

KU V-C chairs first meeting of Working Group on Climate Change

Experts urge greater focus on mitigation and adaptation strategies

Srinagar, Feb 16: Vice-Chancellor of University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad on Tuesday chaired the first meeting of a Working Group on Climate Change constituted by the varsity to address pressing concerns and challenges related to it.

Addressing the WG members from academia, government and civil society, Prof Talat said it's important for everyone, especially youngsters, to understand climate change and how it's going to impact various aspects of life in future.

"Kashmir has a fragile ecosystem where climate change is going to impact almost everything in future. It's therefore important to involve youngsters in raising awareness about the short-term and long-term impacts of climate change," he said, asserting that a lot of anthropogenic activities—unplanned industrialisation, biomass burning, deforestation, increase in traffic—are acting as catalysts for lots of environmental problems.

He said it's equally important to involve social scientists to disseminate the scientific findings among the masses.

"Any development taking place must lead to betterment of lives and should not, in any manner, adversely impact our ecology and ecosystem. Development has to be done in a manner that suits nature so that there's no imbalance," he said.

In his presentation, Dean of Research at KU Prof Shakil A Romshoo underlined the key objectives of the Working Group, including ensuring use of knowledge, data and information, generated in the university on different climate change aspects, into the policy-making at governmental level to tackle the impacts of climate change on various sectors of economy and livelihoods.

He said the terms of reference (ToRs) of the Working Group would be refined and broadened to make these more result-oriented while sub-groups will also be constituted to have focused attention on various climate-related issues like review and updating the State Action Plan on Climate Change, frame sector-specific mitigation and adaptation strategies, go for micro-level impact assessment studies in key areas of climate change and develop awareness strategy among masses and address various other issues related to climate change.

Prof Romshoo said the Government of India has allocated Rs 50000 crore in the union budget for National Research Foundation under National Education Policy-2020 with its prime focus on climate change.

Prof Mohammad Sultan from KU's Department of Geography and Disaster Management called for undertaking micro-level impact assessment studies on impact of climate change on water resources in view of the significant depletion of ground water resources over the years.

Mr Iftikhar Ahmad Kakroo, Chief Engineer I&FC Department Kashmir, called for doing away with misconceptions related to climate change, while understanding the importance of reliability of data on its key aspects.

Prof Nilofar Khan, Director, Institute of Home Sciences called for involvement of women at community-level to raise awareness on immediate concerns pertaining to climate change, while Prof Mohammad Shafi, Director of KU's CCPC, said climate financing is important to develop short and long-term adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Development practitioner and civil society member Mr Arjimand Hussain Talib said KU has an important role to play in addressing climate change concerns.

“Collaborative action is the key here. I am glad that this Working Group is very inclusive and is determined to guide our action plan on this critical issue,” he said.

He said mitigation and adaptation strategies are all about funding and “if we are to mainstream climate change into the present models of development, adequate funding will be required for the same.”

He also called for revisiting the Climate Change Action Plan document to modify it in light of the newer challenges and concerns.

Mr Sakib Qadri, environmental activist from the civil society, emphasised the need for developing a comprehensive framework for addressing the climate change impacts on various sectors in the mountainous Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions.

Dr Shazia from KU’s Department of Social Work (DoSW) said climate change has to be viewed from the prism of heterogeneity, especially its impact on women at different levels.

She said some elective and generic courses on climate change can be introduced as compulsory/optional in academic curriculums for greater awareness at grassroots.

Mr Sonam Lotus, Director IMD Srinagar, said it’s important to ensure that the recommendations of this Working Group are implemented at the policy-planning level. He said IMD would support the Working Group initiatives seriously for better outcomes.

Ms Rabia Noor, Senior Technical Officer, Department of Science and Technology, J&K, also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Mohammad Muslim, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences at KU, conducted proceedings of the meeting as member secretary of the Working Group.