

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON **“NASA SPACE WARD BOUND INDIA 2016”**

Amity Institute of Aerospace Engineering (AIAE) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Spaceward Bound Program-India organized first ever Astrobiological themed International Seminar on “ NASA Space ward Bound India 2016” at Amity University Campus, Sector-125 Noida.

The event witnessed humungous participation of Researchers from USA, Australia, Sweden, Switzerland and Italy and dignitaries from Government (ISRO, DST), Industry, and Academia along with NASA expedition members.

Dr. Ashok K Chauhan- Founder President, Amity Group, Dr. (Mrs.) B Shukla- Vice Chancellor, Amity University and Dr. Sanjay Singh, Director, AIAE inaugurated the Space Forum.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Mukund Sharma- Scientist, Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), Lucknow said that it is very fascinating to study the origin and evolution of life in the universe and to explore the possibility of existence of biospheres that might be different from that on Earth. Dwelling upon the issues faced in exploring early life, he stressed that it is not easy to understand 3500 million years of history of Biosphere, to record early evidences of life and to decipher the signatures of life. He remarked that numerous challenges are faced while tracing the antiquity of Archaeobacteria, Methanogens, Cyanobacteria, Eukaryotes, Metaphytes and Metazoa. Dr. Sharma shared that at present, the researchers at BSIP and other research organisations along with few students are working on a Project to study the extreme environment of Ladakh and various life forms existing in extreme conditions. He remarked that the study aims to develop a pedagogy to study soil samples from other planets. He averred that Astrobiology has so far been forsaken in India and called upon the support from Government and Industry for the study of life in different bio-spheres.

Welcoming the distinguished speakers and delegates and sharing his views, Dr. Ashok K Chauhan- Founder President, Amity Group said that Amity has been organising and hosting important events in emerging and topical areas of concern in order to make students aware of the same and to provide them an opportunity to interact with the key stakeholders for initiating mutually beneficial association between the students and stakeholders. He remarked that Astrobiology is a very interesting field of study which brings together professionals from various disciplines such as Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, Biology, Molecular Biology, Ecology and Planetary Science to study life in different biospheres. He called upon the students to pursue R&D in the field of Astrobiology and unravel the hidden facts about other ecosystems.

Mr. Siddharth Pandey -Mars Society Australia, while sharing his views during the occasion, said that scientists and researchers are working in very interesting areas in Astrobiology and if common man becomes aware of their research, his interest will also develop in the study. He shared that as part of NASA Spaceward Bound India 2016, the extreme environment of Ladakh would be explored by scientists and researchers as analog for human space explorations. He remarked that the climatic conditions, topology and ecosystem of Ladakh is analogous to Mars and the study would help Astro-Scientists to find answers to fundamental questions about ‘life’,

about the origin and evolution of our planet's topological features and also about how microbial life has adapted itself to sustain itself in such harsh conditions. "The knowledge gained, thereby, would be used to study Mars and the possibility of life there", he averred.

Also present during the occasion were Dr. S Shivaji, Director Research, LVP Eye Hospital, Hyderabad Dr. Sunil Bajpai, Director, Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), Lucknow along with other eminent Scientists and Researchers.

The event included "Round Table Scientific Discussion" on the theme: "Identifying key areas of collaboration and stumbling blocks for Astrobiology research in India" and Interactive session on "Out Reach activity of Spaceward Bound India -2016"