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'Rebuild Kerala should focus on respecting nature'

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By Express News Service

KOCHI: As Kerala is on rebuilding mode after the century's worst floods last year, care should be taken to do development activities even while preserving the environment and respecting nature, said Sujata Kohli, Indian Society of Landscape Architects (ISOLA) president. ISOLA, a professional body of landscape architects established in 2003, has members from various states in the country and even some from abroad. "Ecologists have one view.

They say no development or little development. The government obviously wants development. We are the people who can balance the two. We have the skill to merge man-made structures with environment and nature. We can actually combine the flair of design while respecting nature,” Kohli, who is here to anchor ISOLA’s two-day 13th Biennial Conference beginning at Bolgatty here on Friday, told

‘Express’.



ISOLA, which is also a member of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA), is associated with the post-flood rebuilding works at Aranmula, working with the Indian Institute of Architects by giving technical expertise; and providing technical solutions to Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) through its Kerala chapter.

Kohli, who serves as International Project Design Management Services’ (India) managing director, said the main aim of the ISOLA conclaves is to get policy makers and bureaucrats to bring in policy changes to ensure the development projects factor in other key aspects like landscaping and drainage as well.

“We are not saying don’t do any development. If you are developing 2,000 acres, there may be 100 acres which could be ecologically fragile area. We tell them not to touch this 100 acres. But the remaining 1,900 acres who can develop. But while developing that you need to take into account key aspects such as water management. We are facing water pollution, soil pollution. All kinds of environmental degradation is happening. We can find solutions for existing environmental problems and come up with strategies for preserving the environment,” she said.

The two-day ISOLA is titled ‘Reimagining Landscapes; identity, approach and stewardship’ and will see six presentations and four intensive interactive workshops on topics, including living waters, gardens that don’t need gardening, flow of nature - drainage design following natural systems and the how of landscape installations.

ISOLA has lined up some well-known speakers for the conference, including Yossapon Boonsom (co-founder and director, Shma Company Ltd, a landscape architectural firm in Thailand), T V Ramachandra [Coordinator, Energy and Wetlands' Research Group, and, Convener, Environmental Information Systems (ENVIS) at Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bengaluru) Gena Wirth (Design Principal, SCAPE Landscape Architecture & Urban Design Studio, New York), JelleTherry (Design Director, Ramboll Studio Dreiseit, Singapore), John D Liu (Ecosystem Ambassador for the Commonland Foundation, Visiting Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology and Director, Environmental Education Media Project) and Breck Gastinger (Senior Associate, Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects, Charlottesville, VA, USA).

The two-day conference will see ISOLA signing MoUs with various bodies. “We will sign an MoU with IGBC (Indian Green Building Council), which is into rating of projects/buildings,” she said.