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Press Release

JMI and University of Manchester jointly organizes dissemination Workshop on 'District Level Heat Threshold and Heat Wave Vulnerability Assessment in India'

The Department of Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) in collaboration with School of Environment, Education and Development, the University of Manchester, U.K organized a one-day dissemination Workshop on 'District Level Heat Threshold and Heat Wave Vulnerability Assessment in India' on May 10th, 2024. The inaugural function was held at the FTK-CIT Hall of the University. Prof. Haroon Sajjad, Head, Department of Geography, JMI, warmly welcomed all the distinguished guests, officials, delegates, faculty members and researchers from different academic and research institutions across India and abroad. Dr. Upasak Das Principal Investigator of the Project, the University of Manchester, U.K briefly highlighted the motivation, themes, and potential issues to be taken up as part of the workshop.

Prof. Eqbal Hussain, the officiating Vice Chancellor, JMI was the Chief Guest. In his inaugural address, the Vice Chancellor highlighted the impact of heat waves and called for proactive measures to reduce it. The repercussions of heat waves even extend beyond immediate health concerns, impacting various aspects of livelihoods and urban sustainability. The most vulnerable populations, including daily-wage laborers and street vendors, are exposed to heat waves while working outdoors for long, he said. He further stressed that since the frequency and severity of heat waves continue to escalate, proactive measures including enhanced early warning systems, investment in cooling infrastructure, and widespread awareness campaigns are imperative to safeguard public health and mitigate the impacts of heat waves in India. Nature itself has provided solutions to cope with heat waves. He suggested consuming watermelons and muskmelons during heat waves.

Prof. Amitabh Kundu, a renowned Geographer delivered the Keynote Address of the Workshop at the inaugural function. Prof. Kundu emphasized the need of integrating exposure and household characteristics of the rural and urban areas for assessing heat wave vulnerability. Heat waves pose a significant threat to both urban and rural communities, with rural areas facing additional challenges due to prolonged exposure and outdoor work. This increased vulnerability amplifies the risk of heat-related illnesses, especially in regions already prone to extreme heat.

Prof. Kundu further said that the recent data shows a concerning increase in heat-related fatalities, emphasizing the urgent need for proactive measures. Vulnerable

groups, such as schoolchildren, face higher risks during heat waves due to their fixed schedules and limited access to cooling resources. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive strategies that account for both geographical and demographic nuances, ensuring effective protection for all communities against the threats posed by heat waves.

The Guest of Honour, Prof. Sanghamitra Sheel Acharya, Centre of Social medicine and Community Health, JNU spoke about the drivers of heat waves vulnerability. She pointed out the metropolization of urban spaces is adding to the heat extremities and therefore requires revisiting policies towards urban/urbanization, housing, and water. This also need to be nested in National health Policy. She further called for short term measures to reduce the impact of heat waves. Use of summer fruits and provision of daytime shelter to working population may reduce the impact, she suggested.

Prof. Tabrez Alam Khan, Dean, Faculty of Sciences, JMI was the Distinguished Guest of the function. He appreciated the contribution of the Department of Geography, JMI in organizing academic programmes. He highlighted the impact of heatwaves on vulnerable population and sectors of economy. Heat waves in India have caused severe health implications, especially for elderly people and children. These waves have also affected the agricultural economy, water resources and livestock. Further, the occurrence of such waves has caused losses in working hours. This has not only affected individual productivity but also has broader implications for labour capacity and economic output, Prof. Alam said. He emphasized the need to find effective strategies to increase rural and urban resilience.

Dr. Meheub Sahana, Leverhulme Fellow & Lecturer in GIS, the university of Manchester, U.K delivered his address on District Level Heat Wave Vulnerability Assessment in India. Dr Sahana in his address highlighted the methodological framework for assessing heat wave vulnerability. He constructed a vulnerability index using relevant indicators of exposure, sensitivity and adaptation. He demonstrated the maps of all the components of vulnerability and integrated composite heat wave vulnerability in India. His study has not only identified the heatwave vulnerable districts but also identified the various domains of vulnerability where the efforts could be made to reduce the impact of heat waves.

Dr. Kashif Imdad and Dr. Bhanu Mall, The advisors, Uttar Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority, Government of Uttar Pradesh shared findings of their study on 'District level Heat Wave Threshold Determination and its Policy Impacts. In an interactive discussion, Dr. Meheub Sahana conducted a roundtable discussion on the scope of Research on Heatwaves in South Asia and Future Collaborations using an online questionnaire. The session was chaired by Prof. Bhaswati Das, JNU. It was an overwhelming participation in the discussion and effective measures were suggested for future progression of the research.

The programme was attended by the delegates from the University of Manchester, U.K, Kathmandu University, Nepal, Integrated Research and Action for Development, New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority, Government of Uttar Pradesh. The programme was conducted smoothly by Dr. Ghazal Salahuddin, Workshop Incharge and vote of thanks was presented by Prof. Mary Tahir, Department of Geography, JMI.

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