

Celebration of the Earth Day 2024 – A Report

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To celebrate Earth Day, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), New Delhi has teamed up with the Geological Society of India (GSI), Bangalore to organize an event on 22nd April 2024. The venue for this event was Dronacharya Hall, located in NIDM, New Delhi. The primary objective of this event is to increase awareness and promote understanding regarding the theme of Planet Vs Plastic. The event was conducted incorporating a hybrid format- physical as well as online.

Professor. Surya Parkash, Head GMR Division of NIDM, New Delhi, welcomed the dignitaries and informed the audience of the importance of the event. During his speech, he placed great emphasis on the origin of Earth Day, providing a detailed account of its inception in 1970. In addition to that, he went into great detail and conducted an extensive discussion about the urgent problem of plastic pollution, emphasizing its devastating impacts on the ecosystems of our planet. Additionally, he mentioned that Earth Day serves as a platform that brings together people and organizations worldwide, fostering awareness and encouraging participation in various activities aimed at addressing urgent environmental concerns. Additionally, he elaborated on the importance of a systematic approach to nature conservation for disaster risk reduction, emphasizing the pressing nature of tackling the issues associated with plastic pollution. In his discussion, he provided a detailed explanation of the numerous problems and disadvantages associated with plastic, highlighting its detrimental effects on ecosystems and biodiversity. In addition, he highlighted the government's ongoing efforts, which were initiated in May 2016, to tackle the issue of plastic pollution. He motivated and urged both individuals and communities to take proactive measures in order to significantly decrease their usage of plastic, emphasizing the importance of doing so for the well-being of the environment and human health.

The message received from Padma Shree Prof. Harsh Gupta, President of the Geological Society of India, Bangalore was shared with the audience. Prof. Harsh Gupta commended the joint efforts of NIDM and the Geological Society of India in celebrating Earth Day in Delhi, with a focus on the theme 'Planet Vs Plastic'. During the Earth Day deliberations in Delhi last year, Professor Harsh Gupta emphasized the importance of building a society that is resilient to earthquakes. If another earthquake like the one that occurred on April 4, 1905 in Kangra were to happen again, it would result in a significant loss of human lives. One instance is the devastating 2005 earthquake in Muzaffarabad, which occurred on the India-Pakistan border and resulted in the loss of 87,000 lives. There are inspiring examples that demonstrate how a determined effort to build a society resistant to earthquakes has yielded outstanding outcomes. As an illustration, a

powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 7.0 struck Haiti in the Caribbean on January 12, 2010, resulting in the loss of approximately 316,000 lives. A resolute effort to tackle the situation yielded positive results when a 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck Haiti on August 14, 2021, near the epicenter of the 2010 earthquake, resulting in a relatively low casualty count of around 3000 lives. Taiwan provides a more recent example. The Chichi earthquake in Taiwan on September 21, 1999 resulted in the loss of approximately 2400 lives, whereas a similar earthquake in Taiwan on April 3, 2024 caused only 9 fatalities. It is crucial to commemorate Earthquake Day every year. Countries that dedicate an annual day to earthquake awareness have shown improved response when earthquakes happen. It has been found that in the 21st Century, if earthquakes of magnitude like the 1819 Kutch, 1905 Kangra and 1934 Bihar-Nepal occurred, and number of human lives lost will be several folds more reflecting the increase in population and infrastructure. The only time when the number of casualties was lower than the 1934 Bihar-Nepal earthquake, despite a significant increase in population, was during the Gurkha earthquake on April 15, 2015. One of the reasons being Nepal observing 16 January every year as the earthquake safety day. He strongly encouraged all of us to observe Earthquake Day in this brief message.

Shri. Rajendra Ratnoo (IAS), Executive Director of NIDM, New Delhi, discussed his personal experiences in the successful campaign to eliminate plastic in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu. During his presentation, he highlighted the Campaign Design employed in his Kanyakumari Project, which consisted of 6 Es (Experimental, Evaluation, Education, Eradication, Empowerment, and Enforcement). This serves as a model for other states to follow when dealing with such matters. He stressed his commitment to stopping the use of plastic for a sustainable future while addressing the participants. He mentioned that a 60% reduction will be mandated by 2040. His approach to addressing solid and plastic waste involved a strategy that included testing, evaluation, education, and raising awareness. This effort demonstrates the potential for collective action in achieving notable environmental goals.

Prof. Prateek Sharma, Vice Chancellor of Delhi Technological University, New Delhi, highlighted the importance of individuals and communities in tackling environmental issues during his keynote lecture. He stressed the significance of students' involvement in reducing plastic usage and highlighted the global importance of Earth Day. Prof. Sharma pointed out the concerning statistics, revealing that companies generate a staggering fifty million tonnes of plastic annually, of which only 10% is recycled. He stressed the urgent need for effective plastic management systems that encompass production and disposal phases. Prof. Sharma discussed the severe impact of plastic



A presentation on “Microplastics in the Ocean” was given by Prof. R. Baskar from Indira Gandhi National Open University. During his presentation, he brought attention to the alarming prevalence of microplastics in the ocean. During his speech, he shared a alarming statistic that caught everyone’s attention. It is estimated that a staggering 1 million plastic water bottles are purchased globally every minute. This alarming rate of consumption results in a mind-boggling 8 million tonnes of plastic waste being dumped into the ocean each year. In his speech, he not only highlighted the need for urgent action but also emphasized the harmful impact of microplastics on the food chain. In addition to that, he emphasized the importance of Earth Day and its mission to achieve a specific set of core goals. Some of the goals that we have set for ourselves include promoting the establishment of green schools and educational programs, creating sustainable employment opportunities for the community, and actively advocating for the increased utilization of renewable energy sources. Additionally, during his discussion, he emphasized the importance of individuals and organizations actively participating in meetings to tackle environmental concerns. Moreover, he underscored the value of fostering lifestyle adjustments (Mission LiFE), such as actively reducing one’s carbon footprint and ensuring the proper disposal of electronic waste. Alongside showcasing the official Earth Day video, he engaged the audience with interactive discussions, which added to the overall atmosphere of the event.

pollution on marine life and warned of a potential triple increase in plastic waste if immediate action is not taken. He outlined three important steps to tackle this issue: raising awareness and encouraging volunteerism, creating effective and consistent campaign tactics, and advocating for the elimination of single-use plastics.

In his video message, Dr. M. Ravichandran, Secretary of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India, underscored the negative consequences that plastics have on marine biodiversity. He stressed the immediate necessity of embracing alternative materials that are sustainable, biodegradable, and can effectively replace plastic, underlining the significance of reducing its negative impact. During his speech, Dr. Ravichandran emphasized the utmost significance of education in reducing plastic consumption, highlighting the imperative for collaboration among diverse organizations and nationwide initiatives. During his speech, he placed great emphasis on the significance of expanding knowledge and promoting responsible plastic consumption within both individuals and communities. In his speech, Dr. Ravichandran placed great emphasis on the Ministry’s unwavering dedication to combatting plastic pollution. He stressed the importance of extensive and cooperative actions, underscoring the significance of sustainable methods in preserving and protecting marine ecosystems as well as biodiversity.

Following the event, there was an interactive session. The participants inquired about various topics and shared their opinions on matters related to the environment. The interactive session saw the participation of students from Kendriya Vidyalaya, located in New Delhi. The entire programme was moderated by Mr. Shubham Badola, who is a member of the GMR Division, NIDM.

The vote of thanks was given by Mr. Surendra Thakur, the Joint Director of the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM). He made it a point to express his sincere appreciation and gratitude towards the distinguished guests, participants, and the dedicated organizing team, acknowledging their remarkable contributions that were instrumental in making the event a resounding success. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of curbing plastic use and provided a detailed overview of the initiatives being undertaken by the NIDM to tackle this pressing issue. One of the key points he emphasized was that these actions have the ultimate objective of reducing the generation of plastic waste and fostering sustainability not only within the organization but also in the wider community. By demonstrating their commitment to the environment, the NIDM aspires to inspire others to join them in their journey towards building a more environmentally conscious society.