Mass Campaign Against Pollution

I liked the article Nowhere Safe published in the January 2018 issue. It is truly an immediate issue that needs to be addressed by citizens, stakeholders, students and the government. The Government is doing its best to reduce air pollution. Citizens also need to be encouraged to take interest in mitigating pollution.

Parents and teachers should promote bicycle riding among students instead of buying costly motor vehicles. While the bicycle causes no pollution, it also requires less maintenance, is cheap and also saves on diesel or petrol consumption. Constant pedalling in a bicycle is a good means of exercise too.

I feel happy to share that one question on the topic “Air Pollution: Health Emergency in NCT of Delhi” was asked in the CBSE Class 12 Biology Board examination 2018. Along with expressing worry and concern for the deteriorating air quality, citizens should also give their feedback and suggestions and ideas to fight the increasing pollution.

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DNA Evidence

The article entitled Miracle of DNA Finger Printing published in SR November 2017 by Dr. Hirak Ranjan Das was most informative and useful for plus two and AIPMT appearing students since it is a part of their curriculum, and also for inquisitive intellectuals, lawyers and genetics lovers.

I would like to add to it that the discovery of DNA fingerprinting by Alec Jeffreys is to some extent a case of chance discovery because he was working with myoglobin gene in the genome, and found repetitive DNA spread in the entire genome. The pattern of repeat was unique varying from individual to individual leading to the aforesaid discovery.

Department of Biotechnology of the Government of India set up the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics (CDFD) in Hyderabad in 1995. Dr. Lalji Singh, also known as the “father of DNA fingerprinting in India”, was the moving spirit behind the centre. DNA fingerprinting has since been in use in India to track down criminals and also check for authenticity of consumer products, pedigree analysis, medical diagnosis, defence records, population genomics, wildlife conservation, establishing identity in organ transplant, etc.

This letter is a tribute to the father of DNA fingerprinting in India Dr. Lalji Singh. The innovative contribution of this great scientist will always be remembered by the country. Dr. K.K. Ambasta Bhubaneswar

Towards a New Work Culture?

I appreciate the article Artificial Intelligence – Pushing the Frontiers of Machine Intelligence in the April 2018 issue of Science Reporter. I think modern age will be dominated by Artificial Intelligence. The progress of the development of Artificial Intelligence will give us new opportunities. Artificial Intelligence may give us a new kind of work culture as well. We may upgrade our machines to make them Intelligent Machines thus solving various complex problems.

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Clamp Down on Fake News

It was very shocking that not only mud-slinging politics but even science itself is becoming a victim of fake news now as mentioned in the Editorial Critical Thinking – A Way of Life (April 2018).

The definition of fake news is quite blurry. Fake news is usually a mixture of truth and falsity. The proliferation of fake news makes it difficult for people to know what to believe. Misinformation on the web is a global challenge. Low-quality information is just as likely to go viral as high-quality information. The backbone of fake news is science illiteracy that easily leads to false beliefs.

Fake news undermines scientific credibility and erodes public trust in science, especially in underdeveloped and developing countries with an unschooled public where public trust is low to begin with. This makes it imperative for scientists to take every opportunity to expose fake news for what it is.

In the United States, some initiatives have been taken to teach students how to spot false reports. The case for media literacy and science education becomes urgent in the digital era, where a larger portion of the population gets its information from social media. At the same time censorship, some stringent regulations and strong criticism of irresponsibility of social media claims may help to clampdown on the tide of fake news.

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Corrigendum

In the article How Well Do You Know Your Washing Machine in the April 2018 issue, the Email of the author may be read as swapankrdutta@yahoo.co.in and not swapankrdutta@yahoo.com.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Email at sr@nicair.res.in.