

Report on International Mountain Day -2017

Himalayan Forest Research Institute (HFRI), Shimla celebrated **International Mountain Day** on **11th December, 2017**. The scientists, officers, researchers and other staff members of the institute participated in this event.

At the outset, Dr. V.P Tewari, Director, HFRI felicitated the Chief Guest-cum-Keynote Speaker of the event Dr. Tej Pratap, Vice Chancellor, AP Goyal University, Shimla with traditional Himachali cap and shawl.



Dr. V.P.Tewari, Director, HFRI, Shimla felicitating the Chief Guest-cum-Keynote Speaker Dr. Tej Pratap, Vice Chancellor, AP Goyal University, Shimla (H.P)

Dr. Kulraj Singh Kapoor, Group Coordinator (Research) of the Institute formally welcomed Chief Guest-cum-Keynote Speaker Dr. Tej Pratap on behalf of the Director of the Institute. In his welcome address, Dr. Kapoor highlighted the illustrious career of the Dr. Tej Pratap and listed out the contributions of Dr. Pratap for the cause of mountain ecosystem. He informed that Dr. Pratap was the Vice Chancellor of the two Himalayan universities - CSK Himachal Pradesh Agriculture University, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh and Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology, Kashmir, Jammu & Kashmir.



Dr. Kapoor said that Dr. Pratap had a long stint at International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal where he developed keen insight to address the issues of mountain inhabitants as he widely travelled in various mountains of the world. Dr. Tej Pratap has been closely associated with the Mountain Forum- an organization which has been instrumental in collaborating with the United Nation to declare 11th December as International Mountain Day and celebrate the day every year since 2003. Dr. Kapoor further said Dr.

Pratap is known as ‘Mountain Man’ due to his immense contribution in the mountain issues in general and mountain agriculture in particular, and hence it is apt that he is the Chief Guest as well as Keynote Speaker on the occasion of celebrating the event by HFRI, Shimla.

Dr. V.P.Tewari, Director, HFRI while presenting his views on this occasion, gave a brief background of the celebration of International Mountain Day and its importance for creating awareness amongst the masses about the mountain issues. Dr. Tewari highlighted the critical role played by International Mountain Day across the globe to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life and the opportunities as well as constraints in mountain development. Dr. Tewari said that every year there is a specific theme, and this year’ theme ‘Mountains under pressure: climate, hunger and migration’ is very relevant as climate change is a global problem and mountains are very sensitive to the impact of climate change, and hence early indicators. He said that mountain areas in the world including India host about 01 billion people, and over a half of the human population depends on mountains for water, food and clean energy. He told that mountains are known as water tower of the world as mountains provide 60-80 percent of the world’s fresh water.



He further said that there is an inter-related link between climate change, food security and migration pattern; and climate change, land degradation and natural disasters threaten the well being of mountain communities. Dr. Tewari further said that the state of Himachal Pradesh is one of the developed mountain states of India, therefore hunger and migration is not common here but the climate change is a long term threat to all the mountain inhabitants in terms of food

security and hence migration to other areas. He stressed for adaptive measures to combat the onslaught of climate change by reducing carbon footprints.

Dr. Tej Pratap, Chief Guest of the event, in his keynote address lauded the effort of HFRI, Shimla for organizing and celebrating International Mountain Day as the celebration provides an occasion to generate awareness about the importance of mountains and help in ensuring sustainable mountain development. He shared with the audience about early realization in his life as researcher to humanize the research in solving the basic needs of the mountain people i.e. food security. He said that he has been an ecologist by education but he shifted his career towards agriculture, in general and mountain agriculture, in particular so that speedy agricultural research helps in addressing the livelihood issues of the mountain people. He shared his experience in ICIMOD and his involvement in drafting the Chapter 13 'Managing Fragile Ecosystems – Sustainable Mountain Development' of the Agenda 21 of Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. Dr. Pratap said that mountains cover around quarter of the earth's land surface and are home to about 13 percent of the world's population.

Dr. Pratap spoke at length on this year's theme of International Mountain Day. He



conscientiously explained the theme of this year mountain day and said that mountains are really under pressure all over the world. Climate change is real; and as global climate continues to warm, mountain glaciers are melting at alarming rates that will affect freshwater supplies downstream for millions of people. Dr. Pratap said that the most noxious green house gas carbon dioxide is hyperactive and knows no boundary. Therefore, it is important that climate change issues needs to be dealt with seriously by all the nations of the world. He further stressed that there is no time for blame game and politics over climate change for the world leaders.

Dr. Pratap further said that climate change, climate variability and climate-induced disasters increase the vulnerability of mountain peoples to food shortages and extreme poverty. He said that about ninety percent of the world's mountain inhabitants live in developing

countries including India but due to the good governance of the successive governments in the state of Himachal Pradesh, the state is well developed and hunger free.



He further said that as the vulnerability of the mountain populations grow due to climate change, migration will increase. He pointed out the fact the state of Himachal Pradesh is economically developed and he does not foresee any sign of migration as compared to other Himalayan states of India. He added that people of Himachal Pradesh have developed remarkable land use systems, which have evolved through the harmonious co-existence of the communities with environment. He stressed the need to conserve these unique cultures, traditions and knowledge for sustainable mountain development. He further stressed about the fact that there will not be any hunger in Indian Himalayan region as the region is rich repository of biodiversity with range of topography and climate, if natural resources are governed properly and we do not create mess of the economy; however, the mountain people need focus more on education. He told that in the next twenty years country will experience many changes- economy will bloom, agriculture will change - there will be less people in agriculture, migration will increase due to economic consideration but not due to climate change per se. He said that changes are so fast that it is really difficult to visualize future and opined that the issues of climate change, hunger and migration at the global level needs mega efforts but unfortunately our efforts are just micro efforts, and human civilization is already on the threshold of adversity, he remarked.

At the end of his address, Dr. Pratap urged the scientists and researchers of the Institute to focus on those forestry researches that will help in economic upliftment of the mountain people vis-à-vis address the climate change mitigation.

After the keynote address by the Dr. Tej Pratap, discussion took place. Shri Pradeep Bhardwaj, Deputy Conservator of Forests & Extension Officer, HFRI, Shimla moderated the discussion. The officers, scientists, and young researchers expressed their views on theme of the International Mountain Day and shared their experiences working in the Himalayan Mountains of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. The young researchers raised various queries to which Dr. Pratap answered their doubts & questions.

The celebration concluded with the formal vote of thanks by Shri Satya Prakash Negi, Conservator of Forests & Head of Division, Agroforestry & Extension Division, HFRI, Shimla to the Chief Guest -cum- Keynote Speaker, Director HFRI, officers, scientists, researchers and other staff of the Institute for participating in the event .

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Some Glimpses of the Event





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