# News Bits and Pieces

# BIO NEWS

### Patients receive cattle blood

The artificial dog blood called oxyglobin is made from cattle blood by removing haemoglobin and added to a synthetic liquid. Its developer, Biopure claims that this will lead to quicker transfusion. Also unlike real blood, the artificial substance can be kept on a Vet's shelf at room temperature for up to two years. Biopure is now developing artificial blood for human (called 'Hemopure') and is derived from cattle blood. Dr. Ted Jacob, its founder, predicts that Hemopure will get oxygen into tissues faster and more efficiently than conventional surgical case. It will be widely used where donors are hard to find. But there are critics who say that testing prototypes could be dangerous and 'the side effects of the dog produce could occur in people, such as urine discolouration, vomiting and overly expanded blood vessels. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 5th March 1998.*

### U.S. Scientists create cloned calf

PPL Therapeutics. Inc. of Blacksburg, Virginia (US), a subsidiary of PPL of Edinburgh (Scotland), has produced a healthy, 44 kg. holstein calf (named Mr. Jefferson)., the world's first cloned calf (16th Feb.1998). The British creators of 'Dolly' were responsible for this. The main potential of this is to produce large quantities of human Serum albumin used in trauma patients. At present, hospitals rely on donated blood. The calf was produced by a processing called 'Somatic cell nuclear transfer'. In this case, 'a fetal fibroblast cell line' was used, not an adult cell as in the case of the sheep 'Dolly'. Roy James, the Managing Director of PPL is reported to have said, "It would be a shame if this important step forward was overshadowed by current controversy ove Dolly's origin". *The Hindu, New Delhi, 25th Feb.1998.*

### Study gives clue to diabetes

A Scientist from the Howars Hughed Medical Institute, New York and a scientist from Harvard's Joslin Diabetes Center at Boston (US) have found out that the mice got diabetes when they were deprived of a single gene. Mice without a working IRS-2 gene showed insulin resistance in the muscle and liver and they had an unusually small supply of insulin producing cells in the pancreas. This finding may point a way to better understanding the human diabetes. *The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 6th March'98.*

### French Scientists clone calf

A female calf, cloned from a single cell of muscle tissue of a 60 day old foetus, was born on 20th Feb.98' at the French National Agricultural Institute at Paris. Several animals were pregnant with calves cloned by this method. The births of other cloned calves are expected in the next few months. *The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 6th March'98.*

### Role of memory molecule

Dr. Ronald Davis and colleagues from Baylor college of Medicine, Houston, Texas (US) have reported in 'Nature' The isolation of volado, a new mutant in fruit-fly drosophila with a specific effect in short-term memory. The gene is expressed in a part of the insect's brain linked to memory formation. The study of integrins ('a molecule that mediates cell adhesion and signals transduction) as a product volado suggests that the short-term memory may depend on structural changes in synopses. *The Tribue, Chandigarh, 4th March'98.*

### Biopiracy of Indian plants continues unabated

A fact-sheet prepared by a research foundation for science, technology and ecology, lists 22 medicinal and agricultural plants like Karela, ritha, amala, etc. have been patented by American and European countries. Afsar Jaffery, research officer of the foundation at Dehra Dun says that there are about 100 plants have been patented. These are routinely used in Indian medicinal system. Since the patents have already been granted by the U.S. Patent office on mustard, castor amla, cassia, karela, black cumin Jatropha and blacknight shade for their various properties,

Suman Sahai, convenor of gene campaign, an N.G.O. warns that India should chalk out strategy to protect its bio-reserves. She cites the case of 'haldi' (Turmeric) the patent of which is yet to be revoked by the U.S. Patent office. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 26th Feb'98.*

# WILDLIFE NEWS

### Concern over trawlers' killing of Olive Ridleys

The wild life institute of Inida, Dehra Dun has drawn the attention of the Chief Conservator of forests, Orissa on the large scale killing (about 10,000) by the trawlers fishing in the Orissa coast between December and February alone. Casualty figures could be much more as it had only listed those washed ashore on a 282 km. coast line, stretching from Gahirmatha in the north to Dankur village bordering Andhra Pradesh in the south. This is attributed to the uncontrolled near-shore trawling. Orissa Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, 1982 prohibits trawling within five km. from the shore line. But this has been violated by 'mindless trawling'. An official of the state governments fishery department opined that it might be due to excessive 'fatigue', ageing process and swallowing of toxic substances. However, the state government agrees for a post mortem examination of this. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 23rd Feb. 1998.*

### Russian dogs sniff out Tigers

Instead of the traditional method of doing a tiger census by studying the pug marks of the tiger, a novel method has been practised for the last 5 years by the Tiger protection society of Russia by using specially trained sniffer dogs. The small samples collected from the bark of a tree, that the tiger has scratched its back on or pawed, the excreta of the animals, its urine marks, hair and the soil it has trod on are used by the sniffer dogs to identify the tiger. In 1996 a tiger census was taken in lezo area of Russia and Amur tiger census was taken Galina Solkina, founder of the Tiger Protection Scoiety has been the prime mover of this method. *The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 8th March'98.*

### Albino wildlife puzzles Chinese Zoologists

Shennongjia nature reserve in Central China nurtures many albino animals and birds - Bears, Snakes, River Deer, White Crows, Turtles, etc. Tang Mingliang, Professor of the school of biology at Wuhan University finds no significant differences in habits and Characteristics between Albino animals and their pears. Chinese Zoologists in general could not explain phenomenon of albinoism. They attribute the special geographic position of Shennongjia mountain where wildlife survived since the fourth glacier period. In major field surveys, the field workers had captured a white snake, a white turtle and a white river deer in late 1970's and mid 1980's. *The observer, Delhi, 11th March'98.*

### Tracking of Carnivora an art in itself

The art of tracking in forests has a long history, dating back to royal big game hunting in the past. To identify animals from pug mark, to enable the team of hunters to go to the right place for hunting was the purpose behind tracking. The trackers depend on signs like pug marks, bending pattern of grass, flock of birds of prey in the open sky, etc. The art of tracking is still employed in Gir forest in Inida. The skill of tracking has to be acquired over a long period of practice. This art is facing possible extinction because the old generation of trackers are retiring from service. The other reason may be the development of highly sophisticated instruments of radio tracking. *The National Herald, 15th March'98.*

### ZSI brings out exhaustive study of Delhi's fauna

A general visitor to Delhi may not be able to see the myriad of fauna and flora of the city. The development has not exterminated small patches where varigated forms of life from Protozoa to mammals exist. Zoological Survey of India, Dehra Dun has published recently 'Fauna of Delhi', a survey of the faunal diversity of Delhi and estimates the present status. N.G.O.'s of Delhi have played significant role in the conservation of the flora and fauna of Delhi, especially the ridge area. The Kalpavriksh, an orgnization keeps a regular data on birds of Delhi's ridge and has published few books. *M.P. Chronicle, Bhopal, 7th Feb'98.*

### Wildlife corridors under threat

Nilgris Biosphere reserve (NBR) has sustained the loss of habitat contiguity, according to the research funding of the Salim Ali Centre for ornithology and natural History (SACON), Coimbatore. This is the sequel of a project on the revival of certain species (1994-97)aiming at identifying existing wildlife corridor and assessing their habitat quality of the Tamil Nadu part of NBR. Large scale encroachments, developmental activities such as extension of plantation, faulty land use of pattern have collectively affected the wildlife corridors.

The existing corridors are: Moyar - Avarhallah, Singara - Mavanhallah, Thorappalli - Gudalur, Suialkuttai - Bannari, Kallampalayam - Uppuppallam, Kallar - Jakkanarai, Veddar colony - Jakkanarai, Kallar - Nellithurai and Upper Bhavani - Silent Valley. *The Hindu, 20th March'98.*

### Sanctuary attracts many birds

The Karavetti - Vettakudi bird sanctuary (1400 acres) near Tiruchi has become a busy breeding ground for several species of birds like cormorant, darter, egret, heron, Open-billed strok and coots. With the development of a tank, this sanctuary will draw many bird visitors during their winter sojourn this year. This 1500 acre tank with protective trees all around, will become a tourist centre. Road over the tank bund, erection of watch towers with adequate supply of literature on bird migration, running of special buses to the sanctuary are things to be done. *The Hindu, Coimbatore, 20th March'98.*

### A paradise for the bird-watcher

With the financial support (Rs.400 crores) of a Japanese company (OCEE) in 86 sq.-km. area of Harike - 50 km. from Amritsar on the National High way no 15 towards Ferozpur, the Punjab State Council for Science and Technology (PSCST) - the nodal agency for the upkeep of one of the largest manmade wetlands - is planning to promote this as a big bird sanctuary, almost like Bharatpur. This sanctuary has, at present, several species of turtles (listed in schedule 4 of the wildlife protection act). Four of them - Ganges soft shelled turtle, Indian tent turtle and the spotted black terrapin are very rare. Many other animals like hog deer, jackel and fish cat have found home here. Noted Swiss Ornithologist, Mr. Per Undeland has been a regular visitor since 1993 and spotted many Central Asian birds like European roller. There is an enthusiastic local support from devotees of the gurudwaras. *The Hindu, Coimbatore, 14th March'98.*

### MCD may translocate monkeys from sensitive areas in Delhi.

The menace of monkeys in residential colonies in the city of Delhi continues to defy the civic authorities. Iqbal Malik, the noted environmentalist submitted to the authorities a suggestion of not only trapping groups of monkeys but also rehabilitating them in forest patches. About 5,000 monkeys are estimated to be in the city and about half of them must atleast be removed to these forest area contractors are employed to catch the monkeys. Malik has already successfully translocated a large number of monkeys from the sensitive areas in the city to forest patches in Mahendragarh in Haryana. She has cautioned the catchers not to separate even a single monkey from its group as it would turn aggressive. She has reported about many telephone calls to tackle situation of the menace of monkeys. *The Times of India 6th November'97.*

### Elephant corridors in Western Ghats to be linked

To save the environment for the growth of elephant population, the evergreen patches at Veerapuli forest will be connected to Kalakkadu which in turn will be linked with the Neyyar in Kerala and to Srivilliputhur, Kodaikanal and Anamalai in Tamil Nadu and will extend up to Karnataka. To develop elephant corridors in the Western ghats region, the Indian government has undertaken this task. *The Hindu, Chennai, 29th March'98.*

### Dolphin help

An eight year old British boy, who has remained without being able to speak, spent few days at the Human Dolphin Therapy Centre, Miami, Florida, where the children swim with the mammals. He uttered his first stumbling words, after being with a dolphin in a swimming session. Family friends and pop stars raised $17,500 to pay for his three week treatment at the Centre. *The Indian Express, New Delhi, 29th March'98.*

### Maximum protection sought for rarest parrot

Rajat Bhargava, a young aviculturist from New Delhi, claims to have rediscovered the Rothschild parakeet, one of the 72 endangered species of the bird figuring in the red data list. It is named after the American naturalist Walter Rothschild who provided a vivid description of the bird in 1895 without seeing a live one. He could make out the characteristics of this bird

from six skins of the parakeet, shipped to him from Bombay. A century later, Bhargava has seen five parrots answering to the description given by Rothschild. A conclusive proof to this species of bird could be determined only through DNA testing, a process very costly for him to undertake. He suggests that the birds be shifted from appendix two to one of the convention of international trade to endangered species (Cities) to give it the maximum protection. Suggests also captive breeding of the species in some zoos.

This is distributed in Nainital and Dehra Dun districts of Uttar Pradesh and in Himachal Pradesh. A research programme to study 'the psittacula intermedia' is called for. *The Hindu, 30th March'98.*

### Part of Adyar creek to be declared bird sanctuary

As portion of the Adyar creek, protected from bird hunting, will be declared a bird sanctuary (50 acres of land). It has a unique biodiversity system of part open lands which attracts birds during the winter.

In 1980, an area of 430 hectares comprising the Adyar creek was declared as a protected place for bird hunting. This area extends from a foot-bridge in foreshore estate to the Kotturpuram bridge. But in actual practice, only 50 and odd hectares belong to the state government (Tamil Nadu). The remaining postions are in private hands and exorbital cost is involved in acquiring them.

But this bird sanctuary will have a place in urban development of the city of Madras. *The Hindu, Coimbatore, 14th April 1998.*

### Forest cover has shrunk by 5,500 sq.km. says report

The forest survey of India's 1997 report, released in Feb'98, shows that the country's forest cover, especially the dense forest cover continues to decline by around 5,500 sq.km. Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh has around 4000 sq.km. each since 1995. The North Eastern states continues to lose the forest area. The National forest policy laid down in 1980 that the countries 98 hill districts should each have atleast two third of their area under forest. Only 19 do, the average is barely more than a third. The all India average of forest cover is around 19%. Thousands of sq.kms. of open forests have dwindled to scrubland to non-forest areas. In some states like Maharashtra, there is appreciable increase. (2300 sq. km. since 1995). *The Times of India, New Delhi 7th Feb'98.*

# ZOO NEWS

### Mumbai aquarium will be replaced

The Taraporevala aquarium on the marine drive, Bombay will soon be demolished and a fifth generation 'Underwater world' will be built in its place by a Singapore based company. This aquarium was opened in 1951 out of donation of D.B. Taraporevala (4394 sq.metres; 18 tanks containing marine form and 9 tanks freshwater life). Environmentalist Shyam Chainani Opposes this and suggests that a glamorious aquarium will be built elsewhere. Underwater world will be a joint venture between Alliance Technology and development (ATD) of Singapore the State Industrial and investment corporation of Maharashtra (SICOM) and the fisheries development corporation of the same state government. The new aquarium 'could come up' by January 2000. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 29th March'98.*

### Natural habitat for wolves

National Zoological Park, Delhi will have new enclosures for wolves shortly. The present enclosure and the artificial den are considered unsuitable for their proper growth. The new enclosure, when built, will enhance the visibility of the zoo watchers. Being nocturnal animals, wolves come out in the dark and stealthily encircle their prey and hunt in packs. Visitors can watch the characteristics of wolves.
Similarly, new big enclosure and water tank for hippopotamus have been planned. This Park is a favourite spot of visitors to Delhi. *The National Herald, 9th November '97.*

### Another giraffe in Calcutta zoo

With the birth of a giraffe (on 8th Feb'98) to the parents - Sagar and Uttara - Calcutta's Alipore Zoo has 10 giraffes. Sagar and Uttara (named by Jyothi Basu, West Bengal's Chief Minister) were obtained by the Alipore Zoo in exchange for a female Rhinocerus from Koln Zoo of West Germany few years ago. *The Telegraph, Calcutta, 7th Feb'98.*

### Lucknow Zoo to get female gibbon from Mumbai

The Central Zoo authority has permitted recently (4th March'98) the Prince of Wales Zoological garden, Lucknow to get a female Hollock gibbon (on an exchange basis) from Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivili (Mumbai Zoo) for two Bengal tigresses. This animal would have been brought by the end of March'98 and would be used for captive breeding of this rare species. *The Pioneer, New Delhi, 8th March'98.*

### More open enclosures at Delhi Zoo

Critical of the pattern of maintenance of the Delhi Zoo. Stagnant water in the moats, animals living in their own refuse and unfinished food, fungal growth in enclosures and the 'laziness on the part of the zoo employees' are listed in support of this. Dr. Iqbal Malik, the environmentalist feels that 'out of the 1200 exhibits at Delhi Zoo, the number of exotic or endangered animals is few'. She complains of rats in the enclosures and the case of a gibbon being subjected to public teasing. B.R. Sharma, the Director defended the absence of migratory birds due to the pollution of the river Yamuna. He outlined the measures to improve the zoo by new enclosures and bigger aviaries for the birds. *The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 8th Feb'98.*

### Injured leopard dies in Mysore Zoo

A leopard, lying injured inside a small pond in a village near Kollegal town (Karnataka) was brought to the hospital in a bullock cart and later shifted to Chamarajanagar Zoological garden in Mysore where it died. This adult leopard - aged between 10 and 12 years - must have been injured by a partner 'to ensure not only its fidility but that no other male approaches her'. In an injured condition, it searched for water holes in the forest and collapsed due to dehydration. *The Deccan Herald, Bangalore, 11th March'98.*

### Vandalur Zoological Park gets a leopard cat

A leopard cat ('a kitten') lost its mother in floods or in some other calamity. Forest department officials rescued it from the hilly slopes of Kodaikanal and sent to the Vandalur Zoo. It is bigger than forest cat and resembles a leopard in miniature. It has spots on its coat and stripes on its face. It is being fed now with milk only. It is not get displayed to the public. *The Indian Express, Chennai, 2nd Dec'97.*

### New cobra pair at Vandalur Zoo

The Vandalur Zoo (Arignar Anna Zoological Park) near Chennai has acquired recently a new King Cobra pair from the Shimoga Zoo in Karnataka in exchange for an adult male Cobra (14 ft' long) and the female cobra (12 ft' long) are open to public view. Basically docile by nature but highly unpredictable, these snakes are extremely poisonous. These can be seen in evergreen forests of the Western Ghats and in several parts of North India in Bamboo groves. This park will shortly have an insectarium (initial investment: Rs.1 lakh) which includes beeties, crickets and grasshoppers. The aim is to conserve not only the larger animals but the bio-diversity as a whole. *The Indian Express, Chennai, 26th Feb'98.*

### Mysore Zoo gets 3 rare species

New valued additions to the Mysore Zoo have been made recently - a pair of marmoset (smallest monkey) two Himadrayas baboons (both males) in exchange with Frankfurt Zoo for a pair of Slothy bears and Barbari sheep. The Central Zoo authority has assigned this zoo to take up the breeding of lion-tailed macque and gaur (Bison). The executive director, N. Rajasekhar, plans for captive breeding of the 164 species exhibited in the zoo. *The Deccan Herald, Bangalore, 2nd Nov'97.*

### Animals prefer to cool their heels here

Special efforts have been taken this summer at the Nehru Zoological Park to keep the animals and birds in cool atmosphere by the use of sprinklers and grass 'acting as heat retardant' 22 tigers get cold water bath twice a day, the elephant a daily bath. With more than 2200 birds animals and reptiles belonging to 230 odd species water is provided 'on a priority basis'. Rs.10 lakhs earmarked for the purpose. As many visitors are expected in Summer, 20 drinking water tanks have been installed besides additional taps. *The Deccan chronicle, Hyderabad, 14th March'98.*

### 29 Rare wild animals seized from mobile zoo

A mobile zoo in Brindavan (near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh) owned by Veena Kamal, has not renewed its license since 1985 and so the manager was arrested and a case has been registered on 8th Feb'98. 29 rare animals (loris, wolves, hyenas, pythons, porcupines, turkeys, leopard, crocodile, etc.) were seized in pathetic living conditions. For instance, the vertebrate column of one of the lions has developed a permanent arch and its unstable legs. These animals are being treated by the Lucknow Zoo. *The Pioneer, New Delhi, 8th March'98.*

### Mobile Zoo animals to be kept in rescue centre

On a complaint by Maneka Gandhi alleging violation of the Wildlife Protection Act by the owner of mobile zoo, the Central Government cancelled the licenses of 16 mobile zoos across the country and set up a rescue centre to keep these seized animals. The Central Zoo authority has agreed to provide 100 per cent grant to set up and maintain the rescue centre. *M.P. Chronicle, Bhopal, 30th Dec'97.*

### Rare birds, animals seized from mini-zoo

One Krishnacharan of Nanjangud (near Mysore) ran a mini-zoo at Srinivasapuram (Bangalore) and began trading in rare species like civet cats, loris and wild ducks. With foreign contacts, he could sell pheasants, pigeons and other animals and established himself as a well-known trader. On a tip-off the forest and food cell Police of Karnataka raided his mini-zoo and rescued many animals and birds. Some of them come under the category of protected species, particularly Pochards. He was arrested. The seized animals would soon be shifted to the Bannerughatta National Park. *The Indian Express, Bombay, 5th March'98.*

### Animals seized from mobile zoo

The wildlife officials of the Uttar Pradesh government seized 20 animals from the Veena Kamal mobile zoo in Vrindavan on 27th Feb'98. Pair of lions, hyenas, Jackals, Wolves, a bear, rare birds, monkeys and tigers were recovered and these will be finally taken to the Lucknow Zoo. Despite the ban on mobile zoos, six are operating in Uttar Pradesh and ten in Bihar. These mobile zoos move from village to village during festival days ('melas') and the forest officials could not nab them. Many of the animals are in poor physical condition being kept in small, unhygenic cages. Many of the owners are said to enjoy political patronage. *The Indian Express, New Delhi, 1st March'98.*

# WELFARE NEWS

### NGO's and circus body tug of war on circus animals

Indian circus federation (ICF) has been asked by two judges of the supreme court to place before the government relevant mateirals against the ban on the use of wild animals in circuses all over the country. Two NGO's - The wildlife protection society of India (WPSI) and kindness to Animals and respect for environment (KARE) have urged the centre to ban the use of animals in circuses. WPSI in its representation complains about the unnecessary pain and suffering of animals during training and performances. ICF laments about the unemployment of 20,000 families this will result in. Camellia Satija of KARE suggests circuses without animals and cites the case of 'le cirque du soliel' as being popular. A Delhi based environment activist group - Kalpavriksha - stresses that there is no educational value in the display of animals in circuses. H.S. Panwar of the wildlife Institute of India points out the cruelty vis-a-vis training. *The Indian Express, 12th November'97.*

### Dissection still not optional

In November, 1997, the Central Board of Secondary Education (Govt. of India) had informed its affiliated schools about making dissection optional and the modification of the practical biology syllabus. Most schools completed their syllabuses by December without being able to implement the new rules. A Delhi court stated that 'dissection may be made optional for student of the senior secondary schools. Yet several schools have not been able to follow this. When students have been given the option, quite a few have opted out of dissection. A Delhi based N.G.O. named 'Kindness to Animals and Respect for Environment' (KARE) had petitioned the Delhi High Court in 1996, saying dissection should be banned or made optional. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 20th March'98.*

### Infirm circus animals get asylum at Ahimsa

Lame elephant 'Rani' and blind horse 'Francis' of the Great Golden Circus were lodged at the Sanjay Gandhi National Park in Bombay by the Police on the orders of a magistrate. Ahimsa, an animals welfare organisation had complained to the Magistrate about the sick animals and the need for proper up keep of them. As per section 35(4) of the Prevention of cruelty to Animals act, the circus owes the responsibility to feed their animals. *The Indian Express, New Delhi, 29th March'98.*

# MORE NEWS

### Glitterly wild, and educational too .....

The wilderness collection of Art Karat, New Delhi, (a shopping centre) contains, inter alia, birds and animals, made out of gold and silver with diamonds and emarelds studded on them. Even other semi-precious stones used to embellish the peacock, parrots, butterflies, snakes, crocodiles, leopards and foxes are amethysts, turquoise, coral, peridots and semi cultural pearls. This has become very popular and generates interest in animals and birds and make the people aware of the need to protect wildlife. *Times of India, New Delhi, 3rd Feb'98.*

### Need to teach children about conservation of forests.

A Seminar on 'Environmental protection', jointly organised by the Forest college and Research Institute of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and the Coimbatore branch of the Indian Institute of Public Administration, suggested that the children should be taught from a young age to conserve the natural treasures of the forests. G.Kumaravelu, Chief Conservator of forests (research), Chennai said that the forests supported not only trees but also a sizable number of birds, animals and insect life and 'these are destroyed when the trees are burnt or cut down'. Massive afforestation programmes planting ten feet tall sapling of various avenue trees along roadside should be carried out to save trees. Several speakers suggested methods to check the pollution to environment. *The Hindu, Coimbatore, 25th March'98.*

### Seminar discusses effects of tourism on Himalayan region.

A seminar organised by the Himalayan Environment Trust at New Delhi discussed the environmental impact of mountaineering expedition and trekking group and pilgrims/tourists in the Himalayan region. Dr. Karan Singh (Chairperson of the People's Commission on Environment), the advisor to the Trust said that 'the fact that the number of tourists is increasing world wide means two movements for India - Tourist movement and ecological movement'. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 29th March'98.*

### Futuristics: Saving species

World Future Society (US) has published recently 'Biodiversity II', containing a collection of articles by eminent scholars, the object being to discover, document and ultimately benefit from the millions of as yet undiscovered species of animals and plants. Bio-diversity's benefits to human are often unrecognised; notes Thomas Lovejoy of the Smithsonian Institute in one of the articles. Cross-pollinating domesticated plants with wide variation (Ex: a corn discovered in Mexico which need not have to be replanted every year), a venom of a South American pit viper discovered in a river estuary that could break down chloroflucero carbons in an aerobic conditions, are some of his suggestions.

A major obstacle in understanding biodiversity is the number of trained specialists is low and the job of understanding the world biodiversity is vast. One way is to encourage the scientific interest of children, perhaps by having them explore Museums and academic institutions that have collections of organisms. *The Times of India, New Delhi, 2nd March'98.*

### Plan to bring out 'nature map'

Through a 'nature map', the Madras naturalists Society has planned to create awareness about the ecologically important natural sites in the city of Chennai (Madras) in order to protect and preserve them. Green areas will be marked in the map. A list of threats to the bio-diversity (hot spots arising out of human interference and natural climatic changes) will be incorporated in the report.

Information on birds, fishes, mammals, butterflies, crabs and other micro-organisms found in the area will be gathered and brought out in a booklet at the cost of Rs.5 lakhs. The services of schools and college students will be distributed free of cost to schools and colleges. *The Hindu, Chennai, 10th April'98.*

### Baby dinosaur's debut after 113 million years

Dr. Cristiano Dal Sasso of Milan's museum of natural history and Dr. Marco Signore of the University of Napoli (Italy) have found out a hatchling fossil, dating from 113 million years ago as a baby dinosaur. The 50 cm fossil is one of the smallest found and proves that the Italian peninsula was not submerged during the dinosaur period. Study of the tissues will provide an unprecedented glimpse of dinosaur history. This hatchling shows no evidence of feathers but it does have an intestine and skeleton reminiscent of birds', according to Dr. Dal Sasso. *The Hindu, Chennai, 29th March'98.*

### Tipsy rats make life topsy - turvy for cops

The police station in Nangloi, West Delhi is infested with rats which survives merrily on the seized country made liquor kept in polythene bags. Drunk, the rats virtually roam around the police station all night long. A Police officer sighted a big rat in his bed, sharing his pillow. The employment of cats have not reduced the number of rats as very often rats are so big that cat cannot manage the situation. Unless the seized liquor packets are removed, this menace will continue. Many camers crews turn up at night 'to capture the rats on tape'. *The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 4th April'98.*

### The Pasha of pest mortems

New York city has 30 million rats, four for every human. The Mayor Rudi Guiliani has announced 'a 88 million initiation to target 69 neighbourhoods through the city's five boroughs where rats pose health hazards'.

The Director of vector control and research (city's department of health), an Indian by name Ranjan Advani has set his hands to find out exterminating methods. Being a Ph.D. from Jodhpur University, he was with the Zoological Survey of India. He runs the respected Institute for Pest Management Services and his fascination is evident from his business card a rat nestles in the left corner and three roaches populate the right.

The extermination methods between New York's rats and India's are the same. But he says humorously that 'you can't set trap in New York' because the traps get stolen. *Times of India, New Delhi, 15th Feb'98.*

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