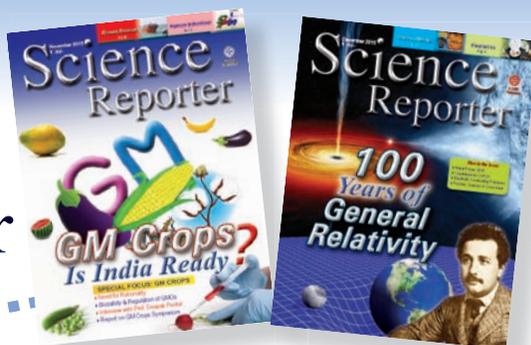


Science Reporter



NEED FOR GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

In the November issue of *Science Reporter*, the article on genetically modified crops was outstanding and very interesting.



India is the second largest country in terms of population. So fulfilling the basic needs of food for such a large population by traditional techniques is not going to work. There is the need for transgenic technologies that will help in low-input and high-output agriculture. In the coming decades such techniques should be used to produce new varieties of crops such as pomato—a combination of tomato and potato.

Madhu Kumari
RIE Bhubaneswar

CAREFUL WITH FOOD

Thank you for the very informative article on how the great army of microbes make our life miserable, making what we eat inedible and even poisonous, unless we tame them to remove their harmful propensities (**Counterattack Against Microbes, August 2015**).

We take it for granted that what we eat – whether natural foods like luscious fruits, milk, etc. or packaged foods – are just the right things for us. We don't realise that they could occasionally be life threatening. We have heard of the innocent looking mushroom, inviting us with its appetising looks, which could even take our life. The attractive tomato or a mango which we consider very delicious could similarly be very dangerous if it is spoilt. Microbes or innocuous chemicals in say, tamarind, or spoilt lemon could create reactions harmful to us when consumed unwarily. In good old days, brass vessels used to be employed for cooking. There were quite a few harmful results when the cooked foods which contained tamarind were left for some time, the delay spoiling the food and upsetting the stomach.

Krishna Kumari has given us a cornucopia of the various chemicals, processes, etc. that the food processors go through to ensure that we consume only wholesome foods. Of course, what manufacturers go through is something that we cannot adopt at our homes. The procedures are too technical, and even the

chemicals used require a lot of expertise to handle, lack of which could lead to disastrous results. She has described some age-old practices followed by our people since times immemorial, and which even today can be used gainfully.

Ch V. Suryanarayana, Secunderabad

GENERAL RELATIVITY AT 100

The feature article by Biman Basu published in the December issue was a write-up at the right time when the most revolutionary theory of the most brilliant scientist of the 20th century completed its 100 years.

Einstein's Mass Energy equation and his work on the Photoelectric Effect, which won the Nobel prize for him, are also equally important. The bending of light by the massive objects was a startling revelation, which was proved experimentally within four years of its pronouncement. He gave the new concepts of spacetime and spacetime curvature which was responsible for gravitation and not the gravitational force. He said that the gravitation does not act instantly but travels with the speed of light.

He also gave the concept of gravity waves. One more interesting feature of his theory was that light loses energy when it moves upward against the gravity by increasing its wavelength and decreasing its frequency with no change in its speed. This is known as gravitational redshift. In fact, the General Theory of Relativity has changed our understanding of the universe

to a great extent. The article is a tribute to the greatest scientist of the 20th century.

D.R. Bhagat, Jammu

POISON PLASTICS

The article **Poison in the Plastic?** (December 2015) dealt with the widespread use of plastics. Plastic continues to benefit society in many ways because of its versatility, cost effectiveness and as it requires less energy to manufacture.

However, the most serious concern with extensive use of plastics is that BPA in plastics could mimic estrogenic activity in human beings which can cause great harm. Large-scale dumping of plastic in the water bodies is also a threat to aquatic life. Therefore, it is better to use effective biodegradable plastics or porcelain/glass.

K.B. Sharath Chandra Kommu
Hyderabad

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