

Water shortage increasing due to climate change, says Chief Secy

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“Drinking water shortage will become grave in Uttarakhand especially in the rural mountain areas due to climate change,” said Shatrughan Singh, Uttarakhand Chief Secretary, while speaking at a workshop on “Reviving Springs in Uttarakhand” organised by People’s Science Institute, Dehradun, with the financial support of Arghyam, Bengaluru, here today.

“In recent years Uttarakhand has experienced low winter rainfall due to climate change. This has accelerated the drying of springs, chal-khals and groundwater seepages. Hence, there is an urgent need to focus on recharging these sources of water for which the state government is willing to join hands with civil society organizations,” he added.

More than 60 participants from various government departments like the Union Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation; RMDD Sikkim; Soil & Water Conservation Department; Meghalaya, Land Resources Department, Nagaland; Indian Institute of Soil &



Chief Secretary Shatrughan Singh at a workshop on ‘Reviving springs in Uttarakhand’ organised by the Peoples Science Institute in Dehradun on Wednesday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

Water Conservation; NIH Roorkee; Central Ground Water Board; Forest Department, Uttarakhand; Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan and civil society organisations attended the workshop.

Rohini Nilekani, chairperson, Arghyam, said springs were the fountain heads of our river systems. They need to be revived not only for maintaining the ecological balance but also for stabilising the state’s economy since the livelihoods of majority of the people in the mountainous regions depend on springs.

Dr Himanshu Kulkarni from Pune highlighted the role of geohydrology in spring shed development and watershed management

in the Himalayan region. The Himalayas are one of the most studied and researched regions of the world and 11 major river systems are associated with Himalayas. At the same time, Himalayas are somewhat of a blind spot with regards to groundwater. There is very little reliable data on groundwater in the Himalayas. “Groundwater has strong links with politics, society, economy and environment. Most of the time these stand in conflict with each other,” Kulkarni said.

Dr Ravi Chopra, former Director of PSI, presented a draft concept note on reviving springs in Uttarakhand. He said, “Springs have been drying up in the state. Fortunately, in the last decade

or so the concept of spring shed development has been successfully demonstrated at many locations in the Himalayan states. The time has come for the state government, civil society organisations and local communities to come together to revive springs in a sustainable manner and equitably use the water. For this a sound understanding of the hydrogeology is also essential.”

The objective of the workshop was to share experiences of springs revival in the Himalayan states with stakeholders and implementation agencies in Uttarakhand and to develop a draft programme for reviving springs in the state.