



India releases Guidelines for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem

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The Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India and the G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development (GBPIHED), today released a new report titled, **“Governance for Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem: Guidelines and Best Practices (G-SHE)”**. The Report, released today by Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of State for Environment & Forests (Independent Charge), Government of India, puts together key guidelines related to the governance and management of the Himalayan ecosystem, along with relevant case studies. “G-SHE” is an appropriate acronym, given the pivotal role played by women in managing the Himalayan ecosystem on a day-to-day basis.

The Report will form a key input into the formulation of India’s National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, under India’s National Action Plan for Climate Change. India is putting together this Mission recognising the importance of the Himalayan region as a unique repository of biodiversity, and considering its sensitivity to climatic and anthropogenic changes. This Mission aims to scientifically study the impact of climate change on the Indian Himalaya, and puts in place adaptation measures to meet the growing challenge. The Mission will bring together the efforts of climatologists, glaciologists, other experts as well as local stakeholders. The details of the Mission are under preparation and are likely to be finalized in the next few months.

The guidelines in the Report cover a wide variety of issues – including urbanization, tourism, water security, energy, forest management and infrastructure – all of which are highly pertinent as the Himalaya faces new and increased pressures. While substantial literature on the subject of sustainable management of the Himalaya already exists, this is often dispersed across institutions and publications. This Report attempts to collate key learnings from this literature at one place, embodied in a set of guidelines and best practices for various aspects of the governance and management of the Himalayan ecosystem. The guidelines in this document cover a wide variety of issues – including urbanization, tourism, water security, energy, forest management and infrastructure – all of which are highly pertinent as the Himalaya face new and increased challenges and pressures.

This Report is meant to be a working document, to provide the basis on which new approaches and practices can be adopted. The Report has been put in the public domain, including on the website of the Ministry, and comments and inputs are being sought from State governments, domestic and international institutions, civil society, local communities and other stakeholders.

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), which occupies a strategic position along the entire northern boundary of the country and administratively covers 10 states in their entirety (i.e., Jammu & Kashmir; Himachal Pradesh; Uttarakhand; Sikkim; Arunachal Pradesh; Nagaland; Manipur; Mizoram; Tripura; Meghalaya) and two states partially (i.e., the hill districts of Assam and West Bengal), has wide ranging ecological and socio-economic significance. Besides innumerable goods, IHR generates a plethora of services not only for Himalayan inhabitants but also influences the lives of people living well beyond its boundaries. Among other services, the region, with its large area under permanent snow cover and glaciers, forms a unique water reservoir that feeds several important perennial rivers. With its vast green cover, IHR also acts as a giant carbon ‘sink’. IHR also forms a considerably large part of identified Himalayan Biodiversity global hotspot. The region, however, is facing environmental problems on account of various factors including the stress caused by anthropogenic activities. Even geologically, the Himalayan ecosystem falls under the most vulnerable category. Therefore the environmental issues being faced by the IHR are of critical importance.