

**International Mountain Day, 2016 Celebrated
at
Himalayan Forest Research Institute, Shimla (Himachal Pradesh, India)**

Himalayan Forest Research Institute (HFRI), Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) observed International Mountain Day under the theme “Mountain Cultures: Celebrating diversity and strengthening identity” at its headquarters on 11 December, 2016. The event featured talk and discussion on the theme by the scientists, officers, research scholars and the staff of the Institute. Dr. V.P.Tewari, Director, HFRI, Shimla chaired the session.

Shri S.P.Negi, Conservator of Forests -cum- Head, Agro-forestry & Extension Division welcomed the Director, HFRI, Shimla and the participants. Shri Negi initiated the talk after giving a brief overview of the origin of the International Mountain Day and its importance.

Dr. V.P. Tewari, Director, HFRI, Shimla in his opening remarks highlighted the critical role played by International Mountain Day across the globe to create awareness about the importance of mountains to life and the opportunities as well as constraints in mountain development. Dr. Tewari said that many mountain areas in the world including India host ancient indigenous communities who possess unique traditions, knowledge, languages and cultures. He further said that mountain peoples have developed remarkable land use systems, which are rich in globally significant biodiversity and have evolved through the harmonious co-existence of communities with environment. He stressed the need to conserve these unique cultures, traditions and knowledge for sustainable mountain development.



Dr. Ranjeet Singh, Head, Entomology & Forest Protection Division, HFRI, Shimla said that he belongs to Punjab province and shared his 16 years' experience working with people in the mountain villages of Himachal Pradesh after joining HFRI, Shimla. He said that he has observed that mountain people are deeply religious, simple, truthful and straight forward.



Dr. Vaneet Jishtu, Scientist, HFRI, Shimla also shared his experiences working with different mountain people in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir and highlighted how the issues and challenges to mountain development in these different places are similar as well as different.

Dr. Rajesh Sharma and Dr. Pawan Rana, Scientists of HFRI, Shimla also shared their experiences working with mountain people. Dr. Rana expressed his concern about the erosion of traditional culture & values amongst the mountain people. He attributed this change mainly due to effect of urbanization & modernization.



Sh. Sunil Waman Bhondge, Research Assistant Grade who belongs to Maharashtra and working in HFRI, Shimla for the past 8 years also shared his experiences of working with mountain people and appreciated their simplicity and unique cultures and stressed that these uniqueness of mountain needs to be preserved.

The celebration ended with vote of thanks to the chair and the participants.

