Observation of "21st *Parthenium* Awareness Week" at ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna from 16-22 August, 2026

Parthenium hysterophorus, commonly known as carrot weed, gajar ghas or congress grass, is one of the most problematic alien invasive weeds threatening agriculture, biodiversity, livestock and human health. The weed has infested nearly 35 million hectares of land in India, and its spread continues to increase at an alarming rate. Besides causing substantial crop yield losses and environmental degradation, *Parthenium* is also recognized as a major source of dermatitis, asthma, nasal-dermal and nasal-bronchial allergic disorders. In view of the seriousness of this invasive weed, ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region (ICAR-RCER), Patna organized the 21st *Parthenium* Awareness Week from 16–22 August, 2026 involving its Regional Centres and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) to create awareness among farmers and the general public regarding the menace of *Parthenium* and its management strategies. A series of awareness and outreach activities were conducted to disseminate knowledge among scientists, administrative and technical staff, farmers, students and farm workers.

As part of the awareness week, a Student Interaction Programme was organized at the Institute. Scientific and technical staff members of ICAR-RCER interacted with M.Sc. and Ph.D. students from various institutions including A.N. College, Patna University, Pataliputra University, Patna Women's College, NIPER Hajipur and J.N.L. College, Khagaul. The participants actively discussed the adverse impacts of *Parthenium* and various approaches for its effective management. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Anup Das, Director, ICAR-RCER, emphasized the importance of public awareness and community participation in combating this invasive weed. He highlighted that an integrated weed management approach, combining biological, cultural and other eco-friendly management strategies, offers the most sustainable solution for long-term management of *Parthenium*. The Heads of various Divisions of the Institute, namely Dr. Sanjeev Kumar (Head, Division of Crop Research), Dr. Ashutosh Upadhyaya (Head, Division of Land and Water Management), Dr. Kamal Sarma (Head, Division of Livestock and Fishery Management) and Dr. Ujjwal Kumar (Head, Division of Socio-Economics and Extension), also addressed the participants and deliberated on practical and cost-effective management options for controlling *Parthenium infestation*. During the programme, Dr. Sonaka Ghosh, Scientist, Division of Land and Water Management, delivered a lecture on "Strategies for *Parthenium hysterophorus* L. Management". She highlighted the invasive nature of the weed, its impact on agriculture, biodiversity and public

health, and discussed various management options including physical, cultural, chemical and biological control methods. She further emphasized the role of biological control agents such as the Mexican beetle (*Zygogramma bicolorata*) and the use of competitive plant species such as *Cassia* spp., marigold and fodder crops for sustainable suppression of *Parthenium*. Dr. Ghosh also discussed the potential implications of climate change, particularly elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide and temperature, on the growth, spread and management of *Parthenium*.

An institute-wide *Parthenium* eradication drive was also conducted during the awareness week. Scientists, officers, technical staff and supporting personnel actively participated in the uprooting and removal of *Parthenium* plants from the Institute premises and farm areas. The initiative reflects the Institute's commitment towards achieving a *Parthenium*-free campus through collective action and sustained management efforts.

The programme was coordinated by Dr. Sonaka Ghosh, Scientist, Division of Land and Water Management; Dr. Shivani, Principal Scientist, Division of Land and Water Management; Dr. Rakesh Kumar, Senior Scientist, Division of Crop Research; and Dr. Ghous Ali, Scientist, Division of Crop Research. The co-organizers of the programme were Dr. Saurabh Kumar, Dr. Abhishek Kumar Dubey, Dr. Manisha Tamta, Scientist, Division of Crop Research; and Dr. Rajni Kumari, Principal Scientist, Division of Livestock and Fishery Management. Technical support was provided by Mr. Vijay Babu, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, Mr. P.K. Singh, Mr. P.K. Mahapatra and Mr. Umesh Mishra of ICAR-RCER, Patna. The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Manisha Tamta, Scientist, Division of Crop Research, ICAR-RCER, Patna.

(Source: ICAR Research Complex for Eastern Region, Patna)

(Interactive Session with Students on "*Parthenium* Management Strategies" at ICAR-RCER, Patna)

(*Parthenium* uprooting activity at ICAR-RCER, Patna)