

For Favour of Publication

“VULNERABILITIES OF WETLANDS AND ITS IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE”

Virtual Seminar

Patna, December 04. The ‘**Vulnerabilities of Wetlands and Its Impact on Climate Change**’ virtual seminar was organised by the Centre for Environment Energy and Climate Change (CEECC) - ADRI.

In the virtual seminar, Dr. Prabhat P Ghosh, Director, CEECC, ADRI welcomed the august gathering and talked about wetland and its importance in our environment. In the special address, Professor Ashok Kumar Ghosh, Chairman, Bihar State Pollution Control Board (BSPCB) highlighted the critical role of wetland in our environment giving special emphasis on the vulnerability of wetlands in Bihar and its present status. He also talked about the management measures carried out for its protection. He talked about Kabar lake in detail and also informed that Kabar lake has been recognized by Ramsar convention as wetlands of importance in October 2020. He also mentioned that 35% of wetlands globally has declined in last 50 years. However, he said that Kabar lake has significantly shrunk since 1988. He also mentioned about the threats to biodiversity linked to the wetlands. Dr. A.K. Ghosh elaborated about the management of the wetlands and mentioned that communities, Government and the business should come together to conserve and restore the wetlands.

Dr. Meenakshi Dhote, Professor, Environmental Planning, School of Planning & Architecture, New Delhi shared her views on the vulnerabilities to the urban wetlands. She also highlighted how the urban development activities are deteriorating the urban wetlands in the city areas in a very fast rate, along with providing the mitigation measures to be implemented for protection in urban cities of Bihar. She explained that wetlands should be identified, mapped and restored accordingly. She also mentioned that wetlands can be used for coconut plantation, fishing, horticulture etc for the livelihood. She said that due to urbanization, the role and importance of wetlands have been overlooked. She also suggested that an action plan is required to be prepared to conserve the wetlands.

Dr. Ritesh Kumar, Director, South-Asia, Wetlands International shared his views and knowledge about the climate change impact on wetlands and how wetlands can play a role in climate change adaptation. He also mentioned climate change impact in Bihar and how much it has been affected. He said that climate change is an additional stressor on wetland, since there are already number of stressor on wetlands existing today. He also highlighted that wetlands act as sinks for greenhouse gases and play an important role in climate change mitigation.

In the keynote address, Shri Deepak Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary, Department Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of Bihar, shared his concerns over the deteriorating wetlands because of climate change and relevant measures undertaken by the Government of Bihar. He also shared his personal views and experiences of wetland vulnerabilities and its restoration method. Along with he also talked about the roadmap of the newly constituted Wetlands Authority of Bihar. He also pointed out that urban planning is the weakest part of the governance in Bihar, since Patna urban has become unplanned city and the wetlands have been covered and converted into habitations. Encroachments, agriculture activity, land reclamation, lack of coordination between the different departments and apathy of the government are the major challenges of conservation of wetlands in Bihar as mentioned by Shri Dipak Kumar Singh. The activities initiated by Bihar Government are : Jal Jeevan Hariyali, formation of separate wing for climate change and wetlands, formation of state wetland authority, community awareness program – as explained by Shri Dipak Kumar Singh. He also suggested that community participation will play an instrumental role in conservation of wetlands. He said that an action plan to conserve and restore the wetlands in Bihar is essentially required.

As a concluding remark, Dr. Ghosh, summarised the panel discussion and highlighted the perspective of vulnerabilities of wetland on the environment and the strategies to be included for reducing the impact of climate change on wetland and along with its management in the state which would play an important role in implementing the strategies.

(Anjani K Verma)