

International symposium on transforming mountain forestry at FRI



Hem Pande, additional secretary, Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, also spoke at the inaugural session. (Source: Express photo by Virender Singh Negi)

Sanjay Singh

Five-day international symposium on transforming mountain forestry in 21st century for the welfare of the mountain people, forests and environment in Hindu Kush Himalayas (HKH) began at Dehradun-based Forest Research Institute (FRI) on Sunday evening.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Dr David Molden, Director General of International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) underlined the need for paradigm shift in managing forests. "A third generation of forest management is imperative given the changing nature of both the mountain societies and ecosystems," Molden told the participants at the symposium. He also gave emphasis on transboundary cooperation in this regard.

Through his video-recorded message, Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar communicated to the gathering that it is first of its kind symposium on a subject of vital interest in the region and looked forward to the outcomes and recommendations of the deliberations. According to Javadekar's video-recorded message, managing Himalayan forest ecosystem

on a transboundary scale is critical of mitigating the impact of climate change for sustaining ecosystem services for the welfare of mountain communities and downstream people.

Delivering keynote address, Dr Christian Korner who is from University of Basel, Switzerland, pointed out the rate at which tree grow should not be confused with carbon storage because growth in itself is part of the carbon cycle. Hem Pande, additional secretary, Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, also spoke at the inaugural session.

Apart from about 250 regional and global experts drawn from 16 different countries, the forest ministers of five states are participating in the symposium. At the inaugural session, deputy minister of Bangladesh Abdullah Al Islam Jakob was present as guest of honour. The ICIMOD and FRI jointly organized the symposium. Participants include ministers, parliamentarians, conservation scientists, forest officials and policy makers. Representative from the countries of Hindu Kush Himalayas- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal- are also participating in the seminar.

According to the press release, Forests cover about 25 per cent of Hindu Kush Himalayas and provide vital ecosystem services. They provide timber and non-timber resources that help sustain local livelihoods, ensure the provision of food, water and energy and protect the environment by sequestering carbon. "In this context, it is imperative for stakeholders in the Hindu Kush Himalayas to promote sustainable and inclusive forestry management that brings together practice, policy and science. Moreover, issues related to forestry management such as the illegal trade of forest products, corridor connectivity, human-wildlife conflict, water management, and value chain sustainability are not confined to national borders and cannot be resolved through isolated efforts. It is hence important to find solutions based on strong transboundary cooperation," the released explained the importance of the symposium.

Organizers expect that the symposium will bring out key policy, practice, and science outputs that can set the pace for transformation of mountain forestry and also create conducive transboundary political and institutional conditions for protecting forest ecosystems while simultaneously improving the lives of rural populations in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region.