

“Beat Plastic Pollution” Not Merely a Slogan, India Means Business”: Dr. Harsh Vardhan

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

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State Environment Ministers Conference Inaugurated in the run-up to World Environment Day

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Urging all stakeholders at the national and international level to work towards betterment of environment, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that “Beat Plastic Pollution” is not merely a slogan, but India means business about it. He also added that environment protection is not merely a technical, but a moral issue. Delivering the inaugural address of the State Environment Ministers Conference in the run-up to World Environment Day here today, Dr. Harsh Vardhan pointed out that 25, 000 tonnes of plastic waste is generated every day. He opined that the developed world must provide the technology, funds and share their research on environmental issues. He asserted that there is no waste which cannot be transformed into wealth. Dr. Vardhan cited the example of Kashipur plant, where 10 tonnes of biomass has been converted into 3000 litres of ethanol. The Environment Minister underlined the need to use Earth’s finite resources judiciously, so that we can move back to our glorious past. “If every Indian adopts one Green Good Deed per day, a revolutionary change can be brought about in the nation”, Dr. Harsh Vardhan opined. He urged the State Environment Ministers to inspire people to take up Green Good Deeds and build small, social movements and said that if all work collectively with heart and soul, India can be taken to the top of every parameter in the field of environment.

The Environment Minister underlined that fundamental changes have been brought about in the Environment Ministry and powers have been delegated to the States.

In his address on the occasion, Minister of State, Dr. Mahesh Sharma expressed concern over the pollution caused due to plastic use in India and how it can create problems for future generations. Recalling the Gandhian thought of ‘Cleanliness is Godliness, Dr. Sharma said that this is the spirit behind the theme of “Beat Plastic Pollution”. Advocating the implementation of the Prime Minister’s ‘mantra’ of 6 Rs – Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Retrieve, Recover, Redesign and remanufacture to eliminate single use plastic, Dr. Mahesh Sharma stressed the criticality of a collaborative role of all the stakeholders from the States in dealing with plastic menace.

Addressing the gathering, Executive Director, United Nations Environment pointed out that in India, Mr. Erik Solheim stated that in India, efforts are needed not only from the Government’s side, but also from the people. “Strongly advocating recycling of all the plastic used, he suggested that plastic used for avoidable purposes such as straws must be refused. “We need to make environment a citizen’s issue”, Mr. Solheim said. The senior UN representative felt that universities should form rules and regulations for students to follow environment norms. He assured that UN’s leadership is here to help take Indian practices to the world.

Quoting several examples from India, Mr. Solheim said that solar efficiency of Kerala should be adopted everywhere. He also cited the example of the use of electrical vehicles in Maharashtra

and Telangana, stating that they should be used in all other states. He praised the organisation of various events at this year's World Environment in India and expressed the view that such conferences are important to delineate ongoing pressing issues pertinent to environment.

In his address, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Sushil Kumar Modi raised several issues pertaining to environment. He suggested the adoption of 'Zigzag technology' to reduce carbon emissions from burning of bricks in brick kilns. The CAMPA Fund's rules should be notified at the earliest, so that the funds can be used by the State governments.

In his welcome remarks, Secretary, MoEF&CC, Mr. C.K. Mishra said that if efforts like this can be sustained forever, fulfil all the commitments can be fulfilled and the nation will be a better place in terms of its environment.

Director General, Forest & Special Secretary, MoEF&CC, Mr. Siddhanta Das, Additional Secretary, MoEF&CC, Mr. A.K Jain, senior officers and officials of MoEF&CC and other Ministries/Departments, representatives of United Nations Environment, State Environment Ministers, as well as senior officers and officials from State governments were present in the gathering.

E.K. JanakiAmmal National awards on taxonomy were also given away during the inaugural ceremony. The awards consist of Rs. 5 lakh of cash, a scroll and a medallion. The awards were given to –

- (i) Dr. S.R Yadav for Plant Taxonomy – (Dr. Yadav is a Scientist, Deptt of Botany, Shivaji University, Kolhapur);
- (ii) Dr. P.T Cherian for Animal Taxonomy (Dr. Cherian is Principal Investigator, Department of Zoology, Trivandrum)
- (iii) Dr. S. Sivaji for Microbial Taxonomy – (Dr. S. Sivaji is from Hyderabad).

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Dr. Mahesh Sharma and other dignitaries released The State of Environment Report 2015 on the occasion.



Dr. Harsh Vardhan and other dignitaries releasing the State of Environment Report

National Geographic's plastic wrapper-free magazine (India, US and UK editions) was also released on the occasion. The effort of National Geographic is to educate and inform the public about the environmental threats of single-use plastic. This initiative by National Geographic will save more than 2.5 million single-use plastic bags every month.

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