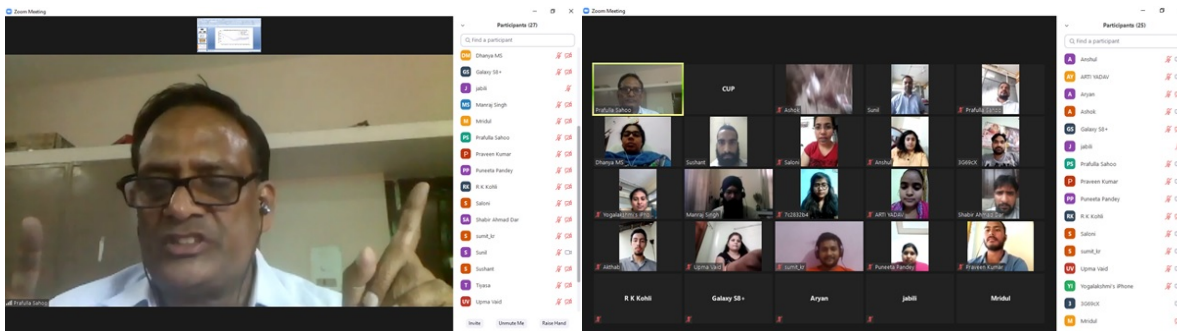


Activity Report

Central University of Punjab organized a Webinar on “Impact of COVID19 Lockdown on Environment” on World Environment Day

5th June 2020, Bathinda: To celebrate World Environment Day 2020, the Department of Environmental Science and Technology, Central University of Punjab Bathinda (CUPB) organized a Webinar on the theme “Impact of COVID19 Lockdown on Environment” on 5th June 2020. CUPB Honorable Vice-Chancellor Prof R.K. Kohli presided over the Event. The keynote speaker of this Webinar was eminent Environmental Scientist Prof Vinod Garg. He talked about the impact of COVID19 Lockdown on Air Quality, Water Quality, Wildlife, Carbon emissions, Deforestation, Food Production, and other environmental aspects. More than 100 participants from across the country participated in this programme through digital teaching aids.

In the beginning, Dr Sunil Mittal, Associate Dean, School of Environment and Earth Sciences, welcomed the participants and introduced the keynote speaker. During his Lecture, Prof V.K. Garg mentioned that the Novel Coronavirus (SARS-Cov2) has affected almost every country of our planet. He informed that, till date, more than 6.5 million infected cases have been reported on account of COVID 19 pandemic, and nearly 3.87 Lakhs persons lost their life due to this virus. To control its spread, most countries have adopted the strategies of nationwide lockdown and massive COVID-19 screening tests. He discussed the effect of these strategies on the environment by citing recent examples.



Prof. Vinod K. Garg delivering lecture during the Webinar

He informed that the sharp decline in the use of transportation and industrial activities during lockdown has resulted in the reduction of global carbon emissions by 17 %. In this period, the Nitrogen Oxide levels have reduced from 20-30% in all major cities of China, Europe, USA and India which has resulted in improvement in Air Quality everywhere. He said, that the two-month Lockdown has resulted in improvement in water quality levels of all the rivers of our country. The level of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) in all lakes (including Vembanad Lake at Kerala) has decreased by up to 16 % due to the reduction of wastewater discharge from metal-based industries & sea-food industries. He added, during this period, the Ganga River Water was found suitable for bathing, and propagation of fishes, as it has registered higher Dissolved Oxygen (DO) level & lesser chemical ratio.

While talking about the effect of COVID19 Lockdown on Wildlife, Prof Garg stated that during this period, there was an increase in fish biomass in rivers and surge in the population of birds & butterflies. The decline in water pollution has allowed breathing space to endangered species like South Asian Dolphins in Indian rivers. But, during this lockdown, the poaching of wild animals got increased and many cases were reported regarding the killing of animals. He informed that according to “Conservation International Report”, the tropical deforestation has increased since the COVID19 Lockdown restrictions came into effect around the world. He mentioned that, during this period, the small scale farmers initiated the adoption of digital technology, to sell their products.

In his lecture, Prof Garg also put a light on the challenges occurred in managing COVID19 Biomedical Waste. He shared his concern that the disposal of gloves, wipes, and sanitizer bottle with municipal waste in open spaces may affect rag pickers and the general public. He added, environmental scientists have found minuscule traces of Novel Coronavirus in non-portable/wastewater in Australia and Paris. Therefore, it is essential that sewage workers should use standard practices and personal protective equipment while performing their work tasks. During this interactive session, participants shared their queries with the speaker, and which were adequately answered by them