



Warm Greetings from Gujarat Science City, Ahmedabad, India.

It is our pleasure to inform you that the Gujarat Science City (GSC), working under the Department of Science & Technology, Government of Gujarat, has emerged as a large scale science education and popularisation institution in the country, with lots of hands-on experience and minds-on exposures.

GSC is organizing various activities on the theme "*Biodiversity and Invasive Alien Species*" to mark the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009.

The United Nations proclaimed May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IBD) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.

Biological diversity - or biodiversity - often understood in terms of the wide variety of plants, animals and microorganisms. The biodiversity we see today is the fruit of billions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. It forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we so fully depend.

Invasive alien species (IAS) are species whose introduction and/or spread outside their natural past or present distribution threaten biological diversity. The theme in 2009 reflects the reality that invasive alien species have invaded and affected native biota in almost every ecosystem type on Earth.

Total annual costs of these invasions, including losses to crops, pastures and forests, as well as environmental damages and control costs, have been conservatively estimated to be in the hundreds of billions of dollars and possibly more than one trillion. This does not include valuation of species extinctions, losses in biodiversity, ecosystem services and aesthetics.

Gujarat Science City in collaboration with the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, is conducting a unique programme on DNA Club (DBT's Natural Resource Awareness Club) for the promotion and awareness of bioscience and biodiversity education among the school curriculum. There are 10 DNA Clubs with 600 more club members in different eco-regions of the state and are engaged in stimulating vast awareness and sensitization on the various aspects of environment degradation and to enhance public attention and policy maker's action.

On the International Day for Biological Diversity, all the DNA Club students across the state are engaged with a series of activities including identification of local invasive plant and its eradication and control initiative. At GSC, a day-long seminar on the theme has been organised for the science teachers and nature educators. In addition there are also a variety of public education and awareness programme for such invasive species and its adverse effect on the environment.

The celebration also highlights an illustrative poster exhibition on the theme, student's competitions and hands on activities, interaction with scientists and screening of biodiversity film. All these activities have been designed to inspire the curiosity of the students and the general public and will provide a life long learning and experiences for them.

The science of biodiversity is going to be the science of our future. For the sake of our own survival, it's time to take a stand and protect the grand diversity of life. Let's work together for its conservation and to ensure a new and sustainable relationship between humanity and the natural world for the generations to come.

We request one and all to be the part of this unity in diversity.

With warm regards.

Narottam Sahoo

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