

KU holds online seminar on World Environment Day

Srinagar, June 09: Department of Environmental Science, University of Kashmir observed World Environment Day-2020 during which a one day online seminar on the theme "Time for Nature": Explore Nature with Iconic Spots" was also held.

Vice Chancellor University of Kashmir Prof. Talat Ahmad patron of the seminar delivered a presidential address on the occasion during which he emphasized upon the need to have various working groups of researchers in the University who will take the lead in submitting the proposals to various funding agencies for earning grants and work on the pressing issues like climate change, carbon dioxide emission and silicate weathering linkages in the nature.

He stressed on expediting the afforestation campaigns so as to check air pollution which has assumed alarming proportions due to which both flora and fauna across the length and breadth of the world is getting affected.

Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Dean Research University of Kashmir delivered a special remarks on the occasion as Chief Guest of the function. Prof. Shakil Romshoo gave a comprehensive account of research scenario at University of Kashmir and remarked that there is need to link our research and science with policy, practice and governance.

He said that researchers should also try to take up such research problems and issues which are linked to society and with problems that Jammu and Kashmir (UT) is facing. He also remarked on the need to strengthen the research and industry interface.

Prof. Shamim Ahmad Shah, Dean School of Earth and Environmental Sciences gave opening remarks and emphasised on the importance of such events for creating awareness on several issues of environment importance.

In his welcome address Prof. Fayaz Ahmad Bhat, Head, Department of Environmental Science and Director of the seminar highlighted the importance of the seminar.

Coordinator of the seminar Dr. Sami Ullah Bhat, Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Science offered vote of thanks while as Dr. Arshid Jehangir, organising Secretary of the Seminar conducted the proceeding of the seminar.

Students, research scholars and few faculty members displayed their creativity, art, skill and research ideas through poster presentation on the theme Dynamics in Nature - Issues, Challenges and Opportunities Arising out of COVID-19 Pandemic.

The three best poster presentations were awarded with certificates of merit besides a certificate of participation. The first position was awarded to Ms. Salma Yousuf from University of Kashmir while as Mr. Arshid Ramzan and Mr. Sahil Bhat again from KU bagged Second position. The third position was shared by Mr. Jawahr Rasool from KU and Mr. Shah Khalid Ahmad from Cluster University, Srinagar.

There were four experts who delivered the talks on various burning and pressing issues like Mountain ecosystems and climate change, Contemporary environmental issues of societal importance in Kashmir like Air pollution, Massive land system changes, wetland degradation, Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem degradation, COVID-19- a pandemic of mistreated nature, Cities and Climate change.

The experts include David James Molden Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (IC-MOD): Kathmandu, Nepal, Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Dean Research, University of Kashmir, Srinagar Prof. P.K. Joshi, School of Environmental Sciences, JNU New Delhi, Prof Arun Kansal, Head Coca Cola Department of Regional Water Studies, TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi.

The technical session started with the lead lecture of Dr. David James Molden Director General, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICMOD): Kathmandu, Nepal who delivered his talk on Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) mountains, climate change, and nature based solutions. Dr. David Molden in his lecture suggested that Mountain issues need strong research backing that are relevant for policy and practice, and well communicated to policy makers who may not know mountain issues.

"Climate change and sustainable mountain development are issues of urgent important both for mountain people and for all of Asia and the world. This is because mountains are a tremendous natural resource base that provide livelihoods and economies for millions of people. They are the pulse of the planet," said Dr Molden.

Prof. Shakil Ahmad Romshoo threw light in a detailed manner on issues like air quality, climate change, melting cryosphere, depleting stream flows, land system changes, wetlands and water bodies. He strongly advocated the participation of researchers from various disciplines in order to plug the research and knowledge gaps while taking research problems of highest societal relevance.

Major emphasis from the lecture of Prof. P.K. Joshi include a) Emphasis and expansion of programs like Nagar Van (Urban/City forests) is desired and required. These should be carried out the principles of ecological/ecosystem restoration. The team should have professional (trained) ecologists as an essential member. (b) Interaction of humans or livestock with wildlife needs to be restricted and checked so as to ensure least exposure to the risk of spillover of potential pathogens. The drivers of zoonotic disease emergence are changes in the environment—usually the result of human activities, ranging from land use change to changing climate, including deforestation and agricultural expansion. These need to be looked with higher degree of seriousness. (c) Ecosystem integrity is must and it underlines human health and development. All ecosystem (terrestrial and aquatic) should be taken with high degree of integrity to all development programs. (d) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) need to be taken in consideration while framing and executing any development programs and/or while executing any intervention to any system. (e) The above can be ensured with regular training and development of youth and professional across the spectrum. The available options/tools should be exploited to maximum extent to ensure this.

Key takeaways from the lecture of Prof. Arun Kansal include that Urbanization is a dominant trend, -Successful adaptation to climate change centrally depends on urbanization process, Cities are complex open systems with linkages to hinterlands across multiple scales, -Spatial planning can influence resource use, -Governance of mitigation in settlements benefits from poly-centric and multi-level governance approach, Urban settlements are faced with multiple sustainability challenges and thus mitigation strategies must address multiple agendas.

There were at least 100 participants and 75 having poster presentations from various departments of University of Kashmir like Environmental Science, CORD, Zoology, Botany, Home Science, SRTM University Mumbai, Bharti Dasam University Tamil Nadu, GDC Shopian, Cluster University Srinagar, SKUAST-K.