

City students take the plight of Pune rivers to New York City

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To enable the youth and teachers from all over the world to undertake and collaborate on projects contributing to the health and welfare of the society, the International Education and Resources Network (iEARN) sponsored the 2009 Youth Communicating and Networking (YouthCan) conference.

The conference was held at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, US, between April 4-6, 2009. The iEARN is a youth non-governmental organisation with regional headquarters all over the world.

Two standard X students from the city, Priyanka Mohite from Bal Shikshan Mandir, Kothrud and Ketan Rikame from Jnana Prabhodhini, Nigdi, accompanied with Pratibha Patke, science teacher from Jnana Prabhodhini, Nigdi and Sunita Bhagwat, iEARN India co-ordinator participated in the YouthCan conference.

They gave a presentation on 'Four rivers, one world' project, along with participants from Nepal and Bangladesh, showcasing the river pollution in their respective countries and their solutions to them.

"Working since 2007 on the river project, both the students were given the theory and practical training about the river pollution, various testing regarding water quality, finding solutions and environment-related practical experience on the four rivers, Mula, Mutha, Indrayani and Pawana in Pune for their presentation," said Bhagwat.

LARGEST NETWORK

The iEARN is the world's largest non-profit, global network of teachers and youth in more than 125 countries, collaborating on educational and learning projects. Through the medium of the Internet, it is a unique platform for students to globally showcase their projects. In India, iEARN, with its presence in 18 states, works collaboratively with the Department of Education and Research and Indian Institute of Education known for their improvement programme in school education.

Looking after the iEARN, Pune office for the last 10 years, Bhagwat said that the tour was funded by the US State Department of Education, Washington DC.

Priyanka and Ketan were selected among students working on the project from various schools in Pune. "They both experienced for the first time that the garbage problem in NYC was incomparably more than what we have in Pune and that the river pollution in Bangladesh and Nepal is worse than what we experience in our rivers," said Bhagwat.

As part of a group of six students from her school, Priyanka with others toured the rivers in Pune and conducted water testing to check



BRIGHT MINDS: (From left) Sunita Bhagwat, Priyanka Mohite, Ketan Rikame, and Pratibha Patke at the 2009 YouthCan conference at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

its PH value (acidity or alkalinity indicator), dissolved oxygen percentage and phosphate and nitrate level. Developing an innovative solution, 'Flora Filter', an experimental model to filter water through the sand and gravel method, successfully filtered most of the suspended particles from the residential drainage waste water discharge. Priyanka suggested

applying the cost-effective filter method at residential complexes and smaller commercial places. "Interacting with students from other countries and sharing our thoughts gave us an introspective and comparative idea of pollution problems prevailing in our respective countries," said Priyanka.

Working for one-and-a-half years on the project under the

guidance of his science school teacher, Ketan came up with an indigenous method of water purification called 'Green Herb Method' using ayurvedic medicinal leaves extracts of eucalyptus, Indian basil, custard apple and mango. These brought the dissolved oxidants level to normal, neutralised the water's PH value and largely effected the chemical composition of the water. "It was a good experience for my future as I learnt a lot through the cultural interaction with students from other parts of the world," said Ketan.

ABOUT YOUTHCAN

YouthCan is a youth-run organisation that uses technology to globally connect and educate people about environmental issues. Working collaboratively with iEARN, YouthCan is an umbrella network of environmental students and educators, who design and present various workshops and activities at the American Museum of Natural History in NYC, US. The museum provides the space, funding and staff support to YouthCan, NYC. The three YouthCan groups of the planning committee, member students and teachers communicate with each other, facilitated by the network structure of iEARN.

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