Dr. Harshvardhan launches Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhayay Vigyan Gram Sankul Pariyojana

Department of Science and Technology is implementing several initiatives for upliftment and economic development of rural areas in the country. A number of appropriate technologies have been developed, demonstrated and deployed at several locations in the country.

The Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harshvardhan today launched "*Pt Deen Dayal Upadhayay Vigyan Gram Sankul Pariyojana"* which will experiment and endeavour to formulate and implement appropriate S&T Interventions for Sustainable Development through cluster approach in Uttarakhand.

Addressing the press, the Minister said that this project has been inspired by teachings and ideals of Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhayay whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year.

DST has conceived to adopt a few clusters of villages in Uttarakhand and transform them to become self-sustainable in a time bound manner through the tools of Science and Technology (S&T). The key deliverable in this approach is to utilise local resources and locally available skill sets and convert them in a manner using science and technology, that substantial value addition takes place in their local produce and services which can sustain the rural population locally. Further, the local communities are not compelled to migrate from their native places in search of jobs and livelihoods. Once this concept is validated in the few selected clusters, it can be replicated across large number of village clusters in the country.

Four clusters at *Gaindikhata, Bazeera, Bhigun* (in Garhwal) and *Kausani* (in Kumaon) have been selected for the intervention through a series of dialogues held among officials of DST and Uttarakhand State Council of Science and Technology (UCOST); Gramodaya Network, Surabhi Foundation and Uttarakhand Utthan Parishad; and other experts. Intensive interaction with local population and field visits were carried out to identify the challenges and opportunities that exist in the clusters.

About a lakh of people would benefit directly or indirectly through this project in four identified clusters of 60 villages in Uttarakhand for pilot phase which are located at different altitudes (up to 3000 meters). As the living conditions and resources available at different altitude is relatively different, the adopted strategy would help in creating models that are appropriate for different altitudes and could then be replicated in other hill states as well.

Areas of interventions in these selected clusters would be processing and value addition of milk, honey, mushroom, herbal tea, forest produce, horticulture and local crops, medicinal & aromatic plants and traditional craft and handloom of Uttarakhand. Post-harvest processing of Kiwi, Strawberry, Cherry, *Tulsi, Adrak, Badi Elaichi* through solar drying technology, extraction of apricot oil using cold press technology. Stringent product and process control interventions for energy and water conservation would also be ensured through this project.

Novel strategies for sustainable development in this ecologically fragile state are important. Practice of agriculture, agro-based cottage industries and animal husbandry in an eco-friendly manner will be emphasized during the implementation of the project.

Sustainable employment and livelihood options within the clusters such as eco-tourism, naturopathy and yoga, are also planned to be promoted.

These clusters would act as model production cum training and demonstration centres. There is a possibility of replicating this pilot phase initiative in other hill states of the country once it is established and stabilized. Various scientific institutions would participate collectively in this endeavour to accomplish the dream of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay towards '*Swavlamban*'.

Department of Science and Technology (DST) has committed Rs 6.3 crore support for a

period of three years for this project.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, former Chairman, KVIC and Director General, Madhya Pradesh Council of Science and Technology and now Chairman, Gramodaya Network and Coordinator Gram Sankul Yojana is steering this unique initiative. Addressing the gathering, he said, ”In my opinion, this is not a routine project. DST has responded to a call from the grassroots by providing technical and scientific inputs which is critical for any project.”

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