Need for Regional cross-border cooperation in Himalaya: drawing inspiration from Arctic Council

The 2,400 Km long Hindukush- Himalaya mountain belt, passes through the areas falling under the sovereign control of several Asian countries. It behaves as an integrated mountain system that is spread over beyond the sovereign control of one nation and imbibes in its folds a multitude of scientific and social issues that are common to most of the Asian nations, such as - Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan as also Myanmar and Bangla Desh that depend upon the Himalaya in many ways. The Himalaya plays a significant role in the sociao-economic development of these Asian stakeholders apart from supporting nearly 2 billion people in one of the most densely populated region of the world.

The magnitude of the problems faced by indigenous population and geographical spread is such that no single stakeholder can do justice to the subject that has a great relevance to the indigenous people inhabiting the inaccessible and inhospitable high altitudes area with rich biodiversity and hostile climate. The Himalaya as a whole has a profound impact on regional climate. It affects wind circulation and storm tracks over large distances. Due to its unique geographic position and high altitude, it faces rapid changes in the weather patterns and ecosystem affecting the glaciers, snow cover, permafrost soils etc. Being geologically a young mountain belt, Himalaya faces extreme natural hazards like earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, cloud bursts and glacial lake outbursts.

It is therefore of prime importance that earth processes having pronounced effect on Himalayan system be identified and monitored by stakeholders by establishing a permanent forum that can think beyond the geographical boundaries. An excellent example for such a cross- border amalgamation of likeminded nations exists in the form of Arctic Council where all the nations that encircle fragile Arctic ocean, have come together to preserve and protect the Arctic eco-system through a geopolitical solution based on a clear science policy.