day when our consumption exceeds the earth's capacity to regenerate natural resources.

Environmental degradation

Since it was first calculated, the EOD has been moving up the calendar, from December 19 in 1987 to August 2 this year — just seven months into the year — revealing the shocking rate at which environmental degradation is taking place.

According to the Global Footprint Network, which calculates EOD every year, about 60 per cent of the world's ecological footprint is made up by carbon emissions, which the world is attempting to curb under the Paris climate change agreement.

However, voluntary emission cuts are not enough to keep the planet on a sustainable footing. "If we cut carbon emissions in half, the date of Earth Overshoot Day would be pushed back by 89 days, or about three months," the Network says.

This means that possibility would take us to October 30, still leaving a deficit of two months.

Rapid exhaustion

Overfishing, wastage of food, overharvesting forest resources are all factors that are contributing to the rapid exhaustion of the world's natural resources, resulting in depletion, poverty, and a large number of species facing extinction. According to estimates, to sustain the current level of consumption, we need a whole new earth by 2030.

"Economic growth and development is critical for India — improved education, health, and job opportunities along with better infrastructure are much needed," said Sejal Worah, Programme Director, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) India.

"However, if not properly planned and implemented, such growth can also pose a significant challenge to the natural environment. The future lies in development trajectories that also reduce humanity's ecological footprint. We need to adopt innovative technology and sustainable lifestyles and to preserve this planet — citizens, business and government must all play their part," she added.

The World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Living Planet Report, released in 2016, had said there was a 58 per cent decline in global populations of fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles between 1970 and 2012.

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