

'Plantation best solution to check global warming'

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Pushpa Gujral Science City celebrated van mahotsav by organising a webinar on 'Role of microbes in sustainable forest management'. Around 300 school and college students from all over the state participated through virtual mode. The programme was sponsored by the Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation, Punjab.

Dr Vipin Parkash, programme coordinator (forestry), Forest Research Institute, Dehradun, was the key speaker. Delivering a talk on the occasion, he said soil micro-organisms were important part of the forest ecosystem and play an important role in sustainable development of forestry.

Further, microbial life has been present on earth for at least 3,500 million years and microbes also play numerous roles as silent partners in human activities such as forestry, agriculture, mining and water treatment. A balanced community of micro-organisms is extremely important for health of trees and plays a vital role in converting barren, poor quality land into cultivable land, he added.

Dr Neelima Jerath, Director-General, Science City, said the primary objective of the van mahotsav week celebration was to bring awareness on the environmental issues and educate masses about the need of planting saplings as these are one the best solution to control global warming. For maintaining the ecological balance in a country, a minimum of 33 per cent of land area is required under forests. But in India, the actual forest area is 21.67 per cent only.

However, with a total forest cover of 7,12,249 sq km, India is one of the 10 most forest rich countries of the world and is one of the mega diverse countries and there is dire need to save flora and fauna to prevent forest degradation, she added. The major issue of concern is that the forest cover is not evenly distributed. For example: Punjab has a total forest area of 3.65% only, of which about 1 per cent is very dense forest, 44 per cent is moderately dense and 55 per cent is open forest. This warrants a need to enhance the area under forests in the state.

Dr Rajesh Grover, Director, Science City, said Science City was playing an important role in harbouring rich floral biodiversity and maintaining cactus garden, herbal garden and avenue of rare endangered species. It has 5,500 trees having rich cultural and heritage value at its premises. He emphasised the need to increase plantation activity in Punjab to increase forest cover to 15 per cent at least. Science City also organised two online competitions on "Plant native tree species" and "Heritage trees contest" at the occasion.

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