

RGU conducts Students' Botanical Expedition-2015 and Biodiversity Lecture Series at Tawang and West Kameng from 4th to 11th February 2015

The M.Sc. Final Semester Students of Department of Botany, RGU has successfully participated and trained themselves in Short Term Students' Botanical Expedition -2015 lead by expedition team leader Dr. Hui Tag, Assistant Professor, Department of Botany, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh and Deputy Coordinator of CPEB-II programme. The team has visited major botanical and biocultural hotspots of Tawang and West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh from 4th February 2015 onward. This time major aims of the expedition programme was to expose the promising final semester M.Sc. Students about distribution pattern of flora of eastern Himalayan region at different altitude gradient and climatic zone. The exploration team made their GPS tracking and digital collection from Balukpong Range tropical rainforest situated at an altitude of 100-300 m and had gradually ascended through subtropical pine forest of Rupa, Shergao, Dirang and Bomdila range situated in between 1500-2500 m. The team has finally ascended the alpine zone of Sela range and PTSO lake of Tawang range situated at an altitude between 3000 – 4500m from the mean sea level. The young students have exposed themselves to a distribution pattern of subtropical *Alnus* and Oak forest and conifer species such as Himalayan Blue Pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), Chir Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*), and temperate and subalpine conifers such as *Cupressus*, *Juniperus*, *Tsuga*, *Abies* and *Taxus*. The young students have learnt the truth that the timberline beautiful *Abies* and *Tsuga* is only the conifer tree species distributed between the junction of subalpine and alpine point, and after which no tree species could be found beyond the altitude of 3500-4000m except shrubby Rhododendron, Berberidaceae and Rosaceae members and alpine scrubs and herbs sparsely distributed along rocky slope. The young team has also learnt a practical lesson during this short but landmark expedition that the Global warming and climate change could drastically alter the species distribution in alpine and subalpine region of Eastern Himalaya as alien and invasive tropical and subtropical species could easily migrates towards temperate and subalpine once temperature are raised due to global warming. The team has also learnt and concluded that gradual shifting of timberline species *Abies* towards higher altitude could also mean scanty snow fall, recession of ice sheet and raising temperature of subalpine and alpine zone which could act as excellent indicator for global warming and climate change studies in the eastern Himalaya region. Time has come for the focused scientific investigation about climate change in Eastern Himalaya by taking distribution pattern of ecologically sensitive vegetation and animal species as one of the major climate change indicators.

Unlike casual visitors, the expedition team has also made a close watch on sacred PTSO lake of Tawang and sighted 4 number of high altitude water birds, and also learnt physiological nature of high altitude herbaceous flora hidden under the debris of freezing -13 to -30 degree. The team came to know that initiatives of army personnel and local knowledge and belief system of Monpas are playing a significant role in conservation of critical mountain ecosystem including alpine Rhododendron patches and sacred lake of the region which really is a noble vision and mission to be appreciated.

The team on the way back from higher elevation has also conducted Biodiversity Lecture Series titled "*Biodiversity & Human Interface: Planet's War for Survival*" –the students' Lecture series of mountain section under the initiative of Centre with Potential for Excellence in Biodiversity, RGU in collaboration with, Principal of VKV Shergao and DFO of Shergao Forest Division of West Kameng District which was held at VKV school, Shergao

on 8th February 2015. Around 250 students including teaching staffs, and RGU M.Sc. students' expedition team has attended the popular lecture series which went on for nearly two hours. Dr. Hui Tag, key speaker of the lecture series and team leader of the expedition team has enthused young and promising VKV students with his captivating lecture by showing the mountain biodiversity potential and sustainable human livelihood, role of botanical and herbal garden in environmental conservation and, sensitive ecological region and rich cultural landscape of the Eastern Himalaya including Kameng and Tawang Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Dr. Tag while extending his thankfulness to Principal of VKV Shergao for joining RGU team in nature conservation campaign has also urge the youth and children to be studious, hardworking and to take lead role in nature conservation by building botanical and herbal garden network at every school campus of Arunachal Pradesh and such activity should inspire the nearby village and localities. Principal VKV and programme incharge Mr. Surojit Das has express thankfulness to Dr. Tag and his young M.Sc. students expedition team of RGU for chosen the VKV Shergao as partner in nature and environmental conservation initiative of RGU and having to share their valuable conservation knowledge.



VKV Students of Shergao VKV, West Kameng listening the Students Biodiversity Lecture series delivered by Dr. Hui Tag, Deputy Coordinator CPEB-II RGU On 8th February during visit of Students Botanical Expedition Team-2015 at Kameng and Tawang sectors.





Dr. Tag Hui, Deputy Coordinator CPEB-II delivering Lecture on topic “Biodiversity & Human Interface: Planet’s War for Survival” held at VKV Shergao on 8th February 2015.



Rhododendron Expedition at Chillipam, Rupa (West Kameng) 8th February 2015