

## World Lake Conference

The 'World Lake Conference', a biennial event, has been held under the aegis of International Lake Environment Committee (ILEC) Foundation, Japan, since 1985. The 12th World Lake Conference, named 'Taal 2007', was organised by the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, under the National Lake Conservation Plan at Jaipur, Rajasthan from October 28 to November 2, 2007. The State Government of Rajasthan was the co-host for this mega event. The central theme of the Conference was 'Conserving Lakes & Wetlands for the Future'. Other main objectives included identifying the issues concerning lakes and wetlands along with restoration approaches under varying conditions adopted by different countries.

The President of India, H.E. Mrs. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, inaugurated the Conference on October 29, 2007, in the presence of other dignitaries, including the Governor and the Chief Minister of Rajasthan. The Union Minister of State for Environment, Shri Namo Narain Meena welcomed the dignitaries and delegates and chaired the valedictory session of the Conference. A total of 650 delegates, including nearly 200 overseas delegates from different parts of the world attended the Conference along with their text or poster presentations on their studies pertaining to the subject matter on five major and more than 40 sub-themes covering the various aspects of lakes and wetland conservation. The National Institute of Ecology (NIE) was assigned the duties of the Conference Secretariat, whereas the task of logistics and event management was entrusted to India Tourism Development Corporation Ltd. (ITDC).

The Jaipur Declaration was adopted at the valedictory session to work upon as a follow up action of the Conference. The declaration includes:

- Acknowledging the importance of lakes and wetlands for domestic, agricultural and recreational uses and to improve habitats towards conserving biodiversity;
- Considering the critical contribution of lakes and wetlands in providing a host of major ecosystem goods and services;
- Stressing the wise use of lakes and wetlands in terms of their values and functions, including those of social, cultural and spiritual significance;
- Expressing concern over the rapid deterioration of lakes and wetlands from developmental and anthropogenic pressures;
- Taking note of the potential impacts of climate change on lakes and wetlands;
- Noting that lakes and wetlands provide a wide range of goods and services to humankind and that their economic value is not well documented or understood;
- Having discussed at length the state of science and available technologies, sharing their experiences and practices for managing lakes and wetlands;
- Appreciating the significant role of lake drainage basins in influencing the quantity and quality of water in lakes and wetlands and their ecological health, and taking note of the emerging concept of Integrated Lake Basin Management (ILBM); and
- Realising the urgency of action needed at national, regional



**Hon'ble MoS, Secretary (E&F) and Additional Secretary of the Ministry in a Press Conference During 12th World Lake Conference**

and global levels to prevent the degradation of lakes and wetlands.

This Conference called upon governments and international organisations to take action on the following issues:

- Appropriate research methodologies need to be applied and data banks established to facilitate the execution of Management Action Plans.
- Standards must be developed for physical, chemical and biological parameters for lakes and wetlands. Guidelines/protocols need to be developed on a priority basis to control invasive aquatic species.
- Innovative low-cost eco-friendly technologies have to be developed to enhance the process of restoration of lakes and wetlands.
- Active participation of all stakeholders, including women and youth in local communities, must be encouraged through awareness programmes towards conservation and wise use of water bodies. Traditional knowledge should be added to the latest techniques for better results.
- Rational public private partnerships need to be promoted in conserving lakes and wetlands and maintaining their ecological services.
- Scientific studies have to be undertaken on a priority basis and strategies for adaptation need to be developed in order to meet the challenges of climate change.
- Mechanism projects with lake sustainability need to be explored.
- Strong institutional and financial mechanisms can be developed for regional and international cooperation in management and restoration of lakes and wetlands.
- An Asian centre of excellence can be established with international assistance to promote research, training and education and develop appropriate technologies for sustainable management and restoration of lakes and wetlands.
- Restoration and management of lakes and wetlands can be promoted through international support. □