

## THE QUOTE

“I am 11 years old and like Nature very much. I always take care not to use too much water while brushing my teeth or washing my hands. We all have to take care of each other and our planet to have a long and healthy life.”

— Eva Duncan, *Gulf News* reader from Dubai

## FACTS

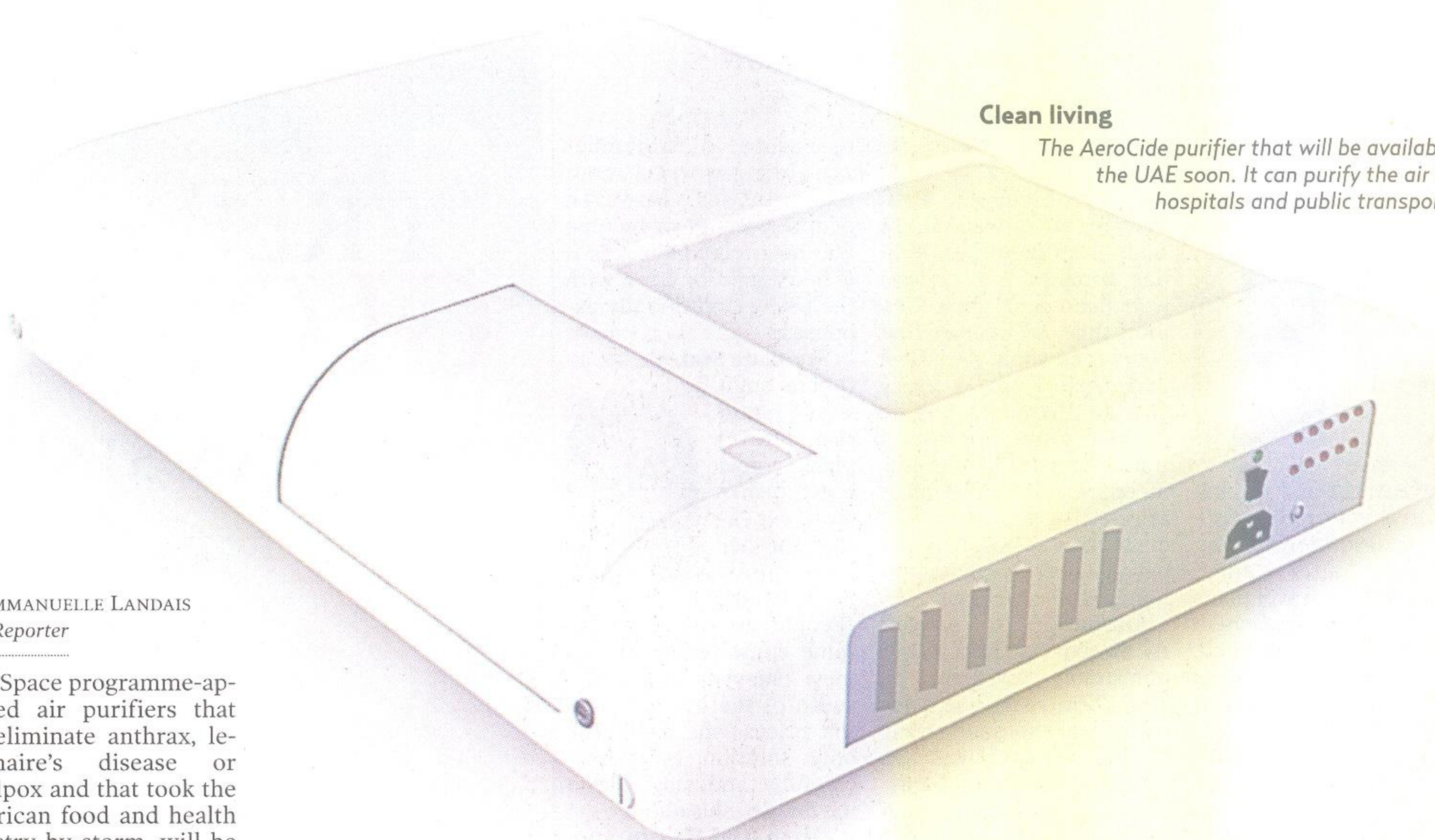
Every day **50 to 100** species of plants and animals become extinct due to destruction of their habitats.

# Pure air from outer space

NASA TECHNOLOGY WAS DEVELOPED TO PRESERVE ASTRONAUTS' FOOD

### Clean living

The AeroCide purifier that will be available in the UAE soon. It can purify the air in hospitals and public transport.



By EMMANUELLE LANDAIS  
Staff Reporter

Dubai Space programme-approved air purifiers that can eliminate anthrax, legionnaire's disease or smallpox and that took the American food and health industry by storm, will be available commercially in the UAE in November.

These purifiers can play a part in reducing food wastage because they help to stop food from rotting.

Over a decade old, the technology was originally designed by Nasa to keep food fresh for astronauts in space.

It removes certain gases from the air that are naturally emitted as fruit and vegetables ripen.

Ethylene, a gas that is released when fruit ripens and eventually rots, was successfully removed from the air with the Nasa engineered AeroCide air purifier to prolong the lifespan of cut flowers, fruits and vegetables by about 20 days.

The technology can also be used in hospitals, day care centres and patient waiting rooms, said Tareque Pirzada of Akida Holdings, the company promoting the Nasa developed technology.

“Nasa's mandate was to grow crops in space. After they took tomatoes and potatoes on missions and things started dying, they came up with something to help control this,” said Pirzada.

The air purifier was created in 1994 and has been adopted by food and beverage giants like Coca Cola and Del Monte, and is also used extensively in hospitals to stop cross-contamination and the propagation

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Tareque Pirzada  
Akida Holdings

of bacteria and airborne diseases.

“AeroCide is very low on energy and has a low power consumption. It contains no chemicals. It can withstand changes in temperature. The system runs without maintenance. Only a light-bulb needs to be

changed once in awhile,” said Pirzada. The system needs no filters and no cleaning.

Inside the purifier are thousands of tiny glass tubes coated with titanium dioxide. When a UV light is shone on the glass inside a chamber in the purifier, airborne particles become surface bound and do not float around.

“Think of them as mini-Pacmans out to eat all the bacteria they come in contact with. When the light comes on the Pacman starts eating, the bacteria or airborne particles disintegrate and are gone. Only pure air is blown out,” said Pirzada.

Recent tests in Indian

hospitals have shown a 73 per cent improvement in air quality in three days in a paediatric intensive care unit, he said.

Consumer purifiers are not on the market yet, but commercial sized purifiers will come to the UAE in a few months.

In the UAE, Pirzada said such systems could be used in hospitals and public transport.

“The food crisis is also being addressed. The technology could be used to preserve food longer. Food distributors are reporting a spoilage rate of 45 to 55 per cent. If we remove the ethylene we can keep perishables healthy longer,” he said.