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IUST holds high-level policy dialogue on leveraging nature-based solutions for fiscal diversification, resilience in J&K

Srinagar, August 6: The four-day international conference on ‘Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) for Enhanced Climate Resilience and Livelihoods in the Himalayas,’ organised by the Islamic University of Science and Technology (IUST), concluded on Friday with a High-Level Policy Dialogue on ‘Leveraging Nature-based Solutions for Fiscal Diversification and Resilience in Jammu and Kashmir’ at Amar Singh Club, Srinagar.

The concluding dialogue brought together representatives from the government, academia, industry, business sector, civil society, including PEC, and other key stakeholders to deliberate on mainstreaming NBS into policy, planning, financing and development practice.

The dialogue was framed around the interconnected challenges of climate risk, fiscal pressure and youth unemployment, and explored how investments in natural systems can simultaneously reduce disaster risks and future public expenditure, strengthen key economic sectors, and generate new employment and enterprise opportunities. The scene-setting presentation also highlighted the need for stronger natural-capital assessment, place-specific data, integrated planning and improved project-preparation and financing mechanisms to translate NBS potential into implementable interventions.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Shakil A Romshoo, Vice Chancellor, IUST, emphasised the need to place nature-based solutions at the centre of inclusive and climate-resilient development. Prof. V. K. Gaur, Emeritus Scientist, CSIR–Fourth Paradigm Institute, Special Guest, spoke on nature-inspired approaches to environmental management, underscoring the importance of learning from natural systems while addressing emerging environmental and developmental challenges. The programme formally included Prof. Romshoo’s opening remarks and Prof. Gaur’s special address.

Ms. Babila Rakwal, Commissioner/Secretary to the Government, Science & Technology Department, along with the Deputy Secretary, Disaster Management Department, J&K, and other senior government officials participated in the deliberations. Government representatives highlighted that several enabling policies and programmes are already in place and stressed the need to systematically incorporate NBS approaches into their implementation. Participants also drew attention to data limitations, fragmented sectoral planning, and the continuing disconnect between policy formulation and implementation, identifying these as key areas requiring coordinated action. The conference scene-setting similarly identified inadequate place-specific baselines, fragmented planning and weak institutional coordination among major barriers to scaling NBS.

The dialogue also witnessed participation from the business and financial sectors, including Mr. Zuhaib Vaid, Regional Head, J&K and Ladakh, Government Banking, ICICI Bank, and Mr. Rakesh Magotra, Chief Compliance Officer, alongside representatives of academia, civil society and other stakeholder institutions.



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The session concluded with discussions on a way forward for strategic NBS/NCS research, policy, planning and financing priorities for the Jhelum River Basin and the wider Himalayas, including the need for a collaborative platform linking science, government, communities and the private sector. Prof. Javed Hussain Mir, Convener of the Conference, and Co-Conveners Dr. Tariq Abdullah, Dr. Irfan Maqbool and Dr. Jasia Bashir, were also present during the concluding deliberations.

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