



Official Newsletter of  
Great Hyderabad  
Adventure Club (GHAC)

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### Venkee scores a century



Getting to 100 trek mark is not easy. More on Page 8.

# The Adventurers

August 2011

## GHAC makes a mark at TEDx

The image of a TED speaker conjures up a fast talking, articulate and powerful person hypnotizing the audience with mesmerising words thus creating the desired impact - of conveying a thought or an idea. So when Diyanat Ali, Chief Organizer and founder of GHAC received an invite to be the speaker at TEDx Deccan, he was stumped. After the momentary surprise, Diya, as we all know him, started working on his message.

First, he conjured it all in his brain and then told a few of us about it. It initially started with a 'sher' or urdu poetry and how he got into the world of adventure. Like a budding script writer struggling with his classic we sympathised with Diya as went through revisions, coming up with a 'revised' version every morning. As the date got closer, things began to fall into place. The 30 plus slide was getting trimmed by the hour and soon Diya began to look and sound like a TED presenter. Many a rehearsal later, Diya snipped off the slides that were not required, modified the ones that were not strong enough and soon we

were driving to Taramati Baradari, the venue of TEDx. We had a dry run on the stage a day before, so that Diya could get a look and feel of how things would shape up on the D day.

One good thing about being a speaker down the order is that one can learn from others' pluses and minuses. By the end of the first session, we got a fair bit of idea of what would click with the audience and what will not. That message was passed on to Diya's prep team of Dr. Prasad, Suresh, Amar and Keku, who accordingly modified the presentation format. More dry runs followed in Diya's room



(yes, he checked into a room at the venue, a day before). Finally, time came when the adventurer was called on to the stage by the emcee for the day, Anuj Guruwara. And Diya did bring a light into the hall for a full 18 minutes. One month of hard work had finally paid off. The question is where do we go from here? A bigger stage. How about TED this time?

We are now..

# 5000

## Editor's Note



*Dear GHACians,*

As most of you already know, GHAC recently completed three exciting years. In these three years, we have evolved from simple treks to bouldering, rappelling, rafting, paragliding, scuba diving... well, the list can go on.

We started with meet-ups on weekends, but the enthusiastic response from the members has inspired some of our organizers to conduct meet-ups on just any day of the week. How else do you explain the fact that, at the time of preparing this document, the calendar of August showed 63 meet-ups, translating to more than 2 meetups a day! How else do you explain the fact that a meet-up is full within an hour of its announcement! Well, there have also been instances when members have set an alarm to wake up in order to respond to a meet-

up before someone else does. Such is the popularity of the club and such is the need for adventure in this stressed world. We have definitely come a long way from where we started! The popularity of GHAC is further evident from the fact that we are a 5000-member family today. GHAC and its activities have received a lot of positive attention in the print as well as the electronic media. With this special Independence Day issue, we re-launch our Newsletter in a new avatar. While you get to see some of the changes right away in this issue, there's a lot more to watch out for in the forthcoming issues.

We promise you, you will not be disappointed.

Your feedback is important to us. E-mail us at [info@ghac.in](mailto:info@ghac.in)

**Farida Sultana**

## My message

*Dear fellow adventurers*

What a time we are living in. Just a year ago we were patting ourselves on the back for having hit the 3000 member mark. That was a milestone in many ways, but then milestones are meant to be passed by on our way to the destination.

Today we are 5000 plus members and growing. But then, we have just begun our journey. A journey that is important if not more than the destination.

By the end of this year, I expect to see a dramatic increase in the number of members who will join us.

With it will come the challenge of growth and fresh opportunities on managing the future. We need more leaders who can lead this growth process. We need more people who can be trained to become organizers.

In short, we need all the help we can get. At the same time, I am not willing to sacrifice quality for the sake of making up numbers. Being an Organizer is akin to a badge of honour and it has to be earned the hard way. It will take time to develop



a new crop of leaders and I am prepared to wait.

I am also happy to notice new avenues of opportunity that are being explored, be it bird watching or a triathlon. This will also

facilitate a new school of thought on what adventure is all about.

I am also happy to report that GHAC found its way to the world of TEDx, with a talk which I gave on 30th July. That in some way, was the recognition of the growing stature of GHAC and with it the immense contribution being made by each one of you.

As we move ahead, let me take the time out and thank my organizing team and each one of you for making this journey of adventure exciting and purposeful.

We are releasing this edition of the newsletter on August 15, 2011, a day that we all cherish as our independence day. A

day that marks our transition to a nation that was able to stand on its own feet.

Cheers!

**Diyanat**

***"Chasing angels or fleeing demons, go to the mountains." Jeffrey Rasley***

# The Triathlon

**Suresh Kochattil**

It was an idea that could have only come to Deepam Morparia or Deepam Sir as we all call him. For someone who is an expert in rappelling, the concept of Triathlon took everyone by surprise. But then, Deepam Sir is a man who believes in the art of the possible. So, took shape the Great Hyderabad Adventure Club (GHAC) Triathlon and Mini Triathlon.

As is with any new venture, the detailing of the event took some time to sink in. The logistics was the biggest challenge and Deepam Sir's experience came in handy. The meetup was clear to the last detail and soon the RSVPs started. The cycles were sourced for those who did not have them and last minute clarifications were answered. Finally, the D Day arrived and we had 25 participants for the Triathlon and 20 participants for the Mini Triathlon.

alled on to their first reporting point 9.5 kms away at Cineplanet on the Medchal highway. Among the participants were senior IPS officer, Rajiv Trivedi and his son Prasoan. Also in the fray was fitness trainer Faiyaz in his full professional cy-



**Rajiv Trivedi, IPS and his son Prasoan at GHAC Triathlon**

cling attire, pedalling away furiously.

At the first reporting point Cineplanet, the cyclists collected their token and rode back to their finishing point, Neni Hitech Club on the Old Airport Road. The idyllic stretch of road from Bowenpally cross roads along the Old Airport Road was the ideal place for the Triathlon. Soon, the first of the cyclists trundled into the club and reported to the GHAC marshals.

A five-minute breather and they were soon on their way jogging along the Old Airport Road towards the central ex-cise office near Bowenpally cross roads, the first reporting point for joggers. A U-turn there and the joggers headed back to the club. That was the end of two of the three events of the Triathlon. A 15-minute

changeover time and soon the participants dived into the pool to do the 25 laps of the 50 meter pool. One could see the sheer effort put in by people like Rajiv Trivedi, who a few months ago swam the Palk Straits connecting Sri Lanka and India. Soon, one by one all the participants completed their swimming rounds and exited the pool.

For those who took part it in the Mini Triathlon, it was a shorter yet rewarding time.

All participants who completed the three events of the Triathlon earned themselves a certificate and a GHAC cap.

Buoyed by the success of this event, GHAC is planning to conduct more Triathlon events in the months to come.

It was great to be a part of the Triathlon and i rate this with 5 Stars. Thanks team GHAC. **Faiyaz**

Thanks for putting this together. It was awesome and challenging. Hope things keep coming. **Kamal Kandadai**

Excellent opportunity to test one's endurance level. **Dhiraj Taneja**

Brilliant idea...wonderfully organized...pushed me to test my limits. **Pravanjan Das**



**Faiyaz Ali Khan powers his way**

At precisely 7.15 am, the group of cyclists who formed the first part of the the Triathlon were flagged off and they ped-



**Final event of the Triathlon: Swimming at the Neni Hitech Club.**

***"The best climber in the world is the one who's having the most fun."***

# Travelogue: Harischandragad via Nalichi Vaat

**Srikanth Rao**

We started our journey from Hyderabad to Harischandragad with a team of 12. We all met at Begumpet railway station and took a train to Pune, and from there to Belpada. Despite a tyre burst, the journey by a mini bus was amazing. Eyeing beautiful mountains, we enjoyed every moment of it and it was hard for us to keep our eyes off the unfolding scene. Weather was distinctly cold.

### Trekking from Savarna Village

We started trekking from the mountainous area to reach Belpada. The long road journey had sapped our energy, and now we were carrying our heavy traveling bags. The villagers were kind enough to rent us a room, where we spent our night speculating about our journey in the morning.

We tried to catch some sleep, but were unable to. Reason? We were all in one room with two strong buffaloes keeping an eye on us. Well, that was not the only reason. It was difficult to sleep with the mountains in the background and considerably long water body beside our room. Continuous grunting and croaking of frogs made us think of the possibilities of snakes ambling around. Despite the lack of electricity, some of us had a sound sleep. It was one of the best of the beautiful scary nights I ever spent.

We woke up by 5 am with an aim to explore Nalichi Vaat. It was a beautiful, but dangerous trek that we ever set out on, till date. Nalichi Vaat is a route between two mountains and is connected with rock patches. It was a difficult trek with stiff wind and a steady drizzle, accompanied by bouts of thunder. We managed to cross five big patches. Among them, four patches presented a big challenge for us, but we climbed up higher and higher. I must say that the rock climbing at Nalichi Vaat is for professional rock climbers and not for beginners.

### The first Patch - 10 ft high

The first rock patch was perpendicular and C shaped and was around 10 ft high.

Sailesh, Krishna, Ranga and I climbed up. The rock was slippery with no proper grabs, and to add to the difficulty of climbing, water was flowing down in our direction. Despite this, we managed to climb up and pulled the other guys up with the help of a rope.

### Second Patch - 15 ft high

The second rock patch was at a height of 15 ft. Though we could find grabs, they were not reliable. They came off at certain places and terrified those of us who were watching from below. I managed to climb up and give belay to others to help them



come up. From the second rock patch to third rock patch, we had to take a U turn at the edge of the cliff. One small mistake could result in a 1500 ft slide.

### Third Patch - 18 ft high

The third patch was the most difficult one, as we were already at a height that would scare even the bravest of souls. The most difficult part of the climbing was to firmly attach ourselves longitudinally to the slippery surface of the rock, which seemed to be pulling us off every minute, threatening to throw us down. Holding on firmly and moving on, we reached the fourth patch, which didn't seem to be difficult to reach, as we were all sanguine of success, having

crossed three big hurdles on our way to the top.

### Fifth Patch - 12 ft high with huge wind throwing us away

The way to the fifth rock patch was uneven. Moreover, the weather was not supportive and the wind was fierce. We were already at a height of 1800 ft. It was all foggy and we were all wet and tired, but we didn't give up. Krishna and I climbed up with our luggage.

Reaching the top of the fifth patch, we were unable to firmly keep our feet together as the wind was blowing stiff and the fog blinded us. It was difficult to see or hear anything. I was thinking how to pull up the other guys, when luckily I found a bolt, which must have been earlier fixed by some professional climbers. I tied a rope around my belly and was trying to pull up all the others who were struggling to come up, when all of a sudden, wind accompanied by rain lashed us. A few rock chips fell on Jyothi and Ranga and that scared us, but we didn't stop there. We accomplished our task.

### Climbing Blind

We trekked a few kilometers to reach Harishchandragad. The beauty of nature revealed itself to us and kept us engrossed. We admired every beautiful flower we saw there. The wind blowing in gusts magnetized us more, with fog enveloping our way. It took us 13 hours to completely cross Nalichi Vaat and reach Harischandragad, where we explored historical hill fort and caves. We spent the night in a cave atop the hill. Early morning the next day, we started trekking around the cave-area. Walking for a few minutes, we again came across a rock patch. It was a small narrow path, on which railing was fixed, that took us to Khreshwar. Analyzing the height we were above from the ground, we took great care while moving on. It was difficult, as the whole area was covered with fog. Finally, a million thanks to GHAC for making it possible to root out the fear factor.

*A bird doesn't sing because it has an answer, it sings because it has a song.*

## Travelogue: Journey to Everest Base Camp - Dream trek of my life

**Ranjan Sood**

It was in my school days, when attending an All India Rock climbing camp at Manali in the Himalayas that a dream of climbing the majestic Himalayas was sown. Way back in the 70s, the National Cadet Corps (NCC) was mostly the only way youngsters could experience adventure, camping, trekking and other outdoor activities. Things have changed today, with organisations like Great Hyderabad Adventure Club (GHAC) which help you fulfill your dreams of any kind of adventure.

In 2009, something wonderful happened when a friend suggested to look up Hyderabad Adventure Club, now known as Great Hyderabad Adventure Club, which was planning a day trek to Bhongir and Yadigirigutta. I joined them and it came out to be an amazing trek and a chance to meet lots of young friends.

It was a great beginning and that dream run has been on since. Then came the first ever outstation trek of GHAC to Masinagudi with Rajan Patel as the organizer. On knowing that my age was 50+ years, he commented in a lighter vein, "We don't carry baggage". After 30+ plus treks (easy as well as difficult) spanning 3 years, I graduated from being a baggage to becoming Sirji or a Fast not so old Man. I have enjoyed growing with every experience in GHAC.

Why not? The crowning glory was the successful completion of Everest Base Camp Trek in May 2011, a dream as old as 38 years coming true. I thank GHAC, for all the wonderful Treks and some very nice friends whom I consider brothers and sisters of the wild. I would love to name them, but the list would run too long.

My journey with GHAC from a single day trek to a heroic 14-day trek to EBC has been an amazing experience. I evolved Physically, Mentally and Emotionally. Every trek completed fuelled the fire of desire and encouraged attempting the

EBC. Though trained last year also, I was not confident of my physical preparedness. I backed off from attempting then.

This year, despite business compulsions and other personal engagements, my family supported me in taking up the challenge. That gave me the will to train seriously and prepare myself, physically and mentally to a good shape. I needed to prepare much more than the other younger members, mostly to overcome the worry of getting altitude sickness which can stop your progress and can only mean a walk back to lower altitudes. The hard work while training paid off. I was one of the very few members who did not suffer altitude sickness or any other problems of exertion or physical pain. Instead, most of the times, I was the first to finish every leg



of our daily climbs and remained the pacesetter. This kept me motivated and charged for all the 14 days. I truly enjoyed the luxury of being fit even though age was never in my favour as compared to the other team members.

The Everest Base Camp (EBC), as per Google, is one of the best and toughest treks. It involves walking and climbing 120 km through the majestic Himalayas to reach a height of 15,600 feet. It is at the foot of the Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world on the North face (Nepal). Reaching EBC was an out of the world experience which cannot be compared to any other happiness in life. The flora and fauna is so mesmerizing and beautiful, that at the end of the 10 hour

walk and gaining altitudes of 500 meters daily, you still cherish those moments of watching picture perfect nature. The sound of bells on the yaks, the chirping of beautiful birds and the whistling of the chilled hard breeze hitting your face is the only companion you have during those long walks. Though with a group, you are walking or climbing alone because every step of yours has to be measured and placed carefully to avoid any major fall, which can be fatal if careless. For me, this journey was one of best moments of my life, where I could look within, with continuous chanting of Gayatri mantra and rejuvenate the spiritual bonding of self with the nature.

The night halts were well-cherished with the gift of Nepali hospitality in the lodges, which were located on the hills in small hamlets, with only solar power to support modern day technology. We never missed our phones, television, internet and all the other modern gadgets. Jokes and recalling the day's experiences would make us laugh our way through the tiredness and pain, if any. Some members suffered acute altitude sickness, including our group leader a very good friend, Ali Razvi, my room partner. He vomited and visited the corner more than 4 times one night, yet he had the courage and the will to start the climb the next day. Priyanka Singh, a young girl of our team, vomited, experienced hallucinations, suffered bad appetite, but continued the journey and finally succeeded. Few others had the same difficulty, but they went ahead and completed the expedition.

I can go on and on, but let me have the treasure some of those wonderful moments as very personal memories to be told to my grand children and friends who may have the patience.

Thank you GHAC for providing me with this opportunity, which I will cherish all my life.

***If one way be better than another, that you may be sure is nature's way.***

## Nature: Birds and Bird watching

### Arun Vasireddy

Birds are beautiful and very lively. The reason they interest many people is because of the dynamism they bring to the natural life. Yes, they are the easiest observable moving, and feeling creatures in the natural world. You need not dive into water or venture into the wild to see a bird fly. Although they are very shy, prob-



ably because they don't wear a thing, they need to be very active to survive. For most birds, camouflage is the biggest defense while perseverance is their biggest weapon. Their features of adaptation are much older than us and their



behavior primitive - making them a beautiful piece of living history.

To appreciate birds, we must be able to take interest in them. After a few days of looking at them as an illiterate, I wanted to know the name of the bird along with

which I read some of its behavior. This started with a very common bird, the Cattle Egret, as it started gaining breeding plumage. I am sure that if you stopped looking around and actually start observing things, at one point you'll start observing birds and enter a new world from where you are now. You will be surprised at how many birds you can see around a small pond or a lake - I didn't know that I was looking at 40+ around a small lake near my house till I brought my first book.

As visual identification increases, it becomes a kind of KBC questionnaire, where every question raises a lot of doubts. You never know whether you can freeze in on that or not, especially with the Warblers and Ducks. A female Purple Sunbird looks identical to the Purple-rumped Sunbird, except for a black patch from its beak to the eye, which is barely noticeable - you will dislike the entire female brand of birds (they are usually boring and frustrating, although you don't need to shop with them!). Now, you'll enjoy birding groups a lot as we guess names and argue a lot. I had great joy at every capture in the camera and for the first time, I could see the world around me in a great lot of detail - to the point of the size of a Warbler's eye up to the wing span of a Purple Heron.

As we enter the forests and the woods more, visual identification gives way to vocal identification. The voices are mixed - there are alarms, mating calls, breeding calls, communication calls and some more, but the spectrum isn't large. The eyes that have widened to see the larger world, now shut to let the ears grasp a distant

call better. I can hear a bird's sound haunt me because I couldn't identify it - what more, we have very little apparatus/books to accurately decipher bird sounds. That means that although we are able to hear a lot of the language from a bird brain, we are still dumb at it.

Along with visual identification and vocal identification, behavioral interests grow. Some birds like the Red-vented Bulbul are so common that we tend to neglect them, but we know very little of their behavior though. For example, I haven't yet seen it hunt a garden lizard, although it is surely possible - wouldn't that be a sight!! I want to count the eggs in a Red-wattled Lapwing's nest to determine the duration of the monsoon this year, and see how a Black Kite reacts to a Black Drongo chasing it (we've seen it being chased away by Parrots, Treepies and Crows).

The curiosity continues, so does our wandering. New avenues are open, but fascination remains the same - it may need a little sunbath to activate again, but then I can't stop looking around and smiling a lot after I started birding. With some birding, I started enjoying morning walks, treks and free time more. I don't know if my birding is going to save the world, reduce global warming, etc. but it surely makes me enjoy the nature that is left around me in a better way, without disturbing it, of course.



**Great things are done when men and mountains meet. ~William Blake**

# GHAC makes news

Amar Deep

## GHAC was on AIR....

In the last few weeks, a few GHACians went on air with FM-Rainbow channel of All India Radio. Diyanat Ali shared information about our GHAC in an interview. Prashant Pai shared his passion for trekking, rock climbing and rappelling. Dr. Vibha Nayak shared



information about basic first aid for the benefit of apna Hyderabadis. Padmaja Pullabhatla shared her experience of going to Mt. Everest Base Camp. I shared my love for outdoors with GHAC and the wilderness.

## Outdoor Leadership Workshop

On June 25 & 26, 2011, GHAC conducted its Second Outdoor Leadership Workshop for the signed up volunteers. Sixteen volunteers



made it through this workshop. They are now gaining experience and the feel of an outdoor leader with a title 'Trainee Organizer' awarded by GHAC.

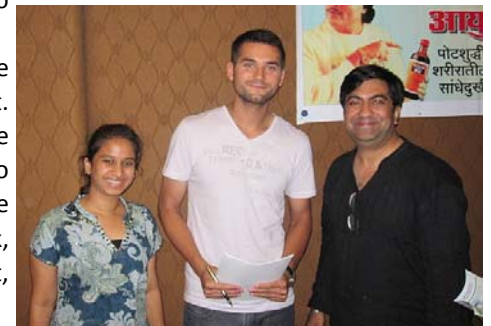
## Girimitra Sammelan

GHAC Adventurers' Team attended a "Girimitra Sammelan" in Mumbai on July 16 & 17, 2011. Being organised since 10 years, the sammelan is an annual gathering of mountain lovers. Veteran mountaineers from Maharashtra and other parts of India, along with nature lovers from all over the world, come together and share their experiences. It brought together more than 500 mountaineers and nature lovers this year.



Through the efforts of our outdoor organizing leader, Harshal Mahajan, GHAC was invited to participate.

A team of six GHACians participated in the event. They got an opportunity to meet Mark Inglis and Apa Sherpa. Mr. Inglis is an untamed double leg amputee from New Zealand, who successfully climbed the Mount Everest. Mr. Sherpa is the superhuman who has scaled the highest peak, Mount Everest, 21 times!



## Know your organizer

Name: Arun Raj  
 Origins : Born in Kerala, raised in Hyderabad...more a Hyderabad!  
 Profession : Green energy consultant  
 Hobbies : Travelling, trekking, trying new cuisines, fitness, etc.  
 With GHAC: 2 years  
 Meetups organised : around 25, maybe more  
 Likes, dislikes : Not many - I like to be in peace. Love my food and I am born to eat.

## Outdoor survival tip - Lightning

Monsoon season is on, and we come across news reports about people being struck by lightning; many of them get killed. Common-sense rules - Don't be near the tallest object around, especially trees. Get rid of metal objects that are in contact with your skin. As a last resort, experts suggest squatting with just the balls of your feet on the ground. Cover your ears, close your mouth and eyes, and hope that the bolt rolls over you.

Reach out to us @

Email: [info@ghac.in](mailto:info@ghac.in)  
Meetup: [meetup.ghac.in](http://meetup.ghac.in)  
Corporate: <http://www.ghac.co/>  
Facebook: [facebook.com/ghac.in](https://www.facebook.com/ghac.in)  
Twitter: [twitter.com/hydadventure](https://twitter.com/hydadventure)

## Get more out of life

### DID YOU KNOW?

That GHAC today is the largest online meetup community club in India, in terms of members signed up. And second largest in the world.

Shared by  
Amar Deep

**Great Hyderabad Adventure Club - GHAC** is a not-for-profit premier adventure club of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, India, organising outdoor adventure activities like trekking, hiking, camping, bird watching and adventure sports like bouldering, rock climbing, rappelling, paragliding and white water rafting. The club encourages everyone to get outdoors, try new adventure activities, and have a fantastic time. We, at GHAC, believe in getting more out of life through our outdoor activities, without compromising on the safety issues. We promote adventure activities and nature awareness, in and around Hyderabad, and organise outstation treks all over the country.

Our Mission is to bring people together to:

- Promote adventure activities,
  - Promote nature awareness, nature care and environment conservation,
  - Bring adventure activity to the poor and underprivileged children.
  - Extend support and assistance to society during natural calamities.
- Anyone, in the following age groups, with a spirit of adventure, is welcome to join us.

**Adults (18 to 60 years)** - can participate at free will.

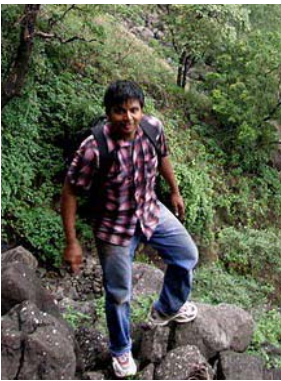
**Junior II (13 - 17 years)** - will require parent's/ guardian's written consent to participate.

**Junior I (8 - 12 years)** - will require to be accompanied by parent/ guardian to participate.

Log on to <http://meetup.ghac.in> and register with us for free. We do not charge any membership fee. To participate, simply open the calendar and choose an activity that interests you.

## Venkee scores a century

Eccentric, bubbly, enthusiastic, wanderer... These are some of the words that fellow trekkers use for Venkee, who completed his 100th meetup earlier this month. Without a doubt, this young man has set a scorching pace of growth ever since he joined GHAC on April 3, 2009. Ever on the go, he looks for treks that are tough and selects fellow trekkers, who he believes will go the extra mile to scale many a peak. From discovering the highest peak in Andhra Pradesh to climbing the tallest of them all in Karnataka and Maharashtra, he has done it all. Meticulous homework on each location is coupled with ability to go for the unknown makes Venkee different. Keep up the good work young man, now we look forward to your 200th meetup.



## Cleaning up Durgam Cheruvu shores

### Rashmi Agarwal

Team GHAC decided to do something more than just lip service on World Environment Day.

Environment-loving enthusiastic members of GHAC decided to clean up the area on the rear side of Durgam Cheruvu Lake. We chose this place, because this is our favorite

spot for conducting beginner's sessions in trekking, bouldering and rock climbing. What better place to commence our Green initiatives from. We cleaned the area right alongside the water because we didn't want all

the trash flowing into the lake, with the monsoon around the corner. Within an hour, the 22-member team collected 150 kg of trash from just about 2 acres of land. This in-

cluded about 5 kg of clothes and 5 to 8 kg of glass bottles & other glass items. The rest of the trash was all plastic in the form of oil packets, milk packets, chips



packets, cigarette boxes, chewing gum wrappers, chocolate wrappers and polythene bags. Basic equipment such as gloves, masks, trash bags, 2 long wooden sticks and 2 hand diggers was used for cleaning.