

‘Wetlands for Life’: Media advocacy, effective storytelling crucial for environmental reporting: KU VC

Urges tangible movements to preserve natural resources



Srinagar, May 7: To equip media professionals in academics including media students and scholars with a comprehensive knowledge and practical skills in wetlands conservation and environmental journalism, the Media Education Research Centre

(MERC), University of Kashmir (KU), in collaboration with the Centre for Media Studies (CMS), New Delhi, Tuesday inaugurated a media engagement programme here.

Titled, 'Wetlands for LIFE', the two-day workshop includes a series of engaging sessions, expert presentations and field visits, wherein, the participants explored the ecological significance of wetlands, the role of the media in environmental reporting.

During the inaugural ceremony, KU Vice Chancellor, Prof Nilofer Khan, underlined the significance of wetlands of Kashmir in terms of environmental conservation and said that "media advocacy for their conservation and effective storytelling techniques are crucial for environmental reporting".

She said that wetlands facing imminent threats of degradation and shrinkage need to be preserved and that we need a tangible movement, right from the school-level, to sustain the awareness campaigns by educating the future generation to safeguard natural resources, especially the wetlands.

Head, MERC, Prof Sabeha Mufti, said that the programme aims to discuss the strategy and framework to preserve wetlands facing degradation threats in Kashmir.

"Our wetlands - Wular, Hokar Sar, Khushal Sar, have been facing widespread degradation for the last several years, while the government is doing its best to preserving and restoring them," she said, adding that the workshop empowers the future media professionals with the skillset for objectively reporting environmental issues in Kashmir.

Director CMS, Annu Anand, highlighted the importance of the wetlands in Kashmir, "through which thousands of families are getting their livelihoods".

She said CMS is working hard on issues pertaining to environment across the country. "Last year we launched a programme on a large scale on sustainable development in which around 500 students took part," she said, emphasising the centre's works that have been published in several leading newspapers and magazines.

Forestry and Biodiversity Advisor, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Kunal Bharat, outlined the programme's key focus providing insights into their collaboration with Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WCMA).

"On Wednesday (today), the students we will visit the Wular Shores, where they will be educated practically as to how the wetlands are being preserved and restored through various efforts," he added.

Workshop Coordinator, Dr Afsana Rashid, talked about the conservation efforts for wetlands, and that how MERC aims to inspire and empower the next generation of journalists to become champions of environmental protection and sustainability.

Dr Irfan Hashim, faculty at MERC, co-coordinated the workshop.

Dr Rashid Maqbool, faculty at MERC conducted the proceedings of the event.

The programme was supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) under the BMUV-IKI Project on Wetlands Management for Biodiversity and Climate Protection.