

China and India: Neighbors need to collaborate for sake of global environment

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Cooperation between China and India can curtail biodiversity loss, mitigate climate change and reduce deforestation, especially in the Himalayas, the mountain chain that stretches between the Indus and Brahmaputra River valleys. Credit: Kamaljit S. Bawa

With large and growing economies and populations, China and India will strongly influence the quality of the global environment for years to come. While their political relationship is strained, it's critical the two countries work together to slow global warming, deforestation, water shortages and other environmental issues, says a Michigan State University scientist and colleagues.

"[China](#) and India are the two largest countries in terms of population," said Jianguo "Jack" Liu, MSU University Distinguished Professor of fisheries and wildlife who holds the Rachel Carson Chair in

Sustainability. Liu is internationally known for his work on [environmental sustainability](#) and coupled human and natural systems. "Even while the rest of the world is in a recession, the economies of China and India are growing and the countries' consumption of raw materials is increasing. Cooperation between the two is vital to mitigating negative environmental impacts."

In "China, India and the Environment," published in the March 19 issue of the journal *Science*, Liu and co-authors advocate using scientific collaboration as a bridge to help break down political barriers between the two nations -- ultimately benefiting the larger global society. All the authors have strong research programs in one or both of the countries.

"We all have a huge interest in a sustainable world and the way we're managing it now, it simply isn't sustainable," said Peter Raven, co-author and president of the Missouri Botanical Garden. Raven also is a foreign member of both the Chinese and Indian academies of science. "The problems get worse every year; biodiversity loss and [climate change](#) have clear global significance. Our thesis is the two countries share so much adjacent territory that the environmental benefits should be obvious and, informed by scientific analysis, should provide a bridge between them."

According to Liu, [water availability](#) could be an increasingly challenging issue facing the two countries and one that will require careful cooperation. Many rivers flow through both China and India -- if one country builds too many dams on its side to generate hydroelectric power, it will likely cause water shortages downstream in the other country.

"Water is a huge issue," said Liu. "It's being discussed extensively. We need to make people aware of the benefits of cooperation. It's more than just China and India that will be affected if these two countries don't work together. The environmental impacts will be felt around the world,

including in the United States."

"One thing we have learned from the recession is that without sustainability there cannot be unlimited growth," added Kamaljit Bawa, University of Massachusetts-Boston distinguished professor of biology and president of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment in Bangalor, [India](#). "The two countries are not facing recession and it is time for them to exercise environmental stewardship. Future economic growth is contingent upon this stewardship."

Provided by Michigan State University

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