

World Environment Day 2015*

A workshop was recently organized on World Environment Day 2015 at Kolkata.

Samir Banerjee (Foundation for Science and Environment, Kolkata) delivered the welcome speech. While talking on sustainable development, he mentioned that our natural resources are getting exhausted. Cattle consume lots of green vegetations and thus consuming meat indirectly causes consumption of lots of vegetation.

The keynote lecture was delivered by Anjan Sinha (Scientific and Environmental Research Institute, Kolkata). He said that it is our responsibility to 'consume with care' and to spread awareness about environment among school children. He also said that 'pollination' is the main event in the environment. Pollination leads to development of fruits and seeds which are necessary for propagation of vegetation. Now it is high time we take care of our environment and protect its components. Irregular and decreased rainfall, the recent earthquake in Nepal, etc. are all events due to imbalance in the environment. He also stated that we should try to follow the rule of 'reduce, reuse and then recycle' for conserving our environmental resources.

Tapan Adhikary (Dr K. R. Adhikary College of Optometry and Paramedical Technology, Kalyani) delivered the guest lecture. He said that environmental pollution causes reproductive and developmental problems and emphasized on organizing such workshops and seminars more frequently, specially at rural areas of West Bengal.

A book titled *Recent Trends in Environment and Ecology* was released by Basab Choudhuri (University of Cal-

cutta, Kolkata) and the recent issue of *Global Journal of Environmental Science* was released by Sinha. This was followed by a guest lecture by Choudhuri. He mentioned that 'air and water supply are free until their supply lasts' and so we should take care that they do not get exhausted. According to him, the cost of living is still low in West Bengal compared to many other states in India. The population of the state is increasing and people are ignorant about protecting the environment. He explained well why in spite of being aware that plastic is non-degradable, and harmful to our environment, we cannot stop using it and also why it has not yet been legally banned. Energy required to produce 1 kg iron is equal to the energy required to make 8 kg polymer. Energy required to produce 1 kg aluminium is equal to the energy required to make 28–30 kg polymer. So if we consider replacing polymers with metals like iron or aluminium, it will not be cost-effective as more energy will be consumed. Energy comes from combustion of fuel in a thermal power plant, i.e. increased energy requirement leads to increased carbon dioxide in the environment. Therefore, if plastic is banned, carbon dioxide in the environment will increase. Thus we cannot make hasty decisions about environmental issues. We have to make models, predict consequences, test and then implement them. E-waste accumulation is an alarming issue in our environment. Choudhuri also talked about conserving our water resources. Water is the most important component of our environment, a valuable asset. We should reduce domestic misuse and wastage of water. About 4000 litre of water is needed to produce 1 kg of rice. We should not only conserve water, but should also take care of reducing pollution of our water reserves. Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC), the 'wonder chemical' of the 1940, was banned in 1980 when scientists revealed that CFC had depleted the ozone layer above the Earth's atmosphere. Choudhuri said that

a recent paper in the *Nature Communication* reveals that some portion of the depleted ozone layer has been repaired. So our awareness and contributions can really make a difference. By being more scientific in our approach, we can make changes and protect our environment.

The 'Environmentalism of the year, 2015' award and 'Scientist of the year, 2015' award were also given during the workshop.

The highly interactive 'Technical session' comprised of a lecture by Bidhan Roy (Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya) on his observations on the tsunami in the Andaman islands. Sujoy Ghosh (University of Calcutta) talked about teratogenicity due to industrial contaminants in *Drosophila melanogaster*. Lochan Barik (North Orissa University, Baripada, Odisha) talked on effect of pollution on millet. Nibetida Mukhopadhyay (Gargi Memorial Institute of Technology, Kolkata) spoke about phytoplanktons as bioresources for combating global warming. Leena Sarkar (Habra Shree Chaitanya College of the eastern part of India) talked about rivers. She said that rivers are in stress, and described the Damodar river system and its associated stress factors. Ishani Roy Choudhuri (Welland Goldsmith School of South 24 Parganas) spoke about quality analysis of groundwater of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal. Chandra Sekhar Bhowmick (Department of Public Health & Engineering, Government of West Bengal) spoke about arsenic toxicity in the food chain. He suggested that the permissible level of arsenic needs to be changed from 0.05 to 0.01 g/litre in groundwater as the present permissible levels are causing several health ailments.

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