

International Year of Mountains 2002 Celebration in Nepal

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The UN General Assembly called all the governments, INGOs, NGOs, private sector, individuals and UN organizations to celebrate year 2002 as an International Year of Mountains (IYM) by adopting a resolution in 1998, which encourages taking the advantage of the resolution to increase public awareness towards the importance of sustainable mountain development. Mountains occupy about one-fifth of the world's land surface; provide life support to one-tenth and goods and services to more than half of the world's population. This reflects the importance to protect and encourage ecological, social and economical aspects of mountain not only for the welfare of the mountain community but equally for the communities living in lowlands.

Being composed of about 86% of mountains, we believe that the celebration provides us a unique opportunity to push the mountain agenda globally, regionally and nationally to achieve the goal of sustainable mountain development in Nepal. We should not consider the celebration merely a series of events taking place only in one year. It is an opportunity to launch long-term efforts for sustainable mountain development extending beyond 2002. Therefore, the success of IYM depends on many grounds such as research and exchange of information, effective awareness campaign, training, education, capacity building, well designed policy, coordinated, committed and dedicated action for well being of both mountain and lowland people.

The main objective of the IYM 2002

- Ensure the present and future well being of mountain communities by promoting conservation and sustainable development in mountain areas.
- Increase awareness of, and knowledge on mountain ecosystem, their dynamics and functioning and their importance in providing goods and service essential to well being of both rural and urban, highland and lowland community partially for water supply and food security.
- Promote and defend cultural heritage of mountain communities / societies.
- Pay attention to frequent conflicts in mountain areas and to promote peace making in those regions.

Nepal's Initiatives

As many of us are aware that His Majesty's Government has formed a high level National Coordination Committee comprising of eight members for the celebration of the IYM. The Hon'ble Minister and the Secretary of Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation are Coordinator and Member Secretary of it respectively. As mandated the National Coordination Committee has formed a nine members Executive Committee Chaired by the Secretary, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. The Executive Committee is composed of representatives from the governmental organization, INGOs and private sectors for celebrating IYM 2002. The Executive Committee has already launched some programmes for observing International Year of Mountains 2002.

IYM Launch

Mountain botanical garden was declared open at Daman, Makawanpur along with launching of the IYM 2002, on 1st January by the Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and National Coordinator of IYM 2002.

Prior to this, Press conference was also organized at the IYM Secretariat on 31st Dec 2001 to promote and encourage the understanding of the media representative regarding the objectives and activities of the IYM for its propagation through media. The National Coordinator was invited as the chief guest and all the Executive Committee members were also present at the occasion.

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Other IYM related Event and Activities

To mark the International Year of Mountains 2002, Radio Nepal and Nepal Television broadcasted interaction programme on 1st January 2002 to encourage the understanding of the IYM. Notice has been published calling essays from the student on separate topics given for each region. Similarly, special issue of "Kalpabrikha" on mountains was published from the Department of Forests on 2nd January and Buffer Zone of the Sagarmatha National Park was declared on 3rd January 2002 by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. The Secretariat of IYM 2002 and Nobel Academy jointly organized inter-school poetry competition on mountains on the occasion of 27th Education Day. All together 34 students from 17 schools from Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts participated in the competition. Renowned guest poets had also recited their poems on mountains during the programme. The Secretariat and Valley Public School, Galfutar jointly organized a Road Race Competition to highlight the importance of the mountains to the school students. The competition was participated by 100 students from 20 schools in which 60 out of them were boys and 40 were girls. The Chief guest, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and National Coordinator of IYM 2002 spoke on the occasion and gave away the prizes, medals and certificates to the winners of the competition.

The International Seminar on Mountain was organized on March 6-8, 2002 by Royal Nepal Academy for Science and Technology to commemorate the International Year of Mountain 2002. The conference focused mainly on six major areas of mountain research and development (i) high altitude medicine (ii) biodiversity conservation (iii) dynamics and geology of mountain (iv) water resources and energy (v) agricultural practices (vi) eco-tourism.

The seminar was participated by more than 285 scientists, doctors, resource managers, environmentalists, policy makers represented from 110 national and international organization of 20 different countries represented major mountain chains of the world.

The seminar concluded with Kathmandu declaration for peace and stability in the mountains when many

mountain areas are facing threats as the armed conflicts and violence.

Wildlife week, which is celebrated every year in all the National Parks, wildlife reserves and conservation areas was capitalized to take advantage from the event also for the cause of promoting awareness on mountain issues. This event was organized from 14-20 April 2002. The programmes were focused mostly on: Eco trekking, Identification of flora and fauna, Training for bird watching and bird identification, Mountain ecosystem threats and Conservation Strategies.

Students from local schools and staff were benefited from the programme.

Sustainable mountain development also depends on the wise use of plant resources. Majority of the mountain people's livelihood depend on the collection and selling of herbs, which constitute one of the major exporting item for earning foreign currency. In order to promote understanding and importance of plants, Plant Day is observed every year on 11th April 2002 by the Department of Plant Resources. The IYM Secretariat actively participated in organizing the above events.

An Interaction Programme on "Mountains: Problems or Glory" was jointly organized with Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalist to sensitize the policy makers. The event was participated by 60 participants including 15 members of the parliament, 20 media representatives and experts of various disciplines. The participants emphasized the need for protecting Sivalik Range, develop appropriate policy to conserve the watershed, protect forests and biodiversity, provide alternative income to poor communities, develop mechanism to stop migration from hills and mountains, maintain ecological balances and beauties of the hills.

IYM programme is also being broadcasted in Kantipur FM from 1 May 2002 on every Saturday at 7:30 am and also broadcasted in Radio Nepal through *Nasa* and *Banbatika*, which is being organised, by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and Department of Forests respectively. The proposal entitled "A proposal for conservation, development and promotion to commemorate IYM 2002" prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed

Management has been materialized. For the implementation of this project Swiss Development Agency (SDC) has provided a grant assistance of about NRs. 600,000.00. The agreement has been signed recently between SDC & Bajrayogini Sewa Samitee. It is expected that the proposed programme will help conserve local cultural heritage by providing alternative livelihood through promoting local tourism.

Programme in Pipeline

Special Postal Stamp has been designed from the Department of Postal Services in collaboration with IYM Secretariat and will be released shortly.

Similarly, Royal Nepal Academy of Science and technology and Nepal Forester's Association have

prepared a proposal for organizing Mountain Technology Fair and Exhibition of Forests products respectively to make aware of the importance of the forests and its resources to the general people. Bamboo trade fair have also been proposed from Department of Forest Research and Survey.

The Secretariat is also planning to organize a Symposium on High Altitude Mountain Development on October 1-3, 2002 to celebrate International Year of Mountains in collaboration with District Development Committee of Mustang to explore the long-term vision for sustainable mountain development, which could be utilized for long term planning for mountain development.