

We should act as 'trustees' to our natural environment, as Gandhiji advised

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The Vice President Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu today said that everyone must become a warrior in the movement to protect the environment in the light of the climate crisis the world is going through. "From Panchayat to Parliament, all stakeholders must act proactively in protecting the environment", he added.

He also stressed the need to act stringently with violators of pollution laws and consider strict enforcement of the 'Polluter Pays' principle.

Highlighting the recent disasters such as the flash floods in Himachal Pradesh, landslides in Uttarakhand and heat waves in Canada and the United States, he said they are instances of increasing frequency of extreme weather events due to global warming and climate change. He added that 'these are tell-tale signs that climate change is real and cannot be wished away.'

Shri Naidu also expressed concern about the recent lightning-related deaths in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and noted that the increased lightning strikes (34 per cent more in India during 2020-21 compared to the previous year) are also being linked by scientists to the climate crisis.

Interacting with the trainees at Swarna Bharat Trust, Hyderabad, the Vice President said that in the light of these worrisome trends, it is imperative for us to co-exist harmoniously with nature and protect the environment to ensure the well-being of all. Going forward, the Vice President suggested that it is extremely important to balance our developmental needs with environmental protection. "It cannot be business as usual", he stressed.

Recalling the importance given to nature in Indian civilisation, the Vice President said that we should act as 'trustees' to our natural environment, as Gandhiji advised. He noted India's commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, leadership in forging the International Solar Alliance and called for even greater substantive global efforts towards mitigating climate change.

The Vice President also underscored how environment and health are deeply intertwined. "Studies have

revealed that spending time in nature lowers blood pressure, reduces stress and enhances emotional well-being. Being close to nature leaves us rejuvenated”, he noted. He called for creating awareness from a young age on the need to live in harmony with nature. “It was also found that children who received outdoor training were more satisfied and emotionally well-balanced. Every school should make outdoor activities like gardening and trekking an integral part of the curriculum”, he emphasized.

Speaking to the young trainees at the Trust, Shri Naidu expressed concern about the increasing cases of myopia among children. He referred to his interaction with experts at the L V Prasad Eye Institute and cautioned that, according to experts, 64 million children living in urban areas in the country are likely to have myopia by 2050 if no anti-myopia measures are initiated soon.

Referring to the experts’ opinion that current digital-ecosystem and the indoor-centric lifestyle were possible reasons for the increasing cases of myopia among children, the Vice President called for implementing the experts’ advice of making outdoor play time of one hour mandatory in all schools.

Addressing the trainees, Shri Naidu suggested that skill development and skill upgradation are necessary in the new job market in the context of the fourth industrial revolution. He noted that the New Education Policy is in tune with these emerging demands of the economy and called upon the industry to join hands with the government to train and upskill the youth. “A skilled workforce is critical to India’s accelerated growth in the coming years”, Shri Naidu observed.

Shri G.N. Rao, founder of LV Prasad Eye Institute, Dr. Prashant Garg, senior ophthalmologist from LV Prasad Eye Institute, Shri Chigurupati Krishna Prasad, President of Swarna Bharat Trust, Shri Bhadrareddy, Treasurer of Mallareddy Educational Institutions, students undergoing training at Swarna Bharat Trust and others were present during the event.

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