

HE WAS ALSO AWARDED THE UN GLOBAL 500 AWARD FOR HIS PATH-BREAKING RESEARCH IN WETLAND

Dr Dhrubajyoti Ghosh given Luc Hoffmann Award '16

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Kolkata, 8 August

Kolkata's Dr Dhrubajyoti Ghosh, who has just been awarded the prestigious Luc Hoffmann Award for 2016, is amongst the earliest engineers to carry out research in ecology in this part of the world. His path-breaking findings in wetland wise ~ basing his research in the East Kolkata Wetlands ~ won him the UN Global 500 award. The Luc Hoffmann Award is given to those demonstrating outstanding stewardship in

ecosystem management.

It recognises individuals demonstrating initiative and environmental leadership within their communities. It celebrates people who are not paid for their activities but undertake them for their own good reasons and provide inspirational leadership not only for their local environment but for the world at large.

The first Luc Hoffmann Award was presented to Dr Germano Woehl Jr, from Brazil, at the World Conservation Congress in 2012.

The second Award was presented to Mr Eduard Zanen, from the Netherlands, at the World Forum on Ecosystem Governance in 2014.

Over the years, as a government servant, taking a quiet position against the state, Dhrubajyoti Ghosh has demonstrated immense understanding of how the East Kolkata Wetlands works and has developed an unusual ability to locate community wisdom in managing ecosystems and identify how communities live creatively with

nature. This he underlines as the philosophical basis of all green goals. Ecologists respect him as a new-generation thinker and researcher who has evolved a barefoot pedagogy to learn and teach ecology.

Luc Hoffmann is an "inspirational ornithologist, conservationist and philanthropist, and is the largest owner/shareholder of Hoffmann/Laroché (Switzerland). He co-founded the World Wildlife Fund and helped establish the Ramsar Convention for the pro-

tection of wetlands. He has set up the Tour du Valat research centre in the Camargue area of France. He is also the author of more than 60 (mostly ornithological) books".

The critical significance of the East Kolkata Wetlands, now under the realtors' siege, was brought to the fore by Dr Ghosh in the early eighties and the wetlands were then recognised as the largest peri-urban wetland. In 2002 it became one of the few wetlands to be included in the

Ramsar list of sites for wise use criteria.

Prior to that the wetlands were protected after a long legal hearing in the court of the late Justice Umesh Chandra Banerjee in a public interest litigation filed by PUBLIC and widely covered by the Statesman.

Not too many of Kolkata's chattering classes realised that this was a milestone reached in conservation activism. The East Kolkata Wetlands, however, represented much more than that. They meant a

notable progress in knowledge gathering, particularly knowledge that had evolved from among the local wetland community, without any technical or scientific inputs from outside. Thereafter, the EKW has become the subject of several doctoral researches.

Yet the Kolkata citizenry, which continues to benefit from the relatively inexpensive produce of fish and vegetable, amongst others, chooses to look at the region as an untapped territory for building homes, a senti-

ment on which the real estate mafia thrives. So much for natural drainage and the region providing the city with natural kidneys and lungs. So much for a culturally superior people who see building blocks over the glorious and graceful landscape at the edge of the City of Joy.

"This is a state of strange indifference by the citizenry and the governance. This state of statelessness that deserves an intellectual enquiry", to quote the Luc Hoffmann awardee.