

The FEJI ATREE Media Fellowships

Call for Applications

The Forum of Environmental Journalists in India (FEJI), in collaboration with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), is pleased to invite applications for the FEJI-ATREE Media Fellowships in Environmental Conservation. FEJI will select three applicants, of which one will be from regional-language media, to travel, explore, study and write on select themes and their complexities in conservation today.

Holding only 2.4% of the world's land area, India's varied physical features and diverse ecosystems host nearly 8% of the world's total number of species. However, increasing habitat fragmentation, industrial development, urbanisation, climate change, dying genetic diversity and over-exploitation of resources are just some of the threats facing India's natural resources.

Additionally, increasing consumption patterns in urban areas have now given rise to a new set of governance and environmental issues. Cities have engulfed adjoining small towns and villages resulting in most urban areas facing infrastructural and governance issues, water and sanitation being prominent. The environment has paid a hefty price in all of them.

Fellowship Themes: Applicants can choose one of the following themes for pursuing their fellowship, broad outlines to which are detailed in page 2:

- a) **Less Charismatic Species**
- b) **Wetlands**
- c) **Groundwater**

Bursary Amount: Rs. One lakh per Fellow for field travel, research and writing to be paid in two instalments, one at the beginning of the Fellowship and one on completion of publishing the required number of stories.

Eligibility: Professional journalists, including freelancers, in Print and New Media in English and any Indian regional language, with at least three years of demonstrated experience in writing on environmental issues. Regional language Fellow will need to know some English for communication.

Duration of Fellowship: Three months, during which Fellows must complete their submissions.

Fellowship Criteria: Fellows must co-ordinate with ATREE for field visits/research and produce at least **FIVE** stories (1000 words each) on each Fellow's selected theme. Close interaction with FEJI too will be needed. Two short news items (500 words each) will constitute one story, and if a Fellow opts to produce only news stories then **TEN** stories will be required for the Fellowship.

Application Requirements:

- Curriculum Vitae
- Online link or scanned copies of three published stories on environment or environment and development. Scanned copies must have the publication title, date of publishing and byline.
- Regional language stories to be accompanied with a competent translation into English.
- A letter of support from an Editor that the Fellow's work will be published. Freelancers too will need this letter.
- One-page cover letter, outlining briefly why you have chosen your theme and what you intend to do with it.

Application Deadline: November 26th, 2013. Selected applicants will be notified within 15 days.

Send Applications to: fellowships@feji.org.in

Brief background to each theme: All themes to be looked at in depth to understand and highlight its related linkages to the environment and to conservation.

Groundwater: A critical resource supplying 65% of irrigation water and 85% of drinking water and being pumped through approximately 27 million borewells, 60% of all GW resources will be critically degraded within 20 years. Official figures indicate high fluoride toxicity in 203 out of 593 districts in India, iron content in 206, salinity in 137 districts, nitrate in 109 districts and arsenic in 35 districts. Additionally, free usage of GW in rural areas and highly-subsidised water in affluent urban areas are posing long-term challenges in water quantity and quality. With this phenomenal growth in withdrawal, India is fast hurtling towards what eminent water expert Dr. Tushaar Shah terms 'groundwater anarchy.'

Wetlands: Occupying 18.4 % of country area (excluding rivers), and connected to major river basins, over 70% of wetlands are under paddy cultivation. Over 80% of the estimated 6750 sq.km of coastal wetlands consist of mangroves and its related biodiversity. In southern India, wetlands are also manmade 'yeris' or 'tanks', with their own ecosystems. However, unplanned urbanisation and development have severely affected wetlands and they are disappearing at a rate of 2% to 3% every year. The environmental and ecological impacts from this loss of wetlands have been immense, having a direct socio economic impact on communities and the country. Serious consequences include flooding, decline of biodiversity, water shortage, decline in water quality and food security issues, especially with rice and its indigenous varieties.

Conserving the less charismatic species: For support from the public and policy makers for conservation, it is easier to hold up a species as a keystone for habitat conservation. Project Tiger covers 41 tiger reserves, encompassing an area about 63874.68 sq.km. in 17 'tiger States'. However, in the web of life there is no species – plant or animal – that is less important than the other. The National Biodiversity Action Plan notes that over 91,000 species of animals and 45,500 species of plants in its ten bio-geographic regions have been documented in the country. Nearly 6,500 native plants are still used prominently in indigenous healthcare systems. Thousands of locally-adapted crop varieties, grown traditionally since ancient times, and nearly 140 native breeds of farm livestock, continue to thrive in its diversified farming systems.

Field Visits: Sites on the chosen themes within ATREE's areas of work in Tamilnadu, Kerala and Karnataka.

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