

Foundation of India; AIIMS, New Delhi). Cardiovascular diseases are assuming epidemic proportion. He provided quantitative evidence of what it means to the nation in terms of loss of material and human resource, and the role that diet, particularly fruits and vegetables, can play in mitigating it. A strong case for integrating nutrition into health and development programmes through public-private partnership and awareness generation was made. The task according to him is to 'telescope the transition from under or over nutrition to appropriate nutrition; adoption of life-style approach with special focus on adolescents and children; use policy and education as complementary interventions to impact on populations and individuals'.

India is a greying society, and the question of health of the elderly to enable them to lead a productive life has become important. Kalyan Bagchi, another octogenarian nutritionist (formerly at WHO, Geneva) discussed some of the

biological and health problems associated with ageing, and how health and nutritional well-being of the elderly can be promoted through proper meals.

Ramesh Bhat (Centre for Science, Society and Culture, Hyderabad) spoke about new policy and programme initiatives needed to ensure food safety in India. Apart from the health of the people of India, a sound policy for food safety also helps India's export potential. Important elements of food safety policy include transparency, stakeholder involvement, enhanced coordination, utilization of science, avoiding conflict of interests between promotions of products and monitoring of safety.

The symposium pointed to the need for revision of the National Nutrition Policy, and suggested important elements for inclusion, but did not specifically provide prescription for its implementation. In the author's opinion there is need for convergence between the thinking and initiatives of scientists, policy mak-

ers and administrators. Institutions like NFI, MSSRF, etc. in the NGO sector need to work in consort with Government institutions like NIN, home science colleges, agriculture and medical institutions and government departments. Currently, parallel initiatives are being forged. Time has come to walk the talk.

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## MEETING REPORT

### International Biology Olympiad\*

This year India hosted the prestigious 19th International Biology Olympiad (IBO). The inauguration took place at the Grand Intercontinental, Mumbai on 14 July 2008. Students from 55 countries across the globe participated in the eight-day programme. The mega event was organized by the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, supported by the Department of Atomic Energy, the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Department of Science & Technology, Govt of India.

Amongst the 55 countries that participated, Italy was this year's new entrant. More than 200 students, 200 team leaders, jury members and scientific observers participated in the event. A National Academic Committee chaired by S. K. Apte (BARC, Mumbai), consisting of some of the leading biologists and biology educationists of the country, has been involved in designing theoretical

and experimental tests of exceptional quality and high difficulty level.

The experimental tests included four practical tasks in plant sciences, animal sciences, biochemistry, cell biology and ethology. Both theoretical and experimental tests were held at HBCSE. The international jury sessions, in which the tests were deliberated upon and passed, were chaired by Anindya Sinha (National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore).

After brainstorming sessions, which lasted for five days, the students were judged and the results delivered at the closing ceremony on 19 July 2008 at the Nehru Centre, Mumbai. At the outset, Rekha Vartak gave an overview of the preparation and execution of IBO. Apte gave a brief review on the formation of questions and tasks to be performed by the students. This was followed by short speeches made by T. Ramasami (DST, New Delhi) and Hans Moralís.

Anil Kakodkar (Atomic Energy Commission) and T. Ramasami gave away 138 medals to young, meritorious students. Subhrashis Guha Niyogi from the Indian team was awarded the gold medal, Siddharth Iyengar and Gopanandan Parthasarathy bagged the silver medal and

Sachit Daniel was awarded the bronze medal. The top three gold medals were given away to students from USA, China and South Korea.

Kakodkar, stressing on the importance of these olympiads, mentioned that IBO is an important activity in India and it is a meeting of cultures, development of new bonds, running a healthy competition and mobilization of the younger community to make the world a better place to live in.

At the end of the programme, the IBO cup was passed on by Arvind Kumar to the Chair, 20th IBO, Japan, where the Biology Olympiad will take place next year.

The 19th IBO, though focused on academics, was a festive occasion, including special tours to TIFR, Nehru Science Centre, Nehru Planetarium and Discovery of India Exhibition and a 'village fair' at the HBCSE. A newsletter was brought out by the HBCSE each day during the event. India's culture including classical and folk dances was showcased at its opening and closing ceremonies.

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