

**Jammu, 9th January 2025** – A seven-day *Skill Development Programme on Conservation, Cultivation, and Entrepreneurship Development in Medicinal Plants* commenced today at the Department of Botany, Central University of Jammu (CUJ) in collaboration with the Regional cum Facilitation Centre (RCFC), Northern Region II, National Medicinal Plants Board, Ministry of AYUSH, of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Kashmir. The programme aims to empower participants with skills and knowledge to explore the entrepreneurial potential of the medicinal plant sector.

The programme was inaugurated under the visionary leadership of **Prof. Sanjeev Jain**, Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, CUJ, whose support has been instrumental in promoting such initiatives that bridge academia with sustainable development goals.

The inaugural session began with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, followed by inspiring addresses by the dignitaries. **Dr. Vikas Tandon**, Dean, Faculty of Horticulture and Forestry, SKUAST-Jammu, graced the event as the Guest of Honour.

**Prof. B.S. Bhau**, Convener of the programme, welcomed the participants and highlighted the significance of preserving ancient medicinal plant knowledge while leveraging modern technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), to foster entrepreneurship. He emphasized the critical role of herbal remedies in promoting global health and economic growth.

**Prof. Sheikh Bilal Ahmed**, Regional Director, RCFC NR-II, National Medicinal Plants Board, SKUAST-Kashmir, elaborated on the programme's objectives, focusing on equipping youth with the skills to become job creators. He discussed the economic viability of medicinal plant oils and their potential to transform livelihoods through entrepreneurship.

**Dr. Vikas Tandon**, Guest of Honour, addressed the audience on the growing global shift toward herbal remedies and encouraged the Indian community to reclaim its rich herbal heritage. He highlighted the sector's vast income-generating potential and its ecological significance.

The inaugural session concluded with a Vote of Thanks by **Dr. Yogesh Kumar**, Co-Convener and Head, Department of Botany, CUJ, who encouraged participants to maximize this rare opportunity to build essential skills for future careers.

**Dr. Vikas Srivastava**, Organising Secretary, coordinated day 1 that featured lectures by **Dr. Wahid ul Hassan** from J&K Medicinal Plants Board, **Prof. Jaya Bhasin**, Dean, School of Business Studies, CUJ, and **Dr. Harish Chander Dutt** from the Department of Botany, University of Jammu.

