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'10% of medicinal plants in India facing extinction threat'

Only 15% of medicinal plants which are endemic to India are cultivated while the rest are simply sourced from forests

 **PTI**

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the rest are simply sourced from forests, they added, speaking at the 9th World Ayurveda Congress (WAC) here. The four-day WAC concluded on Sunday.

Ten per cent of the 900 major medicinal plants in India fall under the "threatened" category, said J A C S Rao, CEO of the State Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Board, Chhattisgarh. Earth is losing one potential medicinal plant every two years at an extinction rate that is hundred times faster than the natural process, he said. Overexploitation, the drug industry's high dependence on wildlife population, habitat destruction and urbanisation were some of the reasons for this situation, Rao said.

"We have to adopt conservation strategies like field studies, proper documentation, mitigation measures, enactment of special laws like Endangered Species Act, 1973, and recovery programmes," he added.

Dr Pradip Vithal Sarmokadam, Member Secretary, State Biodiversity Board, Goa, said that India has about 45,000 plant species and 7,333 of them are medicinal aromatic plants. "But only 15 per cent of medicinal plants are cultivated while the remaining 85 per cent are collected by the industry from forest ecosystems and other natural habitats," he said.

Former Union AYUSH Ministry Joint Secretary and ex-CEO of the National Medicinal Plants Board Jitendra Sharma said a formal linkage of supply chains from the augmented resources from the wild is a big challenge. He said an amendment is needed in the Indian Forest Act, 1927, as there is no provision for a national transit permit that allows the transit of forest produce from one part of the country to other.

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