

ectodermal dysplasia phenotype and this pathway is involved in NF- κ B activation⁷. Hence, such an approach would provide an insight into the species-specific differences in dentition. On the other hand, recognizing the need to reduce the number of animal experiments along with the imperative need to adopt a multi-prolonged approach for the therapy of human oral diseases, genetically engineered human fibroblast in monolayer/epithelial co-culture systems, could be used to screen bioactive (natural/engineered), compounds with biopharmaceutical potential and aid drug development. This complementary and alternative medical approach may be a stepping stone paving the way for design

of future experiments to meet the stringent criteria set in the guidelines for EBR in medicine⁶.

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NEWS

International Cosmos Prize

The International Cosmos Prize, a top award in ecology, for 2006 has been conferred for the first time on an Indian scientist, Raman Sukumar, Professor at the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Sukumar is the 14th recipient of this annual award instituted by the Commemorative Foundation for the International Garden and Greenery Exposition at Osaka, Japan. The Cosmos Prize is given for achievements with a 'long-term perspective' derived from 'holistic' and 'interdisciplinary methods'.

While selecting Sukumar for this award, the International Cosmos Prize Committee noted his academic achievements over the past quarter century in the fields of ecology and conservation biology in the Western Ghats of southwestern India. In particular, his research on the ecological relationship between humans and elephants and the resolution of conflicts between them has been internationally

recognized as pioneering work in the little-explored field of the coexistence of wildlife and humans. The committee noted his comprehensive work on various aspects of elephant biology and conservation, including the use of telemetry to understand ecology and behaviour, survey of habitats and identification of corridors for preservation, and efforts to promote coexistence of humans and the world's largest land animal. This research has provided a scientific platform for the protection of wildlife over a broader area in Asia, a region where the human population is expanding rapidly.

The committee also observed that Sukumar has expanded his research through work on tropical forest structure and dynamics, explaining how past climate change has shaped vegetation patterns in the Western Ghats, and predicting how future climate change could impact the region's ecology.

At the more practical level, Sukumar had formulated and implemented many proposals on biodiversity conservation and the preservation of the natural environment in India. For 'its universal approach in preserving the natural environment and its efforts to conserve life amid the urbanization that is taking place throughout the world', the committee stated that Sukumar's work deserves the honor of the 2006 International Cosmos Prize, which aims for the 'harmonious coexistence of nature and mankind'.

The awards ceremony and commemorative lectures will be held in late October 2006 in Japan. Past recipients of the Cosmos Prize include Ghillelan Prance (1993), George Schaller (1996), Richard Dawkins (1997), Jared Diamond (1998), David Attenborough (2000), Peter Raven (2003) and Daniel Pauly (2005). More details can be found at <http://www.expo-cosmos.or.jp>