

## A Report on the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Earth Science Olympiad

The 3<sup>rd</sup> international Earth Science Olympiad ([www.ieso2009.tw/home/home.html](http://www.ieso2009.tw/home/home.html)) was organized by the National Taiwan Normal University at Taipei, Taiwan, during September 14-22, 2009. The theme of the Olympiad was "Human Environment". Fifty students from 14 countries (Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, UK, and USA) participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> IESO. Three countries (Argentina, France and Ukraine) sent observers. The Indian Team comprised of the following:

Mr Sarthak Chandra (Pune )  
Ms Tanvi Chheda (Mumbai)  
Mr Shobhit Goel (Chandigarh)  
Mr Sharad Mirani (Ahmedabad)  
Dr R Shankar (Mentor)  
Dr T A Viswanath (Mentor).

All four students bagged Bronze medals. Besides, three of them also got recognition as part of International Field Investigation Teams that got the BEST FIELD COOPERATION TEAM AWARD and the BEST PRESENTATION TEAM AWARD. The concept of International Field Investigation is unique to Earth Sciences.

This activity promotes international understanding and co-operation among participants at a young age.

The 3-hour theory test and practical test (spread over a day) comprised objective type questions pertaining to geosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere and astronomy. No question elicited descriptive answers. The question papers were prepared by the Scientific Committee and modified and subsequently approved by the International Jury comprising the Mentors of all the participating countries. Questions were translated for the benefit of non-English speaking students. The students had the opportunity to use clinometer compass, GPS, telescope, etc. during the practical test.

International student teams, each comprising six students from different countries, carried out field work in the earthquake-hit Central Taiwan region and came up with their findings about the magnitude of the earthquake etc. All the teams made a Power Point presentation before a Jury. The Best International Field Co-operation Team Award and the Best Presentation Team Award were given to the deserving teams.

At the Rock Knowledge Assembly held at the National Sihu Senior High School, all students, mentors and observers participating in the Olympiad contributed a specimen each of interesting rocks from their countries to form the pattern "IESO 2009". This was a unique function to

commemorate both the 3<sup>rd</sup> IESO and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chichi earthquake. Commemorative stamps were released to mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> IESO in Taipei.

A field trip was organized to the Chelungpu Fault area. This fault got activated and caused the infamous Chichi earthquake ten years back. Damaged structures like a tilted power transmission tower, mangled railway tracks, collapsed school buildings and the warped race track of a school have all been preserved as a reminder of the devastating power of earthquakes. A museum (the Earthquake Museum of Taiwan) has been erected to educate common people and school students about earthquakes, its causes etc. with the help of charts, models and films. There is also a Ground acceleration simulation theatre where visitors can experience motion during an earthquake.

The visit to the Yehliu Geopark was breathtaking both for the geomorphic features carved by Nature and for the way they have been preserved and presented to common people. After watching a video film on coastal processes, differential weathering etc, visitors proceed to see what are called queen's head, mushroom rocks, ginger rock, candle rocks and shoe-shaped rock, all with the help of short explanations. It provided a good example of a geopark and how common people and school students could be enlightened about the Earth, its processes and products.

Prof S. Uyeda was the Honoured Guest during the Olympiad. He delivered a lecture titled "Breakthrough in Earth Science" in which he highlighted how serendipity backed by hard work led to scientific discovery rather than accidents alone. He emphasised how new ideas should be pursued and how these can not be found in books. Prof Uyeda received a standing ovation for his impressive lecture.

The 4<sup>th</sup> IESO would be held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, September 19-28, 2010.

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