

Detailed report of the 1st Botanical Congress, 2023

Botanical Society of Bengal in collaboration with the Department of Botany, University of Calcutta organized the 1st Botanical Congress from 23rd to 25th March, 2023 at Ballygunge Science College Campus, Calcutta University, Kolkata. More than 300 participants took part in the Congress. Academicians from different Universities and Colleges and Scientists from different National Institutes of our Country participated and delivered lectures on various important topics of botany. Dr. Subhra Chakraborty, Director, NIPGR, New Delhi. Dr. A. A. Mao, Director, BSI, Kolkata, Dr. D.K. Upreti, Emeritus Scientist, NBRI, Lucknow, Prof. Uma Shankar, NEHU, Shillong, Dr. Rakesh Maurya, ex Chief Scientist, CDRI, Lucknow, Dr. Shashi Kumar, ICGEB, New Delhi, Dr. Niraj Rai, Senior Scientist, BSIP, Lucknow, Prof. A.P. Das. RGU, Arunachal Pradesh, Prof. Sudhendu Mandal, Advisor (Academic and Administrative), Central University of Odisha, Koraput are some of the delegates who came from other states. Honourable Vice Chancellor, University of Calcutta, Prof. Asis Kumar Chattopadhyay inaugurated the Congress. The Plenary lecture was given by Prof. Uma Shankar on “Incredible Botanical Knowledge at Crossroads: Opportunities on the Horizon”. On the first day in the Cryptogamic World section Keynote lecture was delivered by Dr. D.K. Upreti, on “Indian Lichen diversity and its Bioprospection” and Dr. A. A. Mao spoke on “The Flowering Plants” in the Flowering Plants: The Blossoms section. In the Medicinal Plants Section Dr. Rakesh Maurya spoke on “Application of Traditional Knowledge in Search of Potential leads for drug discovery”, while Dr. Niraj Rai, enlightened the participants on “In search of molecular past: Reconstructing floral and faunal population histories using ancient DNA” in the Evolutionary and Environmental botany section. Dr. Subhra Chakraborty gave the Keynote lecture on “Decoding organeller control of multi-host resistance” and the Keynote lecture on “Fresh water algal biodiversity of India” in the Technical session was delivered by Prof. Jai Prakash Keshri of the University of Burdwan. Simultaneously oral presentations by young scientists in all the sections continued. This was followed by the Poster Session by the faculty and research scholars. The day ended with the Cultural program and the Congress Dinner. The second day started with the inauguration of the Science Fair by Prof. Debasis Das, Registrar, University of Calcutta. Dr. Shashi Kumar gave an illuminating talk on “Plant synthetic biology for terpenoid drug biosynthesis” under the Engineering resilient plant for better future section. This was followed

by Popular lectures for students, particularly the school students. Forty students from 8 schools of West Bengal participated in the Congress. Eminent scientists from different branches of botany spoke on various aspects of plant science. Prof. S.P. Adhikari (Ex. Professor Visva-Bharati University and Ex. Vice-Chancellor, F.M. University, Balasore, Odisha) spoke on “Studying botany with special reference to biology and utilization of algae: prospects and challenges in India”. Dr. Kanad Das (Botanical Survey of India) highlighted on “Diversity, exploration and taxonomy of wild mushrooms of India”. Prof. Binay Chaubey (University of Calcutta) gave the students an idea of “SARS CoV-2: the virus, the vaccine and future”. Prof. Sudhendu Mandal (Ex. Professor Visva-Bharati University and Advisor, Academic and Administration, Central University of Odisha, Koraput) spoke on “Aerobiology and human health” while Dr. Biswajit Ghosh (Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Centenary College) gave the students the concept of “Plant tissue culture: a basic tool of plant biotechnology”. In the Microbial World section Prof. Sanjoy Guha Roy of West Bengal State University highlighted on “Tackling plant endemics in the genomics era: late blight of potato- a case study”. In the post lunch session there was Pavilion visit of the Science Fair for students, scientific deliberations (oral presentation) and the Poster session.

The third day began with the Interactive Session with Foreign Alumni and oral presentations running in parallel sessions. Running simultaneously was the session on Entrepreneurship and Interactive session with farmers and NGO. Fifty farmers joined this session from the different villages of West Bengal. The keynote Lecture was delivered by Prof. Krishnendu Acharya of the University of Calcutta, who lucidly explained how farmers can start mushroom culture on small scale basis, prepare their own biofertilizers, start entrepreneurship in organic culture for sustainable rural development. The post lunch session was the Valedictory session which ended with distribution of prizes to the young scientists and certificates to all the participants.

The main aim of the 1st Botanical Congress 2023 was to broaden the horizon of knowledge of plant sciences among young minds, touching upon diverse domains of the subject. Interactive sessions with professors, renowned scientists and professionals not only benefitted young researchers but also created an interest in the subject among school children, the future of our nation. This congress ensures to establish a platform for the unhindered flow of ideas, innovations and concepts that would benefit mankind. Along with the gain of knowledge,

societal responsibility of plant scientists and entrepreneurship development among the youth have been attempted.

Some photographs of the event



Fig 1. Inauguration ceremony of the 1st Botanical Congress 2023 and abstract volume publication

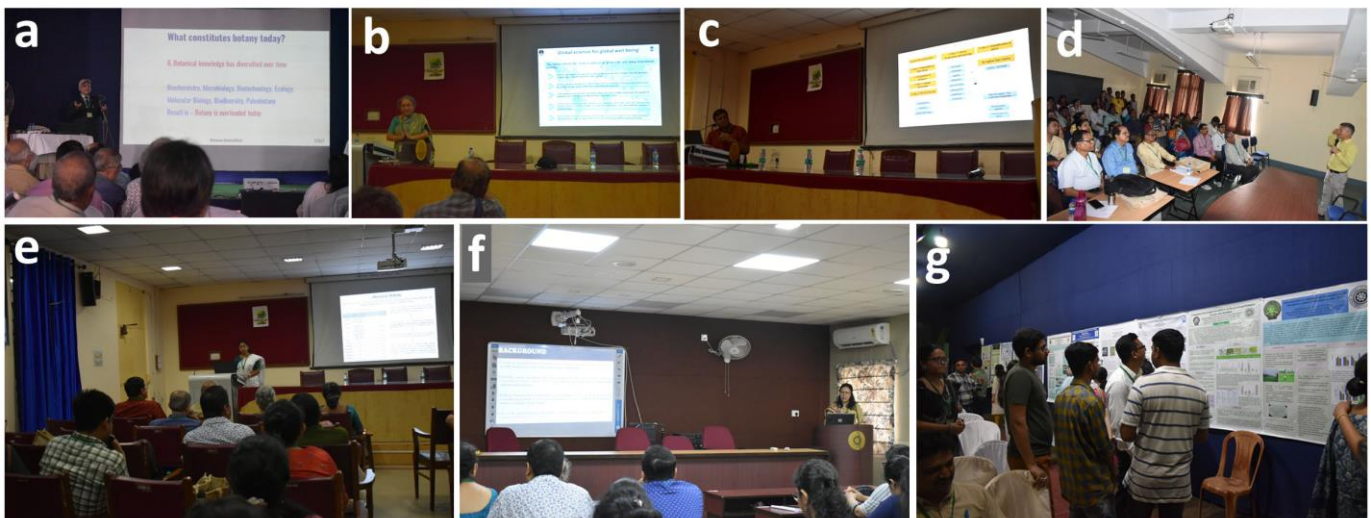


Fig 2. a) Plenary lecture by Prof. Uma Shankar, b) keynote address by Dr. Subhra Chakraborty, c) keynote address by Dr. Niraj Rai, d) keynote address by Dr. A. A. Mao, e-f) scientific deliberations by research scholars and g) poster session



Fig 3. Inauguration of the Science Fair by Prof. Debasis Das, Registrar, University of Calcutta, Popular Lecture by eminent scientists and participation of college and school students in the Science Fair



Fig 4. a) Lecture by Prof. Krishnendu Acharya on entrepreneurship programmes in the field of Botany, b-c) interaction with farmers, d) online interaction with foreign alumni, e) lunch, f) valedictory session, g) awardees for oral and poster session



Fig 5. Cultural programme by the participants