



# ECO-CLUB

## ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

### Newsletter

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For Members only

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#### Editorial

Eco-Club, AMU, celebrated **World Wetland Day 2012** by organizing essay competition. The World Wetland Day is celebrated every year on 2<sup>nd</sup> February since 1997. On this day in 1971, a wetland convention (or Ramsar Convention) was signed between few countries at Ramsar in Iran.

Most of the popular campaigns of human welfare had usually small beginning. The response of students in the essay writing competition is highly encouraging as 18 students participated in it. We all know that air, water and food are three essential requirements for life supporting processes of an organism. All ancient, civilizations evolved, developed and flourished in and around some major fresh water resources mainly rivers or lakes. To meet the daily requirement of the growing population of the city of *Nemausus* (now Nimes), Romans built 50 Km long aqueducts across the hills and rivers in 19 BC and provided about 1000 L drinking water per capita/day . Similar 70 Km long aqueduct fulfilled the need of ancient Roman city of Arelate (now Arles) until 4 AD. Water wheels were discovered and used by Mesopotamean, Sumerial, Greece and Roman civilizations. In ancient India, the pot attached to wheels (called Cakka vattaka- turning wheel or Arihatta Ghati Yantra-pots attached to moving wheel) were used in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. In china, horizontally moving water wheels were invented during Ming and Han dynasties. Excavations of Basra revealed the use of water wheels not only for water but also as means of power to drive mills of paper, stamp, saw, ship, steel, sugar and gist etc., in 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD. One such wheel of 12m diameter is preserved in Syria. Ibne Bassal is known to have invented a chained water wheel for powering mills in Al Andulus (now Spain). Cistercian Monasteries continued to use these power wheels in Spain until 13<sup>th</sup> century AD. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan established MAO College (now Aligarh Muslim University) at Aligarh on the recommendations and report of the then Civil Surgeon based on some parameters including water quality and water table at suitable depth (20 feet). The turbines of hydro-electric power plants of modern days are moved by water force. Now, the surface water bodies and under ground water resources are under greater threat of depletion and pollution.

The wetlands of all kinds are important diversity centres, source of food and energy. The wetlands serve as sinks of rain water and natural water filtering bodies as the stored water percolates down in deeper soil layer and recharge the underground water of the earth. It is therefore the duty of every individual of modern civilized society to protect the wetlands for the safety of biosphere, all kinds of organisms and future generations.

**Dr. Fareed Ahmad Khan**

# Recent Activities

## AMU: WORLD WETLAND DAY

Eco-Club, A.M.U., Aligarh, organized an essay competition in the month of February 2012, as a part of World Wetlands day celebration. The topic of the essay was "**Necessity and perspective of wetland management in India**". Students from different faculties of A.M.U., ranging from students in Secondary education to those pursuing post graduations,

participated in the event with great enthusiasm. Mohd. Naved Ashrafi of B.Sc.(Hons.) 3<sup>rd</sup> year grabbed the first prize, Abdul Khalid of B.Tech 3<sup>rd</sup> year stood second and Faheera Khan of B.Sc.(Hons.) 2<sup>nd</sup> year bagged third prize. Faculty wise Consolation prizes were also declared. Ariba Zainab of B.A.(Hons) 2<sup>nd</sup> year (Humanities), Siddharth Singh of B.A.LL.B

(Hons.) 4<sup>th</sup> year (Law), Hera Syed Mahboob of B.Com (Hons.) 2<sup>nd</sup> year (Commerce) and Mujtaba Ali Naqvi of class XII (Under Graduate) got the consolation prizes and Taalia Mahvish of B.A.LL.B (Hons.) 2<sup>nd</sup> year got consolation prize for the best content.

Essays awarded rank prizes shall be published online on the website of the club.

### WORLD WETLANDS DAY

The World Wetlands Day is marked yearly on 2nd February to commemorate the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands, help on 2nd February, 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of Caspian Sea. This is an inter-governmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. The Ramsar Convention is the only global environmental treaty that deals with wetlands. Each year since 1997, government agencies, NGOs and groups of citizens at all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits and so did the Eco Club in the form of Essay competition as mentioned earlier.

### WORLD WETLAND DAY CELEBRATION IN KENYA

In Kenya, World Wetlands day celebrations were held at Ombaka Primary School, Kisumu County. The activities were aimed at the protection and opening up of the Singida Wetland in Nyando to the Western tourism circuit in line with this year's theme "*Wetlands and*

*Tourism*". About 1500 school going children with a similar number of adults were present on that day. Several publications were also distributed by various groups. Ugenya Singida provides many benefits to the communities living around and within the wetland ecosystem. Yala Conservation Group focused on sustainable use of papyrus to produce marketable products like mats, baskets, tables, chairs and many more products.

### WATERBIRD WATCHING IN BOTSWANA

This year, Birdlife Botswana (BLB) celebrated this commemorative day and took this opportunity to raise awareness and understanding of school children about wetlands and water birds, through bird watching. Children were excited to see and listen to the calls of approximately 50 bird species. "Birds serve as one of the best indicators of the state of the environment.

### INDIA: VOICE FOR CBDR

Consolidating its position ahead of crucial international climate meetings, India's Union Environment and Forests Ministry (MOEF) said that until the formula for equity and common but differentiated responsibilities

(CBDR) is not defined, India's responsibilities to reduce emissions would remain voluntary. Further, it will not accept any punitive international regime now or after 2020.

### MCG SAVES POND

The enforcement wing of Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) on March 2 was able to preserve a natural pond from being destroyed by the land mafia. The MCG acted after a complaint was received, that some private builders in village Shili near Garhi Harsaru were trying to fill up the pond with mud and use it for construction work.

### LEOPARD SPOTTED

A little over a century ago, Delhi's forests were home to lions, leopards and wolves. As forests land disappeared so did most of its animals. A leopard has been spotted at Bhatti Mines for the past couple of months, which has possibly immigrated from adjoining Haryana. The animal has been seen on several occasions, but could not be photographed. Its pug marks, however, have been positively identified by several sources. World Wildlife Fund (WWF) officials

confirmed the positive identification of the pug marks. The Bhatti area, ravaged by large scale mining till a few years back, has been revived to a considerable extent by the army's eco task force (ETF). The presence of the leopard and a clan of hyenas, along with birds, butterflies and reptiles indicate the successful revival of the degraded eco system.

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### **PLAN FOR SEA LEVEL RISING**

Fearing that climate change could wipe-out their entire Pacific archipelago, the leaders of Kiribati are considering an unusual backup plan of moving the populace to Fiji. Kiribati President Anote Tong told on 9 March that his Cabinet endorsed a plan to buy nearly 6,000 acres on Fiji's main island, Viti Levu for the entire population of about 103,000; though he hopes it will never be necessary for everyone to leave. Kiribati, which straddles the Equator near the International Date Line, has found itself at the leading edge of the debate on climate change because many of its atolls rise just a few feet above sea level. Some scientists have estimated present level of sea rise in the Pacific at about 2mm per year. The rate is likely to accelerate. President is awaiting parliamentary approval for the land purchase.

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### **ALIEN SEEDS INVADE ANTARCTICA**

Visitors are introducing invasive plant species alien to Antarctica at a much higher Level, says a study published on March 6 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The Antarctic Peninsula, Ross Sea region and several landing places

in East Antarctica are invaded by alien plant seed. Invasion of such alien species is one of the primary causes of biodiversity change. About 49 to 61 percent of seeds are capable of surviving the conditions of Antarctica. The introduction of such high numbers became possible as people who landed on the continent had travelled to other cold regions like the Alpine, the cold temperate and Polar Regions a year prior to their Antarctica visit.

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### **J & K GOVT CHECKS POLLUTION**

Two laboratories one each at Jammu and Srinagar have been established by J&K state pollution control board (SPCB) for analyzing the level of pollutants in the state. The upgradation of these laboratories is in progress.

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### **VOICES TO SAVE TAJ MAHAL**

Hundreds of activists, students and senior citizens walked along the banks of the bone-dry river Yamuna in Agra on 24 March in a symbolic rally to highlight the grave threat to the Taj Mahal from a dry river bed. They also resolved to continue their campaign till the governments in Lucknow and Delhi announced a concrete and time-bound programme to save the dying river. The rally came on the concluding day of the World Water week.

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### **DELHI HIT BY AIR POLLUTION**

Deteriorating air quality in the national capital can translate into 3,000 additional "premature deaths" annually due to air pollution related diseases, says the report of Centre for Science and Environment. About 55 per cent of Delhi's population is

directly affected by air pollution as they live in a radius of 500 metre of "urban roads" where vehicular pollution level was found to be maximum. The city government has set up a committee to suggest measures to improve air quality in the city.

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### **POLAR FAUNA THREATENED**

Nine out of thirty three healthy polar bears in Alaska are losing their fur examined recently in the southern Beaufort Sea region near Barrow. Alopecia (loss of fur) and other skin lesions were recorded as part of observations under long-term polar bear research program conducted by US scientists. Blood and tissues samples from of 100 out of 107 ringed seals showed skin lesions. Nearly half of the animals were dead when found, or died shortly thereafter.

On the other hand, walrus exhibiting skin lesions appeared to be otherwise healthy.

Similar cases have been reported earlier from Russia and Canada. The cause of symptoms observed in bears, seals and walrus are unknown.

To date, U.S Geological Survey did not find any evidence that consuming these animals caused any human illness. Nevertheless, hunters have been advised to refrain from consuming any animal with such symptoms and to thoroughly cook polar bear meat.

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### **ACIDIC OCEANS: FISH LOSE ABILITY TO SMELL DANGER**

Marine biologist Munday studying the impact of ocean acidification (which occurs when carbon dioxide dissolves in seawater) have found it affects the ability of fish to smell. They discovered that young fish

reared in water with elevated levels of carbon dioxide hindered the ability of smelling to locate their predators and instead seem attracted to their smell. The researchers showed that larvae of these fish took greater risks in swimming further from their original shelter to new hideouts to save them from predators. More of the fish larvae also die in the wild, sparking fears that fish populations could struggle to survive and replenish themselves as oceans become more acidic.

The world's oceans are likely to become increasingly acidic with the rise in the levels of carbon dioxide due to human activity.

It is already known that ocean acidification will be catastrophic for shellfish as the weakly acidic water makes it harder for them to grow shells but this is the first evidence that suggests ocean acidification could also affect fish directly.

The researchers said more research is needed to unravel the cause of change in the ability of the fish to smell. Professor Munday point out that acidic water conditions appears to be interfering with their ability to interpret smells.

Dr Steve Simpson, a marine biologist at Bristol University, said the findings had serious implications for what might happen to fish as carbon dioxide levels continue to increase. He said it was likely that most marine fish, including predators, would suffer similar problems.

## SCA: E-FILING AS OPPOSED TOPAPER

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced for electronic reporting of certain information submitted to the agency under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). TSCA has proposed a rule that requires chemicals to be registered and a mandatory reporting of hazards of all new and old chemicals and their toxicological tests. The action is an important milestone in the EPA's effort to increase transparency and public access to chemical information. Electronic reporting will increase the speed with which EPA can make information publicly available, increase accuracy, and provide the public with quick and easier access to chemical information.

This proposed rule would require electronic reporting rather than paper-based reporting for various TSCA actions including submission of information relating to chemical testing, health and safety studies, and other information. When final, EPA will only accept data, reports, and other information submitted through EPA's Central Data Exchange.

Over the coming months, the agency will offer a number of opportunities for potential users to become familiar with the new requirements.

## THE RIVERS FLOW

(A poem by Linnath, Frederick Banting)

*It's funny how the rivers flow,  
polluted like my heart and soul,  
when my heart beats you soon will  
know.*

*that fire burns from deep below,  
you say you love me, is that so?  
Is that the reason you provoke?  
to fill my face with clouds of smoke,  
that holds my breath and makes  
me choke.*

*I ask a question with no reply,  
my children oblivious to my cries,  
I ask for help, they run and hide,  
with no time left to say good-bye,  
the help I seek is soon denied,  
my skin gets dirty as days go by,  
I shout at my eyes and now it's  
night.*

*open my eyes to reveal sunlight,  
keep them open for natures delight,  
and as night falls I lose my sight,  
my toxic tears will start to rain,  
I'm sorry if that gives you pain,  
it's because of you I am this way,  
Through fancy cars and toxic  
waste.*

*I never made you want to crave,  
the finer things that leak away,  
makes the stench of death want to  
stay,  
because of luxuries that make your  
pride,  
will be the thing that kills you  
inside,  
will be the things that sign your  
soul,*

*polluted like how rivers flow. .*

■■■

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