

**100 thousand tree plantation at East Kolkata Wetlands, nurturing & care...by South Asian Forum for Environment. SAFE congratulates Ramsar on its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

Like every year, SAFE celebrated World Wetlands Day, at East Kolkata Wetlands, EKW only Ramsar site of West Bengal, India by organizing '*Jalabhumi Utsav*', with participation of over a thousand wetlanders. SAFE has successfully launched India's first 'Biorights', project at EKW funded by DFID (UK) through Urban Municipal Affairs dept. Govt. of West Bengal; this has been included in the fourth report of TEEB (The Environment Economy and Biodiversity) of the UNEP as one of the model environment practices.

This year's theme; 'Forest for water and wetlands', SAFE targets to plant 100 thousand trees, plantation beginning from WWD 2011 till the next WWD 2012 at EKW. It was a day long tree plantation program conducted by moving a caravan with tableau covering 40 kilometre of the EKW area. Tree saplings were gifted to each members of the fishermen community and aim was to create awareness highlighting the importance of our wetlands and forests. The tableau moved into the wetland communities who are most affected by its destruction of the wetlands ecosystem due to increasing pollution and unscrupulous encroachment.

Mrs. Sanchita Mandal, Mayor in Council, (Environment); Kolkata Municipal Corporation, Dr. R.P Bannerjee, Director, Eastern Institute of Integrated Learning Management, EILM, our partner organization for EKW conservation & Management project, officials from govt. and corporate sector joyfully participated in the wetlands day celebration. Dr. Dipayan Dey, Chair SAFE addressed the community at *Narkeltala bheri* and announced a rural entrepreneurship program on fisheries and allied products in EKW; similar to Pike Place market of USA that supports indigenous farmers, traders and entrepreneurs in the urban city of Seattle. The market would trade in local endemic fishes, vegetables, medicinal plants, vermicompost, fish feed, flowers, home-made spices and fisheries based food and organic products to support the livelihood, and alternative economic endeavors of the poor people who are getting gradually displaced due to urban encroachment. This project will be realized under PPP model with support from corporate giants and government research institutes and departments.

Mr. Pran Kaul, of DFID(UK), New Delhi later, visited the 'Biorights', project site and appreciated the community and SAFE endeavor in conserving EKW.

EKW holds abundant natural resources and over 240 interconnected water bodies create outstanding economic and conservation opportunity. The ecosystem functions on man-nature dynamics and its rich biodiversity is a part of the magic of our only natural waste recycling zone of the city Kolkata. We gratefully acknowledge, Ramsar Secretariat, UNEP, MoEF, & MoC, GOI, NABARD, and all supporting partner organizations, including the wetlands community for their constant support and encouragement in saving the EKW, amidst tremendous resource

constraints. We look forward to have your continued support as this helps us in saving the vanishing East Kolkata Wetlands.













