

World Water Day – K.R. Gupta (Email: khemgupta@yahoo.com)

The great civilizations of the world have evolved around water. The world water crisis is one of the most significant public health issues of our time. One-third of the Earth's population lives in "water-stressed" countries and that number is expected to rise dramatically over the next two decades. Water resources is the key to agriculture, hydropower and to sustain environment. Considering the vital importance of water for human and animal life, for maintaining ecological balance and for economic and developmental activities of all kinds, the planning and management of this resource and its optimal, economical and equitable use has become a matter of the utmost concern and urgency world wide. A number of initiatives have been taken up all over the world by a number of

international and national agencies on "Water".

An important development in this context is world wide celebration of "World Water Day" on 22nd March each year. The international observance of World Water Day is an initiative that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. The United Nations General Assembly designated 22 March of each year as the World Day for Water by adopting a resolution. This world day for water is being observed since 1993, in conformity with the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development contained in chapter 18 (Fresh Water Resources) of Agenda 21. States were invited to devote the Day to

implement the UN recommendations and set up concrete activities as deemed appropriate in the national context. The UN International Decade for Action Water for Life 2005–2015 identified key issues relevant to water and the main areas covered are: water for health, biodiversity and environment, agriculture and energy.

In the above context, World Water Day 2010 and National Ground Water Congress was organized on 22nd March, 2010 by Central Ground Water Board, Ministry of Water Resources, Govt. of India at NASC Complex, ICAR, Pusa, New Delhi. More than 300 participants including ground water professionals, administrators, and representatives of MOW organizations, agriculture universities, industries, non

governmental organizations and water users attended this important event.

In the "Inaugural Session" B.M. Jha, Chairman, CGWB, welcomed the participants and highlighted UN theme on World Water Day – Clean Water for a healthy living. A.K. Bajaj, Chairman, CWC, in his address spoke about the declining availability of water, increase of demand, deterioration of water quality and water borne diseases. He stressed the need for integrated approach for management of surface water and groundwater, requirement of waste water treatment facilities and active public participation in water management. S. Manoharan, Special Secretary, MOW, in his speech mentioned that World Water Day is being celebrated all over India and the role being played by MOW in dissemination of information related to water resources to the society at large. He informed that National Water Award 2008 and Ground Water Augmentation Awards 2008 will be presented on this occasion by MOW Minister. He also announced about the launching of Ground Water Information System on this occasion. U.N. Panjiar Secretary, MOW, was the chief guest who inaugurated World Water Day 2010 and National Ground Water Congress. In his inaugural address he highlighted the efforts of MOW in water related awareness programmes to society at large in water quality monitoring and assessment. He mentioned about 15640 monitoring stations of CGWB and 878 hydrological stations maintained by CWC. He opined that sustainability and quality of water are main challenges to be faced and addressed by us. Panjiar released the Technical Papers Volume of 2nd National Ground Water Congress. This session ended with a vote of thanks by S.C. Dhiman, Member CGWB.

Technical Sessions

Presentations and discussions in the 2nd National Ground Water Congress were centered around 5 themes in 5 technical sessions as under:

- Ground Water Quality Challenges and opportunities (7 papers)
- Farmers' Participatory Action Research Programme and Water use efficiency (7 papers)
- Corporate Social Responsibility and

Capacity Building for Civil Society Engagement in Water Sector (Panel discussion)

- Ground Water Resources Management and Food Security (9 papers)
- Ground Water Resources Management in the Context of National Action Plan on Climate Change (10 papers)

There were Three Parallel Sessions in the forenoon followed by two Parallel Sessions in the afternoon.

Valedictory Session

In the Valedictory Session, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan stressed on the need for conservation and efficient use of water and effective "Water Literacy Movement". He pointed out that education, social mobilization and legislation are very vital for water resources management. P.K. Bansal, Minister, MOW, in his address reiterated that clean water for healthy world is the UN theme for this year. He pointed out that water security, food security and climate change are very vital issues. He mentioned that increasing water demand is creating water resources scarcity. In the context of sustainable development he stressed the need for rain water harvesting, recycling/re-use of water and need for technological intervention. He also informed the participants about other important schemes of MOW such as 'Dug Well Recharge Scheme', Repair – Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies in all states.

He also referred about the Farmer Participatory Action Research Programme (FPARP) initiated by MOW as a follow up of the recommendation of the Committee constituted under Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. As per the brochure on FPARP circulated, the motto of this programme is "more crop and income per drop of water". It has been indicated that 5000 Farmer Participatory Action Research Programmes have been initiated throughout the country with the help of Agricultural Universities, ICAR, ICRISAT, WALMIs and NGOs. FPARP is being implemented by 60 institutes in 25 states covering 2300 villages. Technologies being implemented under the programme include SRI (System of Rice Intensification) cultivation in Rice, Sprinkle/Drip, Multiple cropping, water harvesting technologies,

reclamation of soil through – drainage/bio-reclamation, crop rotation, bio-farming, fish culture and crop diversification and multiple use of water.

Two important components of the valedictory session were launching of the "Ground Water Information System" and awarding of National Water Award-2008 and Ground Water Augmentation Awards-2008 by P.K. Bansal, Minister, MOW.

The "Ground Water Information System" launched in collaboration with NIC provides access to various thematic layers as well as nationwide database on ground water levels and water quality being monitored by CGWB. This system is currently available in Government-to-Government (G2G) domain for planning and decision –making of ground water resource. As per the brochure circulated, some of the salient features of this information system are:

- Framework Spatial Data Service Oriented Architecture
- State of the art solution using latest GIS technology developed in web enabled environment around SOI reference System in 1: 2,50,000 scale.
- Data mirroring and data update with staging server at CGWB
- Rich Spatial and Non-spatial Data content on ground water resources
- Easy navigation based on administrative/ hydrological boundary
- Derived Information on Ground Water
- Ground Water Potential
- Online access to base data on Ground Water across the country including water level and water quality
- Integrated watershed boundaries (as per CGWB)
- Online help and support services
- Role based user management
- Metadata
- Predefined Queries
- FAQ

National Water Awards – 2008

The two categories of awards viz. National Water Award-2008 and Ground Water Augmentation Awards- 2008 were selected by an eminent jury headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan.

National Water Award-2008 was awarded to Vruksh Prem Seva Trust, Upleta

Rajkot, Gujarat for overall water conservation, watershed development and groundwater augmentation through well recharge and community participation. Innovation in recharge techniques include arch dam, ardha chandrakar dam, sangam dam and farm pond. Vruksh Prem Seva Trust has implemented Ministry of Rural Development sponsored 30 watershed projects from 1995-96 till date in Rajkot District. A total of 25,000-30,000 hectares land has been brought under watershed development programme as per the profile brochure of the said trust. These projects involved construction of 1600 dams covering 15,000 ha land benefitting around 5500 families. This has resulted in rise in ground water levels, self sufficiency in drinking water, 25% increase in cropped area, diversification of 80% of cropped area to cotton from groundnut and in overall socio-economic development of the region. The award was received by Shri Premji Bhai Patel, founder of Vruksh Prem Seva Trust.

Ground Water Augmentation Awards-2008 were awarded to the following 20 awardees ranging from NGOs, Panchayats,

Agriculture Research/Rural Developmental Institutes and Industry from 6 zones of the country:

North Zone

- Social Awareness through Human Involvement (SATHI), Thakur Dwara, Sirmour, Himachal Pradesh
- Academy for Mountain Environics, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

East Zone

- Lok Jagriti Kendra, Bawan Bigha, Madhupur Dist., Deoghar, Jharkhand
- Bankura – I Panchayat Samity, Bankura, West Bengal
- J.K. Paper Mills, Jaykaypur, Rayagada Dist., Orissa

West Zone

- Shree Vivekanand Research and Training Institute, Mandvi (Kutch) Gujarat
- Vanarai Trust, Pune, Maharashtra
- Patrika Manav Mitra Sansthan, Kesargarh, Jaipur, Rajasthan
- Gram Panchayat – Nidhal, Taluka-Khatav, Satara Dist., Maharashtra
- Gram Panchayat – Bakhtawarpura, P.S. Chirawala, Jhunjhunu Dist., Rajasthan

Northeast Zone

- Jaintia Fishing Association, Jowai, Meghalaya
- ICAR Complex for NEH Region, Umroi Road, Umiam, Meghalaya

Central Zone

- Gram Panchayat Dhaturiya, Block-Tonk Khurd, Dewas, Dist., Madhya Pradesh

South Zone

- BAIF Institute for Rural Development, Shardanagar, Tripur, Dist. Tumkur, Karnataka
- Siruthuli, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
- Adat Grampanchayat, Thissur Dist., Kerala
- Koyilandy Municipality, Kozhikode Dist., Kerala
- Palmyra- Centre for Ecological Land-use, Water Management and Rural Development, Aurobrindavan, Auroville, Villupuram Dist., Tamil Nadu
- Water Management Research Centre (University of Agricultural Sciences), Belavatagi, Dharwad Dist., Karnataka
- International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics, Patancheru, Andhra Pradesh.