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Teira batfish

The teira batfish, *Platax teira*, which are normally found in waters around the islands in the Gulf of Mannar have drifted due to the tsunami of 26 December 2004, according to Marimuthu *et al.* (**page 1310**). The batfish were found around the Underwater Biofouling Panel System erected near the coastal town of Pudhumadam. They were found at a depth of 3 m. The fish had yellowish silvery body with a black bar running across the eye. The total

length of the fish was 12.16 cm and the standard length was 10 cm. The fin span, dorsal to pelvic, was the maximum with 29.73 cm. The body depth was 8.10 cm. The standard length was about 1.2 times that of the body depth. The dislocation of fishes by natural causes such as the tsunami may have either beneficial effect or deleterious effect on the fish population depending on the region to which they are dislocated.

A new species of day gecko

Of the 506 species of reptiles reported so far within the political boundaries of India, 201 species are lizards including 73 geckoes. Despite their high endemicity (40%), serious studies on Indian reptiles are few due to their cryptic nature, brief active season, taboos, lack of identification manuals, and limited funds for undertaking field studies. Unlike most species of geckoes, members of *Cnemaspis* are diurnal, and a large proportion (85%) of them are restricted to the Western Ghats of southwestern India. Mukherjee *et al.* (**page 1326**) have discovered a new species, *Cnemaspis anaikattiensis* from the drier hill range of Anaikatti Hills. The taxonomy of *Cnemaspis* geckoes is

poorly understood and it is expected that further intensive studies in the region would result in more new species. Inventorying Indian biota, especially taxa such as reptiles is urgently needed, as it is feared that many of them would disappear before their discovery as habitat alterations and fragmentations are rampant.

Coastal hazard preparedness

The tsunami that hit the coast of India on 26 December 2004, reminded the country that our 7,000 km long coastline is exposed to hazards and that we are not prepared to face all of them. The coastal hazards that occur along the coast of India are: (i) storm surges (about half a dozen per year); (2) tsunamis (one to two every century); (3) coastal pollution due to industrial and domestic effluents; (4) coastal erosion; (5) oil spills; (6) harmful algal blooms; (7) submarine mudslides; (8) hazards related to global climate change. While a tsunami may catch public attention owing to its high impact per unit time, coastal pollution may be equally hazardous in the long run because of increase in diseases due to coastal pollution. Krishna (**page 1339**) addresses science issues that need to be addressed to enhance our preparedness to face coastal hazards.

Women in science

Science proclaims the ideal of 'universalism' and irrelevance of personal or social attributes in judging the scientific claims. However, in actual practice, science has a social structure dominated and hitherto regulated by men, in which women find themselves unwelcome. This creates hidden barriers for women in science. Namrata Gupta *et al.* (**page 1382**) analyses the nature of these barriers in the social organization of science in the diverse cultures of India, Germany and US. It has been found that the contradictions in norms and practice in the organizational environment induce a stress called the first burden. The second burden, common to the women in most professions, is that of managing unequal domestic responsibilities. The third burden arises from a lack of social capital. The analysis ends with the review of cross-national trend towards reforms that needs to be strengthened.

Anomalous fluctuation prior to an earthquake

The observation of anomalous large-scale radon emission accompanied by striking high gamma dose rate and the significant increase in He/CH_4 ratio in the tectonically sensitive thermal spring emanations at Bakreswar, West Bengal prior to the major earthquake of about 8.9 in the Richter Scale near the island of Sumatra, Indonesia on 26 December 2004 has been reported. The likely reasons behind these unusual observations are related to the relative increase in heat flow, stress-induced pore collapse and stress-induced micro fracturing. Das *et al.* (**page 1399**) have attempted to correlate the field observations as the precursory phenomena to the quake.