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Point for discussion this month

Expectations from World Lake Conference 2007

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Dear Readers,

It's a painting by the greatest artist 'Nature'! You can see many such paintings on its canvas which sooth your eyes and make you cheerful. This photograph is from well-known picnic spot near Pune - Panshet Dam. Thanks to all the well-wishers of SERI and Dr. D. B. Boralkar, Ex-Member Secretary, MPCB who have sent wishes to SERI by mail or telephone for completing 12 years in the field of ecotechnology for pollution control. These good wishes are our strength. A pat on back encourages taking more challenges! We promise you all that SERI will always make you proud!

Our heartiest Congratulation to Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri and Al Gore who won the Peace Nobel for this year!!

Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, is organizing 12th World Lake Conference "TAAL 2007" which is supported by International Lake Environment Committee Foundation. It's a great event for all scientists and technologists from all over the world to share knowledge and discuss restoration of polluted lakes. SERI wishes all the best for this mega event.

Jaldindi, 2007 (a sacred journey through water) is on its way to Pandharpur. It started on 22nd Oct.2007 and will reach the destination by 1st Nov.2007. Our all good wishes are with the Jal Warkaries (travellers) who are trying hard to increase the awareness of masses to keep our natural water bodies clean and healthy for the Generation N ext.

Thanking you,
Chief Editor

2nd Green Parliament on Noise Pollution During Festivals

2nd Green Parliament session was conducted on 21 Sept. 2007 on the issue of sound pollution during the festivals. It was organized by Indian Environment Association, Pune Chapter in association with Sevavardhini and UV Foundation.



Increased sound levels in the cities due to vehicles, construction activities and festivals are posing threat to the health of citizens. This was discussed by many eminent personalities who were present for the session. The discussion was initiated with the inputs from Dr. G. B. Kolhatkar, a well known activist and then continued with the active participation of Dr. A. D. Patwardhan, Dr. Suresh Karkhanis, Shri. Pramod Kulkarni and so on.

The hon. Chairman Shri. Arvind Deshpande maintained the harmony in the hall and gave summary in brief. Prashant Dhotekar acted as Parliament Affairs Minister. Finally, Dr. G. B. Kolhatkar put guidelines for the sound control during the festivals before the house for further action.

These guidelines included the instructions such as –

1. There has to be one Ganesh idol per village or ward in the city.
2. The distance between two Ganesh idols should be more than 500 m.
3. The precautions should be taken to restrict the reach of sound levels upto 30 – 35 ft only.
4. After some interval the music systems should be switched for 10 – 20 min.

5. Awareness and mass education on the health effects of sound pollution shall be done by all learned participants of Green Parliament.

At the end of the session, the VCDs on Environment Education were distributed to the representatives of the schools from urban and rural areas. These VCDs were distributed at the hands of eminent environment educationist and engineer Dr. A. D. Patwardhan, Chairman of Indian Environment Association, Pune Chapter.



These VCDs are produced by Mr. Prakash Shaha of ARN, Pune with the help of Mr. Jagdish Kulkarni. These VCDs include lectures by noted Environment Technologist Sandeep Joshi and Dr. Pravin Saptarshi and with animation and graphics to simplify the language of environment for school children especially for tenth standard students.



Sandeep Joshi offered vote of thanks to Hon. Chairman, and all participants. The programme was well organized by Pallavi Deshpande of Shrishti Eco-Research Institute.

---Priya Kapole

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NewsAnalysis

Climate Radar: Priority for Everybody

Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri has done it! Got the Nobel Prize for outstanding work of IPCC team on climate change. It's a Nobel Peace Prize shared by IPCC with former US Vice President Al Gore who is fighting against Climate Change!

The critical issue of climate change has received world's attention. The Nobel Committee realized the efforts to lay foundation, build up, and strengthen the movement on anthropogenic emissions which affect the climate.

It's a beginning of understanding the global impacts of local activities and its directly linked with survival of human being on this earth. It's not just economy and market driven activity but has connection with ecosystems and their own delicate balance and equilibrium. Reversing the economy or market is next to impossible but ecologically intelligent people may be few in number but can initiate the work towards the delaying of deleterious impacts of climate change on human being.

SERI's ecotechnologies have in built capacity of reducing negative impacts of waste treatment on climate as it involves use of green plants and secondly, it does not require electricity for bioprocessing of pollutants, so it again helps in reducing impacts the other way.

Environment friendly buses: Experiment at the behest of MoEF and USEPA

The experiment of environment friendly buses started plying on Pune's roads in Oct. 2007, following the MoU signed between the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and United States Environment Protection Agency (USEPA). This experiment of "Heavy Duty Diesel Vehicle retrofit" involved installation of retrofit devices in 20 public transport buses to track the buses to understand their operational problems and performance in a yearlong monitoring programme.

The retrofit devices have three components such as diesel filters, diesel oxidation catalysts and partial flow filters. A low

sulphur diesel (about 350 ppm) will be used for this experiment.

Ambience of Pune's metropolitan area is severely polluted by dust and emissions from construction activities (60%) and vehicles (20%). The steps are taken to know the effectiveness of retrofit device for one year on handful of buses. Till that time, astronomically increasing vehicular population will continue to spew out the toxics in the environment. Puneites need fast actions to recover the deteriorating air quality in the city. It seems that there is no solution which can improve the conditions in near future; till that time, keep breathing bad air!

Lacunae in Protecting Cities from Floods

In a national workshop on Disaster Management, the top officials accepted that there was no programme to protect cities from floods during the monsoon. Member of Parliament who attended the workshop stated that due to increased rainfall, the big cities were suffering. There was a need of installing flood alert mechanism to save property and human losses.

There is urgent need to formulate a policy considering the modernisation of construction technologies, need for the housing and urban infrastructure, land movement, accumulation of city wastes etc. Capacity building of urbanites (being the purchaser of properties and user of facilities) and sensitization of ULB (Urban Local Body) officers and staff (being regulators and controllers of developing activities in city area) regarding guidelines for will be the key drivers in the process. Then, the architects, builders, contractors and developers will perform satisfactorily to needs of disaster control due to floods.

- Sayali Joshi

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Announcement

Mrs. Sayali Joshi, CEO of Shrishti Eco-Research Institute has announced to conduct study of Pune's 5 rivers - Mutha, Mula, Pavna, Indrayani and Ram for next one year with scientific assistance from Indian Environment Association, Pune Chapter and Water Forum of The Institution of Engineers of India (Pune Local Chapter). The report will be published at the time of next year's Jal Dindi.



Excerpts from the Sandeep Joshi's article published in Maharashtra Pollution Control Board's magazine "Maharashtra's Environment"

Blame It on Weather But Make City Better

The monsoon of 2005 has spelt a new unprecedented episode of downpour. Some may blame it on tsunami or greenhouse effect or pollution. But we have to accept that something is happening in our mother Gaia. Mother earth is a living planet. There is something wrong about the health of earth. These extreme phenomena are the result of ill - health of earth. These intricacies of interactions and interrelationships of environmental factors are still beyond reach of the man. Man has to understand the complexity of physiology of the earth.

Disaster does not recognize the geographical boundaries that keep on spreading till its energy dissipates completely. After Mumbai, The Western Maharashtra was entrapped in the rains and floods. The common factor was that the cities were under water, may be due to high tide or discharge of water from upstream dams or blocking the discharge from the downstream dams.

The result was the city life was under stress, distress. Now, it is time to attend the issues of cities and natural resources. Then, only the modern cities and citizens can be protected from the nature's fury. Some describe it as sinking ship, some as impact of development and some try to politicize it. But the task ahead is to lessen the woes of the society which is under enormous environmental stress.

Natural drains, rivers, hills and mountains are wealth of the cities. But this landscape is forgotten in the city business having tall buildings, roads and pedestrian ways, shopping malls, squares, residential areas, well tailored gardens and parks etc. In the city, about 80 - 85% area is impervious which does not allow the percolation of the water. The landscapes like industry, railways, highways, apartments, abandoned mines and quarries change the look of the city. Even the piles of wastes and garbage add stink to the concretized landscapes.

Urbanization leads to new hydrological regime. Cement and concrete replace the soil. Tall buildings supplant trees. Constructed stormwater drains and sewer lines take the place of streams of natural watersheds. It has been experienced that the runoffs in the cities might constitute 80 - 85% of the rains. Many times, the piped drainage system suffers from sudden heavy rains and runoffs. These systems lead to the flash floods and erosion. The effect is the deterioration of the water quality.

The greater and faster the runoffs cause the swelling of receiving streams and rivers and frequent peak floods. In the Waldhuni Catchment Area near Ulhasnagar and Kalyan, the streams swell due to the rains. The effect is pronounced at the time of tide.

The speedy runoffs cannot replenish groundwater. In the forested land, the rate of soil loss is about 0.005 - 0.1 ton per hectare per year but in the urban area the same is about 0.1 - 2.2 tons. If the construction is in progress then this rate is tremendous - about 92 tons of the soil gets washed away from 1 ha land every year.

Odum, a noted ecologist says 'the most pleasant and certainly the safest place to live in, is one containing a variety of crops, forests, lakes, streams, roadsides, marshes, seashores and waste places - in other words, a mixture of communities of different ecological ages".

This year's monsoon has given a new insight on the city's watershed needs to be addressed. Not only freshwater but wastewater also should be considered while developing plans for the cities. This changes the whole concept of localized development. The issue of discharging water from the upstream and downstream dams has changed the dimension of problems. It is the river basin management where all cities and villages use the same water resource.

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