

Brief Report on the Nature Study Camp at Mungpoo

Introduction

The National Green Corps (NGC) programme introduced by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India is aimed at spreading environmental education among school children. The main objectives of this programme are to educate children about their immediate environment and impart knowledge about the eco-systems, their inter-dependence and their need for survival, through visits and demonstrations and to mobilise youngsters by instilling in them the spirit of scientific inquiry into environmental problems and involving them in the efforts of environmental preservation. The main objectives of the NGC programme are as follows:

- ◆ To make children understand environment and environmental problems;
- ◆ To provide environmental education opportunities for school children;
- ◆ To utilise the unique position of school children as conduits for awareness of the society at large;
- ◆ To facilitate children's participation in decision making in areas related to environment & development;
- ◆ To bring children into direct contact with the environmental problems facing the society they live in and make them think of solutions; and
- ◆ To involve children in action based programmes related to environment in their surroundings.

The NGC programme is being implemented in all the States and Union Territories in the country. The West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB) is the Nodal Agency and Paschim Banga Vigyan Mancha (PBVM) is the Implementing Agency for the execution of the NGC programme in West Bengal. During 2005-2006, there were 2862 schools in 19 districts of the state including Kolkata, in which eco-clubs were formed under the NGC programme.

Why nature camp?

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2003, Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal launched the WBPCB Environmental Campaign for creating awareness necessary for the protection of environment, forest and wildlife. Under the WBPCB Environmental Campaign of 2005-2006, a Nature Study Camp was organized at Mungpoo as part of an awareness programme for eco-club student members belonging to the NGC programme. At the backdrop, the NGC students of classes V to X of 2862 eco-clubs of West Bengal had participated in different individual and group level competitions. As part of the WBPCB Environmental Campaign, these competitions were held during 2005-2006 under the theme "Water for Life". The four individual events were 'Sit-and-Draw-Competition', 'Poster with Slogan', 'Report Writing' and 'Essay Writing', and the four group events were 'Eco-Club Diary', 'Biodiversity Inventory', 'Wetland Report' and 'Paribesh

Anusandhan'. Both the individual and group events, as described in the **Table 1**, were implemented within stipulated deadlines.

**Table1: Events conducted under the
WBPCB Environmental Campaign 2005-2006
Theme: 'Water for Life'**

Individual Events	Group Events
Sit and Draw Competition: on the specified theme for classes V to VII	Eco-Club Diary: Preparing an annual report of the activities of the eco-club
Poster with slogan: on the specified theme for classes VIII to X	Biodiversity Inventory: Preparing a report on the diversity of plants and wildlife in the local area
Report Writing: Preparing a report on 'Plant a tree and observe its growth'	Wetland Inventory: Preparing a report on the wetlands in the local area
Essay Writing: Writing an essay on the specified theme	Paribesh Anusandhan: Preparing an assessment report on the environmental status of the local area

As per the judgment based on the final result of these competitions, the district-level toppers of the individual events, and, the candidates securing the first, second and third positions (for the individual events) and the top group (for the group events) at the state level participated at the Mungpoo camp. A total number of 45 students and 31 teachers-in-charge from the various districts of West Bengal participated in the nature camp. A complete list of the participating students and teachers-in-charge is given in **Annexure I**.

NATURE STUDY CAMP AT MUNGPOO

About Mungpoo

Mungpoo is located 33 km east of Darjeeling and 52 km north-east of Siliguri. Mungpoo has an average population of 15,000 to 20,000 people. The people of Mungpoo are culturally advanced, and have a fair level of education with 12 schools including four of higher secondary level. The nearest college is in Darjeeling.

The first Government Quinine Factory was set up at Mungpoo in 1864 and has a total number of 175 employees. The Government Emetine Factory was also established at Mungpoo in 1984. The number of employees is 40. These factories fall under the administration of the Directorate of Cinchona (under the Directorate of Industries, Government of West Bengal). The activities of the Directorate, since about a century and half in the hills of Darjeeling District, initiated in the then Bengal Presidency (during the sixties of the Nineteenth Century), happens to be one of the lasts of the

living ancients. The Directorate of Cinchona & Other Medicinal Plants (C & OMP) has a vast area of 10023.61 acres of land in Mungpoo under its command. **Table 2** gives a statement of utilization of land at Mungpoo under the jurisdiction of the Directorate of C & OMP.

Table 2: Utilization of land (under C&OMP Directorate) at Mungpoo

Particulars	Area of land (in acres)
Cinchona	2946.98
Ipecac	17.59
Forestation (Nursery)	30.91
Dioscorea	9.65
Taxus Baccata	8.00
Cardamom	42.50
Turmeric	7.52
Rubber	15.62
Bamboo	177.65
Thach	230.12
Forestation	1226.49
Bustee (Under the Directorate)	158.07
Research Complex & Nursery	20.73
Fallow Land	119.40
Forest Area	2288.54
Mazdoor/Staff Settlement	1353.60
Uncultivable Area	293.24
Bungalow, Quarters etc.	42.43
Health & welfare activities	20.15
Roads & Paths	213.77
Factory & Water Reservoir	4.10
Steep land	783.57
Total	10023.61

As evident, Mungpoo has been conserved for cinchona plantation since the mid-nineteenth century. Cinchona is planted for its bark to produce quinine and allied febrifuge alkaloids, used for medicinal purpose to cure malaria. The majority of population here has been relying on Cinchona plantation as the main source of their livelihood.

The cultivation, on an extensive scale, of those species of cinchona which contain quinine and allied febrifuge alkaloids in their bark was begun in 1864. The plantation

was started with one hundred plants each of *Cinchona succirubra* and *Cinchona officinalis*, and two plants of *Cinchona calisaya*, at an elevation of about 4,000 feet.

A factory was established at Mungpoo in connection with the Rangbi plantation. This factory was equipped with the simplest of appliances for the extraction. Extraction started in 1871, expansion in 1887 and the present factory premises was established in 1905. However, in recent years, with the possibility for artificial production of quinine, its natural extraction has declined.

Inaugural Programme

The formal inaugural ceremony of the NGC nature study camp was held at Mungpoo Public Ground adjacent to Saraswati Girls' School on November 8, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. Shri Mohanta Chatterjee, Hon'ble Minister-in-charge, Departments of Environment, Food Processing & Horticulture, Government of West Bengal graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Prof. Sudip K. Banerjee (Chairman, WBPCB), Dr. Prabir Banerjee (Member Secretary, WBPCB), Shri Sankar Chakraborty (President, PBVM), Shri Satyajit Chakraborty (General Secretary, PBVM), Dr. U.K. Som (Quinologist, Government Quinine Factory, Mungpoo), Shri N.B. Chhetri (Headmaster, Saraswati Girls' High School, Mungpoo), senior officials of Darjeeling district administration and local eminent persons were also present on the occasion. During the programme, prizes were given to the student participants of the nature camp. At the end of the inaugural programme, local students performed environment-related cultural events. A total of eight students from the schools located in and around Mungpoo performed these cultural events. The participating schools were as follows:

1. Divya Jyoti Academy
2. Jhanpith High School
3. R.C. Mission School
4. St. Mangal Academy
5. Kasthuri Junior High Schools
6. Saraswati Higher Secondary School
7. Agam Singh Giri Junior High School
8. Lamdah Junior High School

Camping fervour among children

The nature camp coming as a reward for the winners of the competitions (individual and group events) conducted during 2005-2006, cultivated a sense of caring and appreciation for the environment, and also helped inculcate a sense of environmental responsibility among them. The Department of Environment, Government of West Bengal and the WBPCB in collaboration with PBVM organised this nature study camp at Mungpoo on and from November 7 to 10, 2006. The venue of the nature camp is at Government Quinine Factory Ground, Mungpoo. As stated earlier, a total of 45 students and 31 teachers-in-charge from the various districts of West Bengal participated in the nature camp. A total of 34 students from 'individual events category' and 11 student representatives of 11 schools from the 'group events category'

participated in the camp.

Based on the floral and faunal species found in the hills, the the students were divided into six groups, which are as follows:

1. Cinchona;
2. Camellia;
3. Rhododendron;
4. Salamander;
5. Red Panda; and
6. Munia.

The students participated in a series of events during the camp, such as nature study, nature trail, herbarium sheet preparation, night sky watching and many others. The students took part in all the events with great zeal and enthusiasm. As evident from the feedback report received from the students, the camp offered a marvellous learning experience for the campers.

Outfitted with backpacks, guidebooks, and water bottles, campers headed out into Mungpoo's diverse natural habitats. Accompanied with their teachers-in-charge, field guides, compasses, and binoculars were just some of the equipment campers used to explore the great outdoors. Campers participated in a wide range of activities including:

- Radiotracking: Track animals in the wild like scientists do.
- Learning animal calls: Caw like a crow, chirp like a bird, and chatter like a squirrel.
- Orienteering: Use a compass to navigate the wild.
- Creating wildlife art: Sketch floral and faunal species, and design papers/cards with pressed wildflowers.
- Identifying animal tracks: Footprints of animals found in the wild.
- Birding: Learn to spot feathered friends.
- Tree identification: Reach out and explore a new branch of nature.
- Night camping: Watch the stars during the night.
- and many more!

Apart from their scheduled camping activities, throughout the day, campers had time for playing games, reading, or just relaxing under a tree. In the evenings, campers used to get together to watch plays performed by other fellow campers, sing songs, and share stories about the day's adventures. In a nutshell, the students got a unique

opportunity to create an understanding of the various components of environment, the excitement of discovery and hands-on experiences, the joy of an interrelated world, and realised the importance of co-existence of the different floral and faunal species for a balanced ecosystem.

ANNEXURE I

LIST OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS & TEACHERS-IN-CHARGE

2. LIST OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

1. Report Writing

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Nandita Ghosh	Kanakeswari High School	Bankura
2.	Sarbani Pramanik	Akhay Bidyapith Uchha Balika Vidyalay	Nadia
3.	Swati Tripathi	Batahat Model Academy	Purba Medinipur
4.	Tirthankar Bagchi	Jalpaiguri Jilla School	Jalpaiguri
5.	Mousumi Dey	Nalhati High School For Girls	Birbhum
6.	Biswajit Saha	Mathabhanga Vivekananda Vidya Mandir	Coochbehar
7.	Susovon Hens	Rajagram Vivekananda Hindu Vidyalaya	Bankura

2. Poster With Slogan

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
	Kuntala Dey	Rajagram Vivekananda Hindu Vidyalaya	Bankura
	Saheli Bera	Hanschara Sindhubala Memorial Girls High School	Purba Medinipur
	Poulami Das Bairagya	Palashipara Mahatma Gandhi Smriti Balika Vidyalaya	Nadia
	Labannya Ghosh	Rani Binod Manjori Rashtrio Balika Vidyalaya	Paschim Midnapur
	Puja Saha	Sundia Girls High School	North 24 Parganas
	Subhankar Sutradhar	Simlan A.K. Vidyamandir	Burdwan
	Rajen Pal	Badartala High School (H.S.)	Kolkata

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
	Subarta Chandra	Panchkakanian High School (H.S.)	Paschim Medinipur
	Sudipta Konai	Bhadrapur Maharaja Nanda Kumar Uchchatar Vidyalaya	Birbhum

3. Sit-And-Draw Competition

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
9.	Nansi Nayak	Bankura Girls High School	Bankura
10.	Sayanti Jana	Baraj High School	Purba Medinipur
11.	Prathama Das	Gayeshpur Netaji Vidyamandir for Girls	Nadia
12.	Priya Dutta	Rani Binodmanjori Rashtrio Balika Vidyalaya	Paschim Medinipur
13.	Asim Roy	Nigamnagar Nigamananda Sarswata Vidyalaya	Coochbehar
14.	Kasturi Ganguli	Indira Girls High School	North 24 Parganas
15.	Swagata Haldar	Kakdwip Birendra Vidya Niketan	South 24 Parganas
16.	Souradeep Konar	Amlajorh High School	Burdwan
17.	Debjit Midya	St. Pauls School (H.S.)	Kolkata
18.	Bahnisikha Manna	Kakdwip Birendra Vidyaniketan	South 24 Parganas
19.	Sagnik Koley	Nayabasad P.M. Sikshaniketan	Paschim Medinipur

4. Essay Writing Competition

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Shrestha Ganguli	Bankura Girls High School	Bankura
2.	Saheli Bera	Hanschara Sindhubala Memorial Girls High School	Purba Midnapur
3.	Sonam Agarwala	Gangarampur Uchcha Balika Vidyalaya	Dakshin Dinajpur
4.	Lal Debojyoti Rooy	Kurunnahar Uchcha Vidyalaya	Birbhum
5.	Atanu Roy	Badartala High School (HS)	Kolkata
6.	Rishika Chattopadhyay	Burdwan Municipal Girls High School	Burdwan
7.	Soumitra Mandal	Tangrakhli P.G.P High School	South 24 Parganas
8.	Ashis Mandal	Bajua High School	Hooghly

GROUP EVENTS**1. Eco-Club Diary**

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Sucheta Kundu	Rajagram V.H. High School	Bankura
2.	Manisha Mandal	Mission Girls School	Bankura
3.	Tathagata De	Chatra Kunjarani Bani Bhaban	Purba Medinipur

2. Biodiversity Inventory

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Krishnendu Dutta	Bankura Girls High School	Bankura
2.	Subhajit Patra	Bankura Municipal High School	Bankura

3. Paribesh Anusandhan

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Jaydeb Kundu	Bankura Municipal High School	Bankura
2.	Subhajit Bar	Dheknamari D. A. Vidyapith	Barasat, North 24 Parganas
3.	Rahul Mukherjee	Rajgram Vivekananda Hindu Bidyalaya	Bankura

4. Wetland Report

SL. No	Name of the Winner	School with Address	District
1.	Ruchira Pratihar	Bankura Girls High School	Bankura
2.	Somenath Ganguly	Bikrampur R.D. High School	Bankura
3.	Pavel Sk.	Sultanpur Tulsidas Vidyamandir	Burdwan

LIST OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS-IN-CHARGE

Sl. No	Name of the Teacher-in-charge	Name of School	District
1.	Jibananda Chakraborty	Bankura Municipal High (H.S.) School	Bankura
2.	Tapan Kumar Dutta	Bankura Municipal High (H.S.) School	Bankura
3.	Sadhan Chandra Dana	Bankura R.V.H. Vidyalaya	Bankura
4.	Madan Gopal Mandal	Bankura R.V.H. Vidyalaya	Bankura
5.	Kartik Chandra Dhara	Bankura R.V.H. Vidyalaya	Bankura
6.	Sajal Kanti Mandal	Bikrampur R.D. High School	Bankura
7.	Anjan Kumar Mahesh	Chhatra Kunjarani Bani Bhawan	Purba Medinipur
8.	Basudev Dam	Bedibhawan Rabitirtha Vidyalaya	Nadia
9.	Chanchal Chakrabarti	Badartala High School (H.S.)	Kolkata
10.	Mrinal Kanti Manna	Kakdwip Birendra Vidya Niketan	South 24 Parganas
11.	Dipankar Haldar	P.T.P.H. School	South 24 Parganas
12.	Madhusudam Mandal	Dubrajpur R.B.S.D. High School (H.S.)	Birbhum
13.	Kartick De	Nalhati High School	Birbhum
14.	Jiban Krishna Pramanik	Sultanpur Tulsidas Vidyamandir	Burdwan
15.	Sanjit Bandopadhyay	Guptipara High School	Burdwan
16.	Chandan Debnath	Mahesh High School	Hooghly
17.	Nandini Pratihar	Bankura Girls' High School	Bankura
18.	Sobhana Bhowmik	Mission Girls' High School	Bankura
19.	Sabari Manna	R.B.M. Government Girls' High School	Paschim Medinipur
20.	Minu Dey	R.B.M. Government Girls' High School	Paschim Medinipur
21.	Suchismita Mishra	Lakshya High School	Purba Medinipur
22.	Dipali Karmakar	Bankura Girls' High School	Bankura
23.	Santwana Haldar	Kakdwip Birendra Vidya Niketan	South 24 Parganas
24.	Sima Sarkar	Gangarampur Girls' High School	Dakshin Dinajpur
25.	Jiten Pande	Institute of Pahrnacy	Jalpaiguri
26.	Niloy Bhowmik	Barnes High School	Jalpaiguri
27.	Amit Sarkar	Dheknamari D. A. Vidyapith	Barasat, North 24 Parganas
28.	Hirendranath Mandal	Dheknamari D. A. Vidyapith	Barasat, North 24 Parganas
29.	Jagannath Basak	N. Smriti Vidyapith	Dakshin Dinajpur

Sl. No	Name of the Teacher-in-charge	Name of School	District
30.	Biswanath Ghosh	Nayabasad P.M. Sikshaniketan	Paschim Medinipur
31.	Susanta Kumar Das	Gouranga Bazar High School	Cooch Behar