

Skill Development and Entrepreneurship: **KU to mentor, monitor future start-ups for connectivity, marketing: KU VC**

To provide seed money to encourage culture of entrepreneurship, innovation



Srinagar, March 27: A weeklong skill development and training programme aimed at sensitising youth about agri start-ups with a focus on the economic viability, cultivation and commercialisation of medicinal and aromatic plants, ornamentals and mushrooms, organised by the Department of Botany, Kashmir University (KU), concluded here Tuesday.

Titled, 'Empowering Potential, Fostering Future: Building Entrepreneurship for Self-Employment', the programme focused on empowering youth with practical skills by encouraging a culture of start-ups and entrepreneurship, an official release issued here read.

Highlighting its importance in empowering the youth and encouraging innovation, KU Vice Chancellor, Professor Nilofer Khan, said that teamwork and coordination make institutions and individuals successful.

“The journey begins now as the university will mentor the future start-ups, monitor them and provide them seed money for their connectivity and marketing,” Prof Khan said, reiterating KU’s commitment to encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation to serve the institution and the community effectively.

Emphasising the significance of such initiatives in promoting self-employment opportunities KU Registrar, Prof Naseer Iqbal, commended the efforts of the Department of Botany in organising the programme.

“We need to keep a track of such programmes to further strengthen the varsity’s skill, entrepreneurship and start-up endeavours,” he said while maintaining that one has to be skilled anyway.

Dean School of Biological Sciences, KU, Professor Abdul Hamid Wani, lauded the comprehensive approach of the programme in addressing various aspects of agri start-ups and entrepreneurship.

“This is a billion dollar industry and we have to start somewhere,” he added.

Sharing success stories of some prominent entrepreneurs of Kashmir, Head, Department of Botany, Prof Zahoor Ahmad Kaloo, shed light on the practical training and field visits provided during the programme enriching the participants’ learning experience.

Programme Convenor, Professor Aijaz Ahmad Wani, presented a comprehensive report of the weeklong activities and expressed gratitude to the Vice Chancellor for supporting the department's initiatives in regional developmental activities.

Faculty, Department of Botany, Dr Anzar Ahmad Khuroo, Dr M Arief Zargar and Dr M Yaqub Bhat also spoke on the occasion.

The programme featured invited lectures by eminent scientists and subject experts, hands-on training sessions and field visits to cultivation and commercialisation centres.

One of the positive outcomes of the programme was the invitation received from State Medicinal Plant Board for various collaborative initiatives, including the establishment of a Herbal Garden in KU and organising capacity-building programmes, the statement read further, the spokesperson said.

On the occasion, certificates were also distributed among the participants.

Associate Professor, Department of Botany, Dr Seema Singh, conducted the proceedings while Prof Manzoor Ahmad Shah, Department of Botany, proposed the formal vote of thanks, the statement added.