

World Wetland Day 2012

World Wetland Day is celebrated on 2nd February each year to mark the signing of the convention on Wetlands at Ramsar, Iran in 1971 with the main mission of Conservation of Wetlands at a global level. As is known, Wetlands are among the most precious natural resources and perform multiple environmental functions and provide various ecosystem services for the welfare of humanity. Their insensitive depletion, despite their exceedingly critical role to human survival, is indeed a matter of great concern.

In each country the day is celebrated by organizing various panel discussions, cultural programs, exhibition/painting/slogan/quiz contests for different levels of society. Participants are encouraged to participate on different environmental themes and prizes are distributed to talented participants on the basis of their performance.

All such events in every country are organized at State level too to sensitize people about values and functions of wetlands and need for their conservation in a sustainable manner. Ramsar Convention chooses different themes every year for celebrating this auspicious occasion. This year's theme for World Wetland Day is **'Wetlands and Tourism'**. A National level programme for World Wetland Day this year was organized at Thiruvananthapuram in Keral in collaboration with Kerala State Council for Science Technology for environment and Centre for Earth Science Studies at Kanakakunnu Palace.

On first February various competitions were organized with different levels of students on various environmental themes. On 2nd February a seminar on wetland & tourism was organized. The inauguration of the national celebration and the seminar was done by Shri Oommen Chandy Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala and the meeting was presided over by Shri K. Muraleedharan, MLA. Chief Minister informed about setting up of Wetland Authority in a State and also opening up of Wetland Institute at Kottayam. He also informed that State Govt. was preparing comprehensive Management Action Plans for all the identified Wetlands from the State. He was of the opinion that Kerala has a bright future for ecotourism and this can be the best method for preserving our cultural heritage. He gave away trophies and certificates to prize winning students who won various competitions on the eve of World Wetland Day.

Shri Murleedharan in his presidential speech laid emphasis on degradation of wetland s in the State and urged for their immediate protection and conservation.

Mrs. Meera Mahrishi, Additional Secretary, MoEF talked about various threats to water bodies and how we can combat these through various schemes launched in the Ministry for conservation of water bodies. She also informed the gathering that National Wetland Programme has been merged with the National lake conservation plan to give it more strength and deal it in a multi-disciplinary manner.

Executive Vice President of KSCST and ex-officio Principal Secretary, Science & Technology Department, prof. V.N Rajsekhran Pillai outlined the importance of the Wetlands in mitigating climate change. Advisor (MoEF) Dr. S. Kaul wanted more pro-active attitude of the State Govt. to deal with environmental issues and requested State Govt. to make this programme more meaningful and result oriented in terms of execution. He also emphasized on need for formidable data base in the field of Research and Development so that it is helpful in preparing predictive models for Wetland restoration. He promised all help from Ministry in this regard as and when required. Director (CESS) Dr. N.P. Kurian informed about various action programmes in state for wetland conservation. Member Secretary, KSCST Dr. K.K. Ramachandran proposed a vote of thanks.

Inaugural function was followed by technical session. In the opening presentation, Dr. Siddharth Kaul, Advisor, MoEF talked about National Wetland Conservation Programme and Ramsar Convention. He also briefly talked about recently published wetland Conservation Rules which need to be executed by all States for not using wetlands beyond their carrying capacity. He wanted State Govt.'s to take up Wetland Conservation Programme in a more realistic manner particularly taking into consideration their role in-charging aquifers.

Former Executive Director for Central Water Resource Development and Management of (CWRDM) Dr. E.J. James talked about Management River basin in relation to wise use of wetlands for sustainable development. He emphasized on interplay of social, economic, environmental and institutional factors.

Former Managing Director of Kerala Tourism Development Corporation Shri K.G. Mohanlal emphasized on role of local communities for various tourism initiatives so that negative dependence of the community develops into positive one. The coordinator wetland technical unit KSCST, Dr. P. Harinarayanan summed up all the activities of the day and thanked all the participants for their active role in giving suggestions for conservation of wetland in the state.

Painting competition



Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE

Painting competition



Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE

Elocution



Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE

Quiz



Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



Welcome address by Prof. V.N. Rajesekharan Pillai, Principal Secretary, Science and Technology Department, Government of Kerala.



Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala Shri. Oommen Chandy Inaugurating the Celebrations by lighting the lamp

Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



Ms. Meera Mehrishi addressing the gathering on the importance of world wetland day 2012



Shri. K. Muraleedharan, MLA delivering the Presidential Address

Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



Inaugural address By Hon'ble Chief Minister of Kerala Shri. Oommen Chandy.



Prize distribution to winners of the competitions by
Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri. Oommen Chandy

Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



Felicitation by Dr. Siddarth Kaul, Advisor, MoEF, Government of India



Felicitation by Dr. N.P. Kurian, Director Centre for Earth Science Studies

Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



Vote of thanks: Dr. K.K. Ramachandran, Member Secretary, KSCSTE



Dr. E.J James, Former executive director, CWRDM, Speaks about the Management of wetlands

Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE



The delegates for the celebrations



Summing up : Dr. P. Harinarayanan, Coordinator, Wetland Technical Unit, KSCSTE