



# **EAST KOLKATA WETLANDS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**



**On the Occasion of  
WORLD WETLANDS DAY  
2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2013**

In the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea the first Convention on Wetlands was held on 2 February 1971. Since 1997 each year, internationally World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2 February with a theme. The theme for World Wetlands Day 2013 was 'WETLANDS AND WATER MANAGEMENT' and the slogan was 'WETLANDS TAKE CARE OF WATER'.

The East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority (EKWMA) has been entrusted with the duty to conserve and protect the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW). To raise public awareness about the ecological importance of EKW and its values and benefits, EKWMA celebrates World Wetlands Day every year. This year EKWMA celebrated the programme in:

**Site 1:** Collector Bheri (a waterbody of 10.65 Acre) of Mouza- Nonadanga under P.S. Tiljala (KMC Ward No.108) in EKW was selected for celebrating the occasion. Last year it was drained out of water and illegal construction of boundary wall around the said waterbody was noticed. This wall was demolished by EKWMA. The location was chosen to observe the transformation of drained waterbody into a resplendent habitat of birds, reptiles, amphibians, and insects.

Mr. Arijit Banerjee, Chief Technical Officer (EKWMA), Ms. Bonani Kakkar, President, PUBLIC (an NGO), Mr. Arjan Basu Roy of Nature Mates (an environment action group), Mr. Subhra Niyogi (Journalist, TOI), Mr. Jayanta Basu (Environmentalist), 50 class IX students and a teacher of La Martiniere School (boys & girls) and staff of EKWMA attended and participated in this occasion.

The experts explained the importance, values and critical issues, their possible solutions and transformation of Collector's Bheri within a year to the students, the future generation of our country. The brief explanations of experts have been summarized below:-

- Ms. Bonani Kakkar: She explained the history of this Collectors bheri to the students. "Prior to the encroachment, the bheri had sparkling water and the fishermen's cooperative offered joyrides on paddle boats. After the wall was pulled down, skeptics had written off its revival. In the months that followed, local farmers had started growing leafy vegetables on the fertile bed. But nature has clawed back, reclaiming the area,"
- Mr. Arjan Basu Roy: He explained the homeostasis mechanism of environment on the backdrop of transforming the drained waterbody into a pleasant habitat of wetland lives. He told "if we keep our hands off, nature will manage itself and restore what's been lost. Amidst all the gloom over unbridled conversion of wetlands, this stands out as a beacon of hope".
- Mr. Arijit Banerjee: He flagged the issue of real threat to this EKW. Being a peri-urban wetland, EKW has always been under a constant threat of encroachment. He pointed

out that “the lure of turning waterbodies into real estate goldmine is so strong that it is difficult to save them from disappearing unless we all become interested. In the case of Collector’s Bheri, we could take firm action because it was government-owned”.

After the brief discussion a programme of plantation of saplings around the Collector’s bheri was executed with the association of students of La Martiniere School (boys & girls), green activists under the supervision of the staffs of EKWMA. This programme includes plantation of 40 saplings of different types of trees. They are as following:

1. Date, (Indian name: Khejur), Scientific name: (*Phoenix dactylifera*)
2. Indian Gum Arabic tree (Indian name: Babla/Babool), Scientific name: (*Acacia nilotica*)
3. Bamboo, (Indian name: Bans), Scientific name: (*Bambusa bambos*)
4. Sacred Fig, (Indian name: Peepal), Scientific name: (*Ficus religiosa*)
5. Sola plant, Scientific name: (*Aeschynomene aspera*) etc.



**Site 2:** After the conclusion of first programme Mr. Arijit Banerjee, Chief Technical Officer, EKWMA joined another programme organized by South Asian Forum for Environment at Jhagrashisa Bheri. He participated in a debate with different school students regarding development and better livelihood of the people who resides in EKW and depends on it. After hearing all concerns he concluded that as the earth is colorful, not black and white, so there are no clear cut solutions of the critical issues relating to EKW. He addressed the students and told them that as tomorrow's future and responsible citizens of this democratic country, it is their duty to preserve and protect these wetlands and its surrounding environment. He also emphasized on the importance of arriving through discourse, on development solutions that are equitable and just. Conservation and development need not be antagonistic

