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Global cooperation needed to conserve medicinal plants: expert

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BANGALORE, Feb 16

US National Academy of Sciences Home Secretary Peter Raven today called for international cooperation and collective wisdom for the conservation and multiplication of medicinal plants and also for the protection of endangered species.

Delivering the inaugural address at the four-day international conference on medicinal plants at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Dr Raven, said that the rapid growth of the human population in the last few decades had resulted in an increase in human demands which in turn had led to the extinction of many species at a very fast rate.

Dr Raven observed that biological diversity was essential for sustainability and in the last 50 years the human population had

increased by 3.5 billion. Humans today were wasting 45 per cent of photosynthetic plants and 15 per cent of the top soil. The growth of industries and pollution from the cities was having an adverse effect on the climate resulting in an alarming increase in carbon dioxide levels throughout the world. "We cannot afford another century like this one," he added.

He said that two-thirds of the world's population depended on medicinal plants for their medical needs. For the cultivation of medicinal plants, proper planning was necessary. The ecological system was not homogenous in the world and different methods of cultivation were required for different medicinal plants in various parts of the world, he added.

He called for more studies on the ecosystem and a worldwide movement for the protection of these plants to make the world

sustainable in the 21st century. He felt that time bound and economical solutions were the need of the day to protect the environment.

Earlier, Mr Darshan Shankar, Director, Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions observed that medicinal plants should be conserved and protected in their natural habitat with the guidance of local people and the benefits obtained from such cultivation should be made available to these people. He also suggested the setting up of an ethanobotanical ecosystem for medicinal plants. Mr Shankar urged the Government to encourage such work, but suggested that the management should be left to the organisers.

An exhibition of medicinal plants and their uses was organised at the venue. Delegates from 31 countries and from different parts of India were present.
