

in remote and difficult regions running through pristine forested area, resulting in dumps of excavated forest soil. Similarly, construction activities such as building houses also involve digging the soil. In the hills, the excavated soil often does not find any sustainable utilization and is thrown down a valley. These soil heaps spoil the beauty as vegetation growing along the roads get buried. Landslides and soil erosion occur in such destabilized areas and the debris chokes the river below, causing flash floods. The excavated soil can be utilized efficiently by nearby agricultural fields for improving depth of the farm soil. Concepts like this need to be

researched and practised as the recycling of waste is important in sustainable low-input land management. The Himalayas falls in a seismically active zone, but the building architecture in the haphazardly growing townships does not comply with the norms of earthquake-resistant buildings.

Air quality is also deteriorating. This is likely to have a serious impact on public health and vegetation. Community places such as shopping malls should be designed such that people can walk or take public transportation to reach them. Awareness about urbanization threats and their remedial measures is important

for human health, tourism development and improving the quality of life. Accomplishing these will ensure that in spite of urbanization, the Himalayas continues to supply ecosystem services and many other benefits to humanity.

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Is *Corypha talliera* (Arecaceae), the most handsome palm of India, extinct?

The 'Talliera palm' (*Corypha talliera* Roxb.) – an endemic species of Birbhum District, West Bengal was declared as the most handsome palm of India by William W. Roxburgh. This species was seen growing till 1946 in the Indian Botanic Garden at Shibpur, Howrah, India and was also enlisted in the *Index seminum* of Singapore Botanical Garden. One of the authors (R.C.S.) invited information through a letter published in *Economic Botany* (USA) about any surviving plant of this species in any of the botanical



gardens. But, even after about a decade, no such report has been received/published so far. Hence, it appears that this palm of India has become extinct. A painting by Roxburgh is being reproduced here to invite the attention of people to relocate it even now.

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NEWS

Awards

The Indian Physics Association has announced the following awards:

R. D. Birla Memorial Award–2006

The R. D. Birla Memorial Award, given for excellence in pure physics was awarded for the year 2006 jointly to N. Kumar, Homi Bhabha Distinguished Professor at Raman Research Institute, Ban-

galore and S. S. Kapoor, DAE Homi Bhabha Chair at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Mumbai.

M. M. Chugani Memorial Award–2004

The M. M. Chugani Memorial Award for the year 2004 was awarded to V. C. Sahni, Director, Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology and Director,

Physics Group, BARC for excellence in applied physics.

Buti Foundation Award–2006

The Buti Foundation Award for the year 2006 was awarded to Tarun Souradeep, IUCAA, Pune for outstanding contributions in the area of theoretical applied physics, astrophysics and biophysics.