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Environmental games under way

New innovative ideas on the environment are being exhibited by a group of creative students from across 40 countries in the annual International Environmental Project Olympiad. 80 projects compete for the prize

An exercise machine that uses manpower to produce hydrogen and an initiative to produce Soy yogurt were just two of 80 unique ideas presented at the 17th Environmental Project Olympiad, or INEPO, which began in Istanbul yesterday.

INEPO is an event run annually in Turkey by Fatih College, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment during Environment Week. It operates parallel to operations carried out by the United Nations Group, aiming to encourage youths to participate in projects that work to find alternative, eco-friendly energy sources. The international event includes students from 40 countries who establish friendships with those from different cultures and share ideas on pressing environmental issues. Andre Heinrichs and Florian Trost from Germany presented a project at the opening ceremony yesterday that aimed to produce hydrogen from an exercise machine powered by humans.

"Independent of weather conditions, every human being is able to produce and compress their own hydrogen with our developed system," Trost told the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

The duo built a conventional bicycle ergometer, which is used to produce hydrogen by splitting water into two components solely using human energy. "When someone sits on the exercise machine the human physical energy is transformed into a mechanical energy of moving parts, like the flywheel," Heinrichs said. Once the hydrogen produced has been compressed, it is stored in gas cylinders where it can be kept safely. Moreover, pure oxygen is emitted into the fitness studio through a glass pipe filled with water, thus increasing the air quality in the fitness studio.

Another unique project came from Vietnam as Huy Vu Tran Phuoc and Thien Duong Thai have been working on producing Soy yogurt. "Soybeans have been recognized as an excellent quality protein and lipid that contains no cholesterol, gluten or lactose, therefore we decided to research a way to produce pro-biotic yogurt from soymilk," said Phuoc. The group told the Daily News that they were inspired to carry out the project as an alternative that provides a rich source of dietary fibers, which accelerate the excretion of harmful chemical compounds and regulate the function of the intestines.

Improving water quality

A number of experiments were carried out by countries to find methods to improve water quality and sanitization. Olga Loza and Snisarevska Oleksandra from Ukraine took a different stance on water issues and have been examining the influence of coral water on living things. After a series of experiments the group found that coral water significantly increased the speed and height of plants, such as seed corn and kidney beans. Turkey also contributed to the competition with some creative



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ideas. Halil Çetiner and Mahmut Tarik Özkaya worked on research to produce recyclable plastic from conquer starch.

Turning black trash bags into art

A repairman living in the Kadirli district of the Black Sea city of Osmaniye has been making sculptures using black plastic waste bags for the past 16 years.

Abdulkadir Karaarslan, 48, said there was no other sculptor using the same method, adding that he also helps the environment by using plastic bags that would otherwise take thousands of years to decompose naturally.

"I started painting in primary school," he said. "My teacher discovered my talent for art. I prepared posters for the school. I was also writing stories. I am interested in all branches of art.

I have been making sculptures using black plastic bags for 16 years since I returned from my military service," he said.

Karaarslan said he started producing amulets and key holders and sometime later sculptures. "I don't color sculptures because then they become like decorations and lose their artistic value.

Metal and PVC strips used for sculptures

I first prepare skeletons of sculptures using metal. I cover these skeletons with long plastic strips, which are used in PVC windows.

And I work on the details and dress them. I also use glue to make them stronger.

In this way they seem natural," he said. Karaarslan received his first order from the Kadirli Education and Culture Foundation, and he made a sculpture of Ince Memed, a popular folk hero. He said his only wish was to open his own studio.

"I want to perform my art by making bigger sculptures. I have nearly 300 works, including the sculptures of prominent Turkish figures like businessmen Sakıp Sabancı, Vehbi Koç and former president Süleyman Demirel."

Karaarslan said Ahmet Tabur, the provincial culture and tourism director, told him that he had sent a file about his work to the Culture and Tourism Ministry and that he would be given support.

Hope floats for marine tourism

Despite thousands of vessels from all around the world visiting the bays of Bodrum, Fethiye, Marmaris and Antalya every year, bringing approximately \$4 million a year to the Turkish economy, sea tourism is an often underrated part of the country's assets. The industry authorities believe that the country can at least double that amount if it is supported with new and improved facilities as well as creating laws that will protect the bays from many dangers



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Although Turkey's sea tourism industry, which includes all kinds of naval activities conducted with marina vessels, has become a quickly developing and profitable area in recent years, it faces serious problems that might endanger its future.

Gündüz Nalbantoğlu, chairman of the Bodrum Chamber of Shipping, highlighted the undiscovered potential of Turkey's sea tourism, which significantly contributes to the national income. But the industry is at stake and immediate precautions should be taken immediately in order to keep competing internationally, he said in an interview with the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review.

"The major problem is waste and protecting the bays. If we do not protect our bays as soon as possible, we will no longer mention any sea tourism in Turkey," Nalbantoğlu said. While asking for special attention to seamen, who are the key elements for running and protecting the sector, Nalbantoğlu urged support from citizens, governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

Hasan Mengi, chairman of the Marmaris Chamber of Shipping, agreed with Nalbantoğlu on the problems that sea tourism faces today, but he also listed the lack of harbor launches as a major problem, especially for small boats.

"On the other hand, our district is a special environmental area, so shipyard construction is forbidden. But new marinas are urgently needed since all the marinas are working at full capacity," said Mengi, adding that other problems include the lack of a coastal master plan, new harbor launches, petroleum without value-added tax and the waste issue.

Officials are of the opinion that the lack of investments to make better use of the natural beauties that our country owns such as bays, seas and coasts is a growing problem. Unless new investments and investors are attracted to the field, the industry's financial gains will melt away before the country can make the best of it.

The income obtained from sea tourism constitutes 25 percent of total tourism revenues in Turkey. Despite the problems it faces today, the industry keeps its popularity as a result of the fact that the overall costs are lower when compared to those of airways and highways.

According to a report released by the Marmaris Chamber of Shipping, some 80 percent of all tourists in Turkey come for sea tourism. But the popularity of the all-inclusive system, which seems to have worked well for years, suffers from the low-price policy and overshadows some other aspects of sea tourism such as marinas and marina management, cruise tourism, and water sports and diving tourism, the authorities say.

As one of the sector authorities, Ahmet Erol, board chairman of Antalya Chamber of Shipping, also believes that sea tourism can save the Turkish economy if managed well. "Sea tourism contributes to the overall tourism income by \$3.5 million to \$4 million annually. This serious contribution can be increased if the sector is supported with new facilities and laws," Erol told the Daily News.



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The regions that contribute most to the Turkey sea tourism include Bodrum, Fethiye, Marmaris and Antalya, Erol said, adding that thousands of vessels visit these regions from around the world every year.

Agreeing with Erol the potential of Turkey's sea tourism, Nalbantoğlu explained that sea tourism does not only refer to the marina sector. Besides its transportation aspect, sea tourism should also be closely associated with the fishery sector for which it creates serious employment opportunities and with the strategic position it would take in Turkey's defense.

Cruiser tourism, newly developing sector

While mentioning how much Turkey could benefit from sea tourism if enough attention is given to the industry, Erol emphasized cruiser tourism.

"Among the fields that sea tourism feeds, cruiser tourism is of great importance in terms of the income it supplies. Each tourist who visits our country on a cruise spends at least 300 euros, which basically includes taxi costs, jewelry, leather and carpet expenses, being the most common ones," Erol said.

Highlighting the importance of cruiser tourism similar to Erol, Nalbantoğlu also said, "Having a total capacity of 7,756 marinas, the Bodrum, Fethiye, Marmaris and Göcek regions are especially important for cruiser tourism. I believe that cruiser tourism, which has been developing in our country, will become the main tourism branch with the increase in the number of marinas."

"The number of cruisers visiting only the Muğla region amounted to 162,923 as of 2008. Moreover, the number of yachts registered at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and rented across Turkey is 1,267, 90 of which are located in the Muğla region," he said. Nalbantoğlu also emphasized that the sector is open to further development.

Similar to Nalbantoğlu, Mengi also pointed out the importance of cruiser tourism in Turkey. "Marmaris occupies a critical position in this sub-sector of sea tourism with its coastal line of 547 meters," he said.

"Some 8,500 people work in the sea tourism industry in the district. Four marinas located in Marmaris have 2,881 yacht anchoring points, all of which are full today. Moreover, ferry expeditions are held between Marmaris and Rhodes Island, and these ferries carry more than 100,000 passengers annually," Mengi said, adding that if the total capacity is increased with new investments and the sector is supported with new laws, revenue will also increase.

Authorities agree that apart from cruiser tourism, the growth of water sports and diving tourism have also gained pace for the last few years.

"The development of water sports and diving tourism is rather a positive event for us; this can be a good opportunity to diversify the industry by supplying new blood from different sub-sectors," said Nalbantoğlu, adding that the number of firms engaged in the field is around 300, all of which are officially registered.



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Akenerji surges on gov't plans

Akenerji, a Turkish power producer, surged to a seven-month high in Istanbul trading on expectation that government plans to increase the price of renewable energy will boost profits.

Akenerji added 40 kuruş, or 4.5 percent, to 9.35 Turkish Liras at 3:33 p.m. on the Istanbul Stock Exchange on Tuesday. That's the highest level since October 9. The government will increase the price for wind and hydro-electric power to encourage renewables, a spokesman for parliament's industry and energy committee had said.

Investment to sound of samba

Visiting Turkey, Brazilian leader Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hints at increased energy cooperation. Speaking to the Daily News, 'Lula' reminds the day Brazil paid off its debt to the IMF.

Brazil plans to invest in Turkish oil and biodiesel sectors and both countries are committed to increasing economic ties, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said during his three-day visit to Turkey.

The trip was organized as part of a strategy aimed at increasing trade and economic ties between the two countries. During an exclusive interview Thursday with three journalists from the Turkish press, the Brazilian leader also shared his experience with the International Monetary Fund.

"I don't think it is a bad idea for a country that is facing some difficulties to borrow money from the IMF. That is why the IMF was created. But what is unacceptable is the IMF thinking that lending money gives the fund the right to impose conditions over the fiscal adjustments a country has to make and the monetary policy it has to follow. That is unimaginable," said the Brazilian president, who is simply known as "Lula." He added that telling the IMF that Brazil was ready to pay back its debts was "one the greatest pleasures in my life."

"I was going to give back the money that they lent to us. He [the managing director of the IMF] didn't want me to give back the money. He said, 'You keep the money, because we are just going to give it back to you,' Lula said. But, on the contrary, Brazil is today in a position to lend the IMF money to create financial resources for other emerging markets, he said, adding that negotiations with the IMF are much easier than they were in the 1980s because leaders used to let the IMF control them, but now the loan conditions are more flexible.

"The G20 has created the proper conditions for the IMF to lend money without conditions. This is a new fact," Lula said. "I think Turkey will not face new difficulties in negotiating with the IMF... I hope Turkey will have success in its negotiations."

Planned investments

The Brazilian state oil company Petrobras will start joint oil explorations with the Turkish Petroleum Corp. in the Black Sea, Lula said, noting that the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer is also in talks with Turkish companies regarding a possible collaboration. "We also want to contribute to Turkey with new technology in the energy field, especially in ethanol and biodiesel, that will create jobs and



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improve the lives of people," Lula added. "We have the proper conditions to discuss building partnerships between Turkish and Brazilian companies."

Petrobras and TPAO have signed an agreement over the drilling rig that will operate in the Black Sea, with Petrobras securing the right to use the unit for a three-year period. The first drilling is expected to start early in 2010, a Brazilian official said. Petrobras has the technology to prospect oil from as deep as 6,000 meters under the sea, an extraordinary contribution Brazil can make to Turkey, the president added.

Lula is currently in Istanbul to attend a conference organized by the Turkish-Brazilian Business Council's Foreign Economic Relations Board. He is accompanied by business executives from various companies, including Petrobras and Embraer, as well as foreign and trade ministers.

The Brazilian president held talks with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday and is scheduled to meet President Abdullah Gül in Ankara on Friday.

Turkish firms invited to Brazil

During his speech at the meeting, Lula invited Turkish companies to Brazil to learn about the production of ethanol. "There is no other country in the world that has decided to make ethanol production alongside agricultural production for food. So come to Brazil and learn," he said.

Brazil is the largest exporter of ethanol, producing 27 billion liters in 2008. Brazilian officials said they plan to increase production to 50 billion liters by 2015 and to start exporting Turkey. The trade volume between Turkey and Brazil was \$1.74 billion in 2008. Turkey's exports to Brazil stand at \$318,000, while imports are \$1.42 billion. Lula called for an increase in the trade volume between the two nations, saying \$1.7 billion is too low for such big countries. The Turkish business association meanwhile urged the Brazilian government to lift restrictions on trade. "The free-trade deal should be finalized soon to solve the problem of higher export taxes. We expect President Lula's support on that," said Rifat Hisarcıkloğlu, the chairman of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey.

Energy minister attends preliminary G-8 meeting

Energy Minister Taner Yıldız arrived in Rome Monday to meet with energy ministers from around the world.

The meeting served as a preliminary meeting to the G-8 Summit in July in Rome. Energy cooperation and problems were discussed. Ministers from Australia, Brazil, Algeria, China, Indonesia, South Africa, India, South Korea, Libya, Mexico, Egypt, Nigeria, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and Turkey attended the meeting in addition to G-8 member states.

G8: Energy investment 'necessary' inspite of crisis

Investment in energy projects is "essential" and must go forward despite the global financial crisis, Group of Eight energy ministers said Monday at the end of a two-day meeting in Rome.



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"The current financial and economic crisis must not delay investments and programmed energy projects which are essential to economic recovery," the ministers said in a joint statement.

"We urge governments and energy companies to adopt a long-term view in planning their investments in energy infrastructures," the ministers said.

On Monday, the International Energy Agency, or IEA, said falling oil prices, tight credit markets and slumping demand had prompted oil producers to delay or scrap 170 billion dollars worth of investments.

IEA chief economist Fatih Birol was quoted as saying by France's specialist Petrol Industry Bulletin that oil investment was hit hardest in North America and the North Sea. "We stress the need to define and share long-term scenarios on energy policy with the aim to increase transparency and reduce volatility in the energy markets," the G8 energy ministers said.

They urged improvement in "regulatory frameworks as an essential prerequisite for well-functioning energy markets and for reducing investment risks and uncertainties," the statement said. The statement was initialed by the European Commission and the energy ministers of 15 countries -- Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Egypt, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Australia, Indonesia, Libya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Turkey.

Earlier Monday, the head of the Italian oil group ENI said price volatility discouraged investment by creating "a huge climate of uncertainty for the oil sector and all other energy sectors."

The uncertainty "sets the stage for the next price increase," chief executive Paolo Scaroni told a press briefing. Falling from an all-time high of 147.50 dollars a barrel in July 2008 to 32.40 dollars in December, oil prices have gradually recovered to around 60 dollars.

Scaroni said ENI had proposed the creation of an international oil agency that would stabilize the price of crude and compensate producing countries when prices fall too low.

The agency "would bring together consumers and producing countries," Scaroni said, adding: "The sector needs a kind of watchdog."

Scaroni, who acknowledged that the idea was "very ambitious," said it had "sparked interest" among the G8 ministers here as well as among member states of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC, to whom he pitched the plan in March.

The new agency would generate a "stabilization fund" that would guarantee a minimum income level for producing countries "when prices fall too low," Scaroni said.



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Agriculture minister in Paris for OIE meeting

Agriculture Minister Mehmet Mehdi Eker is attending the 77th World Organization for Animal Health's general meeting in Paris. The meeting, which yesterday, will end May 29.

The organization will discuss the standards and safety procedures of animal products trade, how to fight contagious animal diseases, and raising the quality of veterinary services. The effects of the environment and global warming on animal diseases are also on the agenda.

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