



July 2012
₹ 40/-

PEOPLE AND UN

Published by The Indian Federation of United Nations Associations

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Group Picture on Ship of MUNA Team and ICGS Officials

Maharashtra United Nations Association Observes **World Environment Day** **on ICG Ships**

AN extremely innovative, informative and interesting event was organized by The Maharashtra United Nations Association (MUNA) in collaboration with the Indian Coastal Guard (Ministry of Defence - Govt. of India) on 5th June to celebrate and observe World Environment Day aboard the Coast Guard ships ICGS Samudra Prahari and INS Sankalp at Mumbai. The event was a first of its kind. The celebration dwelt on the theme Green Economy: Are you part of it? Which was also the theme of the international conference Rio +20.

The event was kicked off with Deputy Inspector General NV Narasimha with his welcome address. He also gave a brief introduction to the activities of the Indian Coast Guard which included safeguarding the Indian coastline as well as issues related to protection of the marine ecology and environment. He also appreciated the initiative by MUNA and aired hopes of having more such joint initiatives to increase awareness among the officers of the defence forces as well as the common man.

The programme flagged off with the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban



Prof. (Adv.) Ashraf Ahmed Shaikh, Mrs. Mohini Mathur and Mr. A.A. Syed are handing over MUNA Trophy to DIG Donny Michael.

ki Moon's Message which was flashed on the screen and a special video message from Ms Kiran Mehra - Kerpelman, Director United Nations Information Center (UNIC), for India and Bhutan, New Delhi, in which she congratulated Maharashtra United Nations Association and officials of Indian Coast Guard for the collaboration and stressed on the need for various agencies to work together for saving the environment. In her video Message from New Delhi Mrs. Kerpelman also spoke about the theme: Green Economy and the upcoming Rio conference on Environment.

Mr. A. A. Syed, Secretary General (MUNA) while addressing the audience highlighted about the various activities of MUNA like observance of UN Designated international days, conferences, seminars, workshop, and about pollution in the city of Mumbai. He thanked and appreciated the ICGS services for the cause of nation.

Ms Mohini Mathur, Executive Chairperson MUNA delivered the key note address. In her address she elaborated the imbalance between nature and man and further said the survival of mankind was in danger. "With ice glaciers melting, forest disappearing, climate change and global warming the earth is on the brink of disaster. The need for industrialization and development cannot be denied for a country like ours however it is essential that the development should not at the cost of environmental decay". She explained the various historical developments about conferences and meeting on Environment at international level to audience which included the commanders and officers of the ICGS, activists, students and professionals from various walks of life.

DIG Kothari in his presentation highlighted the activities of the Indian Coast Guard in recent years for saving the fragile marine ecology around the Indian coastline. The activities basically dealt with clean up operations undertaken by ICG after there were oil spills from damaged merchant ships and off shore platforms. He also threw light on the initiatives taken by ICG to sensitize the masses by holding educational seminars for schools children.

Ashraf Ahmed Shaikh, Hony. secretary, MUNA and President Youth Wing spoke about International Environment Law and informed the audience about various treaties, conventions, statutes, regulations and common law, agreements and protocols on environment and stressed on sustainable development. He also spoke on the role of United Nations and each individual and government. "The need for safeguarding the environment today for the benefit of future generations "environment law draws from and is influenced by principles of environmentalism, including ecology, conservation, stewardship, responsibility and sustainability, whereas, the pollution control laws generally are intended often with varying degrees of emphasis to protect and preserve both natural environment and human health and the role of judiciary in interpreting those laws. "Said Prof. Ashraf

DIG Donny Michael in his address dealt with the legal aspect of the marine environment damage that was being caused by unscrupulous ships responsible for polluting the sea and elaborated on various international agencies available for redressing and compensating the marine damage and loss. He also pointed out about the absence of a proper redressal channel in the country that allowed polluters to get away scot free in some cases.

The highlight of the programme was a debate between ICG officials and the members of civil society on "Environment Protection Consciousness in India- Is it still in nascent stage or achieved critical mass." which was Moderated by DIG NV Narasimha and . Adv. Ashraf .. Governing council members,, MUNA Youth Members and other professionals participated in the lively debate. the pollution response equipment onboard of the indigenously built pollution control vessel ICGS Samudra Prahari were started and displayed to the participants. The Coast Guard officials also said that they were in the process of commissioning two more pollution control vessels that will deal specifically with for oil spill response containing damage to the marine environment. ■

— A Report by Ashraf A. Shaikh