



Bioshields Against Climate Onslaught

Your Editorial **Disappearing Islands** and the cover story **Rising Seas and Receding Islands** in the September 2010 issue make for very interesting reading on this subject of vital importance for our future. Although nearly one-fourth of the world's countries are islands, when we include the impact of rising seas in the coastal areas, the total population coverage will be far greater.

Worldwide, however, it has always been felt that there is much talk and less action. There are solutions including development of halophytes (salt-tolerant plants) and bioshields. There is a need for an integrated worldwide programme in these areas.

Incidentally there is a thinking on these lines and some efforts are being pursued such as a Demo Bioshield being set up through a consortia approach at Kalpakkam. The important considerations are avoiding monoculture, application of new development in halophytes and engineering design. Such Bioshields can help in minimizing the effects of tsunami and cyclone, improve the ecosystem and offer economic returns to the people. A National Bioshield Society has also been formed recently to promote this movement.

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Crying for Survival

The September 2010 issue was very informative. The article **Islands Under Water** is really touching. "Majuli", though it is a fresh water island, located in the river Brahmaputra and Subansiri river in Assam, is also going to disappear. Once it was the largest riverine island in the world. But presently, it has been slicing away year after year by annual floods and regular soil erosion and is facing the danger of extinction. At one time it was 1,256 sq km (1991) and now it



is less than 875 sq km. More than 35 villages have been washed away. The Mishing tribes living in stilt house and the Assamese Vaishnavite monasteries (xatras) are under threat. Majuli is famous for wetland flora and avifauna. During winter it is the hub for many migratory birds like greater adjutant stork, pelican, Siberian crane, whistling teal etc. Almost pollution free, serene, the fluvial island Majuli is crying for survival.

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Information at Ground Level

Congratulations, your cover story **Rising Seas and Receding Islands** was so nice that it forced me to write for the first time although I have been a regular reader of *Science Reporter* since the last 10 years. The facts and figures given in the article should go to people at



the ground level. Population in India is exploding. If not checked we will reap the consequence.

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Wasting Water

The Editorial **Nurturing Water Reservoirs for a Better Future** (August 2010)

was worth reading and an eye opener as well. Due to global warming, changes in weather patterns, deforestation, and urbanisation the earth and its inhabitants are today facing an acute scarcity of potable water.



Wastage of water is also becoming a prime reason for the scarcities we face. Most people use piped water for washing cars and watering plants. Conservation of water is our duty. It should start from every household. The public should ensure that piped water is not used for anything other than cooking and drinking. For all other purposes, rain water should be stored and used.

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Chance Discoveries

As pointed by Poornima Mani in **Aha! Moments** (August 2010), Archimedes, Newton, Darwin and Kekule had their moments of chance discovery. Actually, the list of chance discoveries is a long one. Some such better known ones are given below for the benefit of your readers: Alexander Fleming (Penicillin), Luigi Galvani (Bioelectricity), Edward Jenner (Vaccination), William Herschel (Uranus), Satyendranath Bose (Bose-Einstein Statistics), Wilhelm Roentgen (X-Rays), Hans Christian Oersted (Electromagnetism), James Watt (Steam Engine), Charles Good Year (Rubber) and Alfred Nobel (Dynamite).

Shashi, Indore (M.P.)

More than Serendipity

Poornima Mani has mentioned the **Aha! Moments** experienced by Archimedes, Newton, Kekule and Darwin (August 2010). No doubt lady luck smiled benignly on them. But besides chance something else goes into a serendipitous discovery. According to Louis Pasteur: "In the field of observation chance favours the prepared mind." Scientists can benefit if they are open-minded to catch hints provided by Nature. To grasp the significance of their work they have to be receptive to divergent and awkward results. Much depends on the mental alertness and the technical competence to be able to validate the chance observation.

Dr Shiv Kumar, Jaipur

Cleanliness Pays

The article on Malaria (July 2010) by P. Cheena Chawla was very informative and provided lot of information regarding symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of malaria. Apart from the several treatment options mentioned in the article, I think our habits can also play an important role in reducing the spread of malaria. We need to keep our surroundings clean to prevent the spread of mosquitoes.



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Wildlife is Important

As a student of Ecology & Environment Science I think conservation of wildlife can be achieved by spreading awareness among people about its importance. What *Science Reporter* is doing is an important part of conservation of wildlife.

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