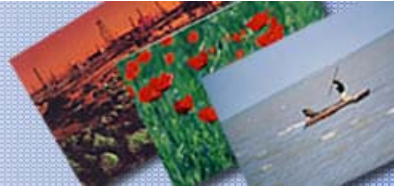




CEP E-Bulletin



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[Home](#)

Our Programme Since We Last Met:

CEP Announces Fifth Round of MSGP

The Matched Small Grants Programme (MSGP) finances small scale projects that focus on the key environmental problems in the Caspian Region through practical and concrete measures. Grants are from USD 5,000 to 50,000. At least 100% matching of the grant amount is mandatory. Legal entities such as government agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), private companies and firms based in the Caspian region (Azerbaijan , I.R. Iran, Kazakhstan , Russia and Turkmenistan) are eligible to apply for MSGP. Proposals from local governments and municipalities are encouraged. Applicants from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in partnership with government or private sector are also eligible. Joint applications by any of the eligible entities are also permitted. For further information, please visit the CEP website www.caspianenvironment.org , or contact the Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) PCU/MSGP office in Tehran , or the Matched Grants and Public Participation Advisors, MPPAs , in the Caspian countries. Applicants are highly encouraged to submit a concept paper to the MSGP team for review and guidance before preparation of the Full Application . The deadline for submission of the Concept Paper for the fifth round is APRIL 30, 2005 . The deadline for submission of the full application is AUGUST 15, 2005 .

CEP Announces Second Round of MEG

Micro Environment Grants (MEG) Programme aims to finance small-scale projects with a real impact to address urgent environmental problem through raising public awareness, knowledge and understanding of the environmental problems facing the Caspian Sea . Projects in the Caspian Region of Azerbaijan , I.R. Iran , Kazakhstan , Russia , and Turkmenistan will be supported by MEG. Grants may range from USD 500 to USD 3,000. Other funds from the applicant and/or other partners could also be used to implement the project; however it is not mandatory. Any group of people who has the capacity to raise public awareness or carry out small scale project with a real impact is eligible. This includes NGOs, schools, community groups, specialist groups, associations, trade unions and others. For further information, please visit the CEP website www.caspianenvironment.org , or contact the PCU/MSGP office in Tehran , or the Matched Grants and Public Participation Advisors, MPPAs, in the Caspian countries. The deadline for submission of the MEG Full Application is APRIL 15, 2005 . .

LBS Protocol Meeting, Ashgabat, 24-25 January 2005

The First Land Based Sources of pollution (LBS) Protocol Meeting was held in Ashgabat on 24th -25th of January 2005. In this meeting, the technical scope of a LBS Protocol to the Framework Caspian Convention was discussed. The representatives of the five Caspian littoral countries participated in this gathering that was facilitated by the UNEP/ROE as the Interim Secretariat for the countries. During two days of intensive interaction, the experts from the Caspian littoral countries, together with specialists from international organizations discussed modalities of a protocol to prevent the pollution of Caspian from land-based sources. Ministry of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan and the UN Coordinator's office in Ashgabat were co-hosts of the event. Representatives of all the Caspian states – Russia , Azerbaijan , I.R. Iran, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan expressed full support to the proposals tabled by UNEP. They also agreed to continue the dialogue for finalization of the protocol in subsequent meetings. The framework convention for protection of marine environment of Caspian, which was approved by the Caspian states in November 2003 in Tehran , calls for the development of several protocols including a protocol on land-based sources of pollution.

Caspian Legal Status Meeting, Ashgabat, 28-29 January 2005

January 30 th , 2005 (News Central Asia): The 16th meeting of Special working group at the level of deputy ministers of Caspian littoral states for drafting of Convention on Caspian legal status was held in Ashgabat on 28-29 January 2005. Khoshgeldy Babayev, Head of Turkmen delegation and the chairman of state organization on Caspian issues at President of Turkmenistan, presided over the meeting. Heads of delegations from Azerbaijan , Khalaf Khalafov, Islamic Republic of Iran, Mehdi Safari, Republic of Kazakhstan , Rupil Joshybayev , Russian Federation , Igor Yusufov and Turkmenistan , Khosheglly Babayev participated in the meeting. In the course of meeting, conducted in the spirit of constructivism and mutual understanding, the Heads of delegations expounded the positions of Caspian littoral states on key issues of legal status and different aspects of cooperation on Caspian. The parties embarked on article-by-article discussion of draft convention on Caspian legal status, achieved some results and agreed to continue the work on settlement of issues demanding further decision. The next session (17th meeting the parties) will be conducted in Tehran . The date of meeting will be agreed through diplomatic channels.

RSE Mission in Tehran , 22nd – 27th February 2005

The representative of the Religion, Science and Environment, Ms. Maria Becket, met Iranian high official authorities including Dr. Ebtekar, the Vice President and the Head of the Department of the Environment, as well as prominent Iranian academia and religious figures during this visit to discuss the RSE symposium, following the first regional meeting of June 2004 – Baku . The RSE Symposium, "The Link between Great Civilisations", is tentatively scheduled for June 2005 in the Caspian Sea under the patronage of HAH The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and H.E. Mr. Kofi A. Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations. The participants of the RSE Symposium will be around two hundreds of religious leaders, scientists, theologians, environmentalists, policy-makers and media. The symposium will call attention to the vitality of the Caspian region's historical and cultural heritage. It will also provide an opportunity to encourage understanding and dialogue between the Islamic and the Christian worlds and highlight the acute environmental challenges facing the Caspian Sea . For further information please visit RSE website, <http://www.rsesymposia.org/rse/mission.htm> .

Upcommings:

2nd Pollution Regional Advisory Group Meeting, Tehran , 6 th - 7 th February 2005

The second meeting of the Interim Caspian Pollution Regional Advisory Group (PRAG) will be held in Tehran on February 6 th -7 th , 2005. The main objectives of the meeting are to discuss the assessment of the impact of key transboundary contaminants in water and sediments in the Caspian Sea and to develop a work plan for further surveys of sediments and water of the Caspian Sea by conducting of a Scientific Sea Cruise in summer 2005

RSE Meeting, Istanbul , 11 th -13 th February 2005

Religion, Science and Environment (RSE) will meet the representatives of the Caspian countries as well as the pertinent international organizations in Istanbul on 11 th – 13 th February 2005. The meeting aims to plan for organizing a symposium on a ship sailing round the Caspian Sea . In this water-borne conference, religious leaders, scientists, ecologists, policy-makers and media will participate to work together to help save the environment. This voyage, tentatively scheduled for June or July 2005, is being jointly supported by the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Christian Orthodox Church and Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General. For further information please visit RSE website, <http://www.rsesymposia.org/rse/mission.htm> .

Biomarkers Meeting, Baku , 22 nd - 24 th February 2005

The Workshop on Application of Biomarker Technique in Environmental Monitoring and Management will be held in Baku on 22nd-24th February 2005. The objectives of the workshop is to discuss the biological-effect measurements as environmental diagnostic methods, biomarkers used in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), adaptation of biomarkers to Caspian species and validation of biomarker responses, Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA) in connection with offshore studies, and the role of biomarkers in a sustainable management of the marine environment.

PPS Regional Meeting, Baku , 24 th -25 th February 2005

A two days Public Participation Strategy workshop will be organized on 24-25 February 2005 in Baku . The PPS is being produced in line with the requirement of the CEP-SAP Project Document to assist the Caspian countries as a voluntary guideline in planning and coordinating Caspian related public participation activities. During the workshop the PPS document will be shared with the relevant stakeholders, the views and ideas will be obtained and the document will be finalized for implementation

General NEWS:

Migratory Birds Flock to Gilan

January 1 st , 2005 (Iran Daily): Huge flocks of graylag geese have entered Anzali Wetland and the Sakaleh wildlife sanctuary, in Caspian province of Gilan , with the start of the cold season. Director General of Gilan Department of Environment, Shaban- Ali Nezami made the remark, adding that pelicans are also arriving in local shelters gradually. He said the number of species of migratory seabirds including common shelducks and Eurasian wigeons is also increasing in the region. Nezami cited expert reports based on which close to 3,000 graylag geese had already been sighted at the Sakaleh shelter, with more entering the site gradually. He hailed the environmental officers for their round-the-clock patrols to ensure security in the area and said, "The birds have landed in exactly the same shelters considered for them which indicate the high level of security governing the area." According to Nezami, the number of migratory geese which have longer necks compared to ducks is expected to increase with a new wave of cold weather. Nezami said: there are four species of these geese including lesser and greater white-fronted, graylag and red-breasted geese. "The lesser white-fronted and graylag geese are the only species sighted in Gilan," he mentioned. "Over the past two decades, red-breasted goose, a rare species, has changed its migration route trying to bypass Gilan due to excessive hunting in the province." He noted that a small number of the wild fowls are sometimes sighted in Dasht-e Moghan, MianKaleh and Khuzestan Province . He stated that common and ruddy shelducks have been migrating to Gilan regularly during the past several years.



I. R. Iran, Largest Caspian Caviar Exporter

January 2nd, 2005 (Azer Tag): According the Iranian IRNA news agency, Iran is the largest caviar exporter in the Caspian basin with 59.9 tons of annual production. Head of the Iranian Fishing company, Luftulla Saidi, said: "I.R. Iran is expected to found the caviar-producing company in the mid-2005 to prevent illegal manufacturing of the product and protect the Caspian environment. Among the Caspian caviar exporters, Russia ranks second with 20.7 tons followed by Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan with 14 and 6 tons of annual production, respectively.

Reduction in Spawning of Various Fish Species in Mazandaran Rivers

January 4 th , 2005 (Iran Newspaper): According to the experts of the Department of the Environment Office in Mazandaran Province , lack of adequate oxygen in rivers due to the discharge of urban and industrial wastes and agricultural pesticides has reduced the migration and spawning of various fish species in Mazandaran rivers. The adverse effects of deforestation, heavy sedimentation of the riverbeds due to the discharge of industrial wastes, chemical materials, oil byproducts and pesticides as well as the introduction of a dangerous new invasive species called "Mnemiopsis Leidy" have disturbed the natural trend of migration and spawning in Caspian rivers. This is one of the reasons for promotion of ever-increasing artificial breeding of fish species by the Caspian littoral countries. Dr. Abbas Esmaeili, the Research Deputy of Natural Resources College of Tarbiat Modares University, argued that without the preservation of rivers and their continual clean up, the protection of the Caspian environment is impossible. He announced that a project for the identification of pollution levels in the Caspian Sea has commenced in 2004 with the support of the World Bank.

Kazakhstan will Establish a Military Base in Caspian Region

January 5 th 2005 (Iran Newspaper): According to Baku based Shargh Newspaper , Kazakhstan is planning to establish a military base on the Caspian coast with the aid of the Russian Federation . The Defense Minister of Kazakhstan announced that Astana will undertake this endeavor as a sign of friendship and peaceful coexistence of the Caspian littoral states by providing security to the region. He added that Kazakhstan is ready to jointly cooperate with other Caspian states in enhancement of security and safety of the region. Russian Federation is planning to provide technical assistance to Kazakhstan through the establishment of a training center for the Kazakh naval force.

Occurrence of Tsunami in Caspian

January 15th, 2005 (Azer Tag): Director of Scientific Research Institute of Hydrometeorology under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan, Professor Rza Mahmudov said that occurrence of tsunami on the Caspian Sea is unreal. However, according to the Russian news agency "Novosti", few Iranian experts commented that occurrence of tsunami on the Caspian Sea is possible similar to the earthquake in the Indian Ocean with displacement of layers of the earth's crust. Professor Rza Mahmudov, called such comments "hasty" and noted that occurrence of Caspian Sea 's strong waves is primarily related to the wind regime. Periodically, waves are observed at the center of Caspian Sea with heights of up to 9 meters, but their influence on the coastal zone is insignificant. The highest waves on the Caspian Sea with the height of 10 meters were observed in 1957 on the Oil Rocks.

Khatami, Aliyev Favor Continuation Of Caspian Talks

Tehran , 26 January 2005 (Iran Daily): President Mohammad Khatami and Azerbaijan 's President Ilham Aliyev on Wednesday stressed continuation of talks to determine the legal regime of the Caspian Sea . Talking to reporters after signing 10 documents on expansion of bilateral cooperation, Khatami said negotiations with regard to the legal regime of the sea are underway in a friendly atmosphere and with understanding, IRNA reported. "The (main) issue is that this valuable sea belongs to the five littoral states which will benefit from its resources by safeguarding this god-given asset," he said. He noted that economic issues were on top of the agenda of bilateral talks between Iran and Azerbaijan , saying the two countries will make efforts to begin broad cooperation while pursuing trade ties. Khatami also pointed to a memorandum of understanding signed between the two states on Wednesday on expansion of railroad cooperation and the linking of the North to the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea via Iran and Azerbaijan as an important regional development. Aliyev said mutual relations between the two countries would witness important and positive developments through the economic, political and cultural agreements reached during his Tehran visit." Azerbaijan 's foreign policy attaches importance to consolidation of ties with Iran ," he said. The Azeri president added that ties between the two countries have entered a new phase, noting that talks on the legal regime of the Caspian Sea would be continued in the future.



Turkmenistan Favors Dividing of Caspian Bed under International Law of Sea

Ashgabat, 28 January 2005 (News Central Asia): In the clearest statement to date on its position, Turkmenistan has demanded that Caspian bed should be divided between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on the principles laid down in the International Law of Sea 1982. The latest statement issued by the Turkmen government says, "Turkmenistan has always supported the principle of median line according to international norms and laws. The position of Turkmenistan , as maintained during the Turkmen-Azeri negotiations on division of the Caspian bed between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan , is based on the principle of equidistant line according to the UN convention on sea rights 1982. Therefore, the extent of coastal line, its general direction, and also geographical, geological and geomorphologic factors and structure of the continental shelf should be taken into account [for dividing the Caspian bed]," the statement explains. Pointing out the reasons for difference with Azerbaijan , the statement says, "However, Azerbaijan does not take into account the conventional international criteria for drawing the median line, in particular, the parameters for determining the coastal line which influence the delimitation of Caspian bed between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan ."

EU/TACIS Sustainable Development of Caspian Coastal Communities

One of the projects conducted by EU/TACIS under the framework of the Caspian Environment Programme (CEP) is the Sustainable Development of Caspian Coastal Communities implemented in Azerbaijan , Kazakhstan , Russian Federation and Turkmenistan . The overall objective of this

project is to reduce and prevent overuse of the natural resources of the Caspian Sea region by assisting local communities to develop alternative and sustainable sources of livelihoods for local communities. For more information about this project please contact Mr. David Burton, the Project Team leader David.Burton@imccconsult.com or look up its Brief Summary and Updated Contact List on the CEP web site www.caspianenvironment.org .

[Home](#)
