

RCE Lucknow initiates a mobile exhibition on biodiversity

RCE Lucknow has initiated a mobile exhibition on biodiversity of Uttar Pradesh a northern state of India. This innovative mobile exhibition titled '*Prakriti*' (means Nature) has been developed by CEE North with the support from RCE partner Uttar Pradesh State Biodiversity Board (UPSBB) and University of Lucknow. *Prakriti* is a mobile resource bus on knowledge dissemination about the biodiversity of Uttar Pradesh.

The state-of-the-art exhibition aboard the *Prakriti* Bus has 22 informative display panels on the biodiversity of UP and its importance in the ecosystem and human society. The display panels highlights the key information on bio-geographic zones of UP and India, floral and faunal diversity and its importance, rivers, wetlands, medicinal plants, agro-biodiversity, status of protected areas, flagship species, green calendar of India, etc. The exhibition also highlights the ecosystem services provided by the biodiversity, its linkage with the livelihoods, and the key challenges faced in their conservation. The present mobile bus runs on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), which helps to create awareness and motivation to use CNG, a clean fuel.

The bus was inaugurated 2 August 2014 in a formal function having presence of more than 400 people. With its launch, *Prakriti* bus started visiting schools of Lucknow touching urban and rural schools. Easy to understand language of panels are appreciated by principals and teachers. There are three science educator/communicators from CEE with the bus who explain various interesting facts and information to students. After visiting exhibition, one could see students noting down facts and information from panels in their notebook. Teachers found it as innovative educational resource to make students learn about natural wealth of the State. The State Symbol panel on the back of the bus is the most popular section. Students get excited to be introduced to Palash, Barasingha, Saras and Sita Ashok as State symbols first time. Community members gather around the bus and ask about medicinal plants, about varieties of fruit and livestock, names of the animals that they have not seen before.

The bus will move in 7-8 districts of Uttar Pradesh including Lucknow, Kannauj, Unnao, Kanpur, Hardoi, Sitapur, Barabanki, and Rae Bareli. The *Prakriti* bus has completed one month on the road and has reached more than 10000 students and teachers from 40 schools in Lucknow.

In order to assess the level of understanding of the participating schools, a campaign on the biodiversity mapping is also launched "Biodiversity at My Campus Campaign" for schools. The innovative exhibition on the wheels reflects the vision of the RCE Lucknow partners to bring forth this iconic and flexible mobile resource on the Biodiversity of UP. Based on the initial reviews and comments of the various target groups like school principals, teachers, and their students, the *Prakriti* bus is acting as a ray of hope amid the deteriorating status of biodiversity and promoting the society to act for the conservation of biodiversity and sustainable utilization of its services before it is too late.