

WORLD WATER DAY

3-day international webinar on ‘Water, Health and Parasites’ begins at KU

Top experts from several countries to join deliberations during technical sessions

Srinagar, May 22: Vice-Chancellor of University of Kashmir Prof Talat Ahmad Monday inaugurated a three-day international webinar on ‘Water, Health and Parasites’.

The webinar has been organised by the varsity’s Department of Environmental Science in collaboration with Indian Society for Parasitology (ISP) to discuss broader objectives identified in this year’s theme for the World Water Day—‘Valuing Water.’

In his presidential address, Prof Talat said there is a need for a very strong policy on water conservation to ensure equitable access of all to this most precious resource.

“Access to water and sanitation is among the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. The World Water Day is therefore an opportunity for all of us to rise to the occasion and commit ourselves to water conservation for a better tomorrow,” he said.

Prof Talat said the University of Kashmir has focused its research on some pressing environmental issues, including water conservation, to feed the outcome of its research into the policy-making on this precious resource.

Prof Sukhbir Kaur, President, Indian Society of Parasitology—chief guest on the occasion—said water-borne diseases pose a major public health problem to the developing countries which badly affects the economy.

“Over 5 million people die due to unsafe drinking water, lack of sanitation, and insufficient water for hygiene. According to the WHO, at any given time, almost half of the people in developing countries suffer from water-related diseases,” she said, adding that 58% of burden in low and middle-income countries is attributable to unsafe water supply, inadequate sanitation and lack of hygiene.

“Over 30 million cases of water-related diseases could be avoided globally each year through water and sanitation interventions,” she said.

Prof Sukhbir said 19 percent of the world population washes hands with soap and water after contact with excreta and 26 percent people drink water occasionally contaminated with faecal bacteria.



“Though the whole world is suffering from COVID 19 pandemic, the positive aspect is that people have learnt hand hygiene habits and the environment pollution also decreased tremendously during this period,” she said.

Prof Shakil A Romshoo, Dean of Research at KU, who was a guest of honour, emphasised on action-oriented strategies and frameworks by different stakeholders to have robust and sustainable water policies, informed by knowledge and science, in place.

“J&K and Ladakh significantly contribute water supplies in the South Asian region. We have 12,000 glaciers in the J&K and Ladakh UTs and water is the most important resource for this region,” he said, referring to factors which have led to deterioration in quality and quantity of water resource in J&K, including climate change and industrialisation in downstream part of water basins.

“There’s a continuous need to generate awareness among different stakeholders in academia, government, policy-making and elsewhere on the importance of water conservation,” Prof Romshoo said.

In his opening remarks, Prof Shamim A Shah, Dean School of Earth and Environmental Science at KU, congratulated the DES for organising the international webinar on a vital theme which is centre of attention of the entire world.

In his welcome address, Head Department of Environmental Science Prof Fayaz Ahmad highlighted the aims and objectives of webinar as well as the achievements of his department in the fields of academics and research.

Dr Samiullah Bhat, webinar coordinator, conducted proceedings of the inaugural session and also presented a vote of thanks.

Top scientists and researchers joining the technical deliberations include, among others, Zhang Fan (China), B Maheshwari (Australia), Prof C J Hiware (Aurangabad), Dr Larry Stevens (USA), Prof Kuldeep K Sharma (Jammu), Prof Ummey Shameem (Visakhapatnam), Prof S K Malhotra (Allahabad), Dr Samendra Sherchan (USA), Dr Sara Nowreen (Bangladesh), Dr Binaya Raj Shivakoti (Japan), Dr Amit Kumar (China), Prof Marco Cantonati (Italy) and Prof Mohiuddin Munawar (Canada).