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Environment Ministry Celebrates International Day for Biological Diversity

Today is the International Day for Biological Diversity. The theme for 2013 is ‘**Water and Biodiversity**’, both of which represent essential building blocks of life on Earth. The theme reflects the reality that water sustains all life on earth, and that ecosystems of our world, particularly forests and wetlands, ensure that clean water is available to us. However, despite being two sides of the same coin, they are rarely seen in unison when it comes to their conservation, use and management.

The United Nations has proclaimed May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity to commemorate the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Celebrating International Day for Biological Diversity every year affirms our resolve and responsibility to safeguard the precious heritage of bio-resources for the future generations.

Having hosted the Eleventh Conference of Parties (COP-11) to the CBD in Hyderabad in October 2012, India is presently the President of COP.

As part of the celebrations, Dr V. Rajagopalan, Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests inaugurated a function organised by the Ministry of Environment & Forests in collaboration with Wetlands International – South Asia and WWF-India here today. On the occasion, the Ministry released a “Water is Life” poster, designed by Centre for Environment Education, Ahmadabad, a Centre of Excellence of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, depicting how all life forms including human beings are interconnected by, and through, water. The poster can be utilized for a wide range of activities by students and teachers, for education and awareness purposes. The poster is presented in 16 major official languages of the country and will be distributed countrywide. A soft copy of the poster will also be available on a weblink soon, for download and local printing. CEE is working out a scheme where the best entries/activities done by children around this poster can be evaluated and awarded.

During the event the following book, newsletter and DVDs were also released:

- A book entitled ‘Mangroves of India – Their Biology and Uses’ - This book is published by Zoological Survey of India containing 56 papers representing the state of the art science and management information on mangroves of the India.
- A DVD by the Botanical Survey of India, digitizing all its publications under the Bulletin of the

Botanical Survey of India, to date. All results of exploratory and scientific activities of BSI and information relating to floristic and utilitarian aspects of Indian botany are now readily accessible in this digital archive.

- Digital Edition of Checklist on Blue Green Algae of the India: The BSI has been engaged on research on Cyanoprokaryotes, commonly known as blue-green algae which are primitive but important group of micro-organisms. The BSI has prepared a checklist of 1,232 taxa including 939 species, 207 varieties and 86 forms. This is being released in the form of CD.
- A DVD: Digital Archives: Zoological Survey of India containing Zoological Survey of India's past research spanning 98 years, including 111 volumes of records, 31 memoirs and 335 occasional papers into a searchable digital database, accessible on a CD. This is also being placed on the website of the Zoological Survey of India and Ministry of Environment and Forests.
- Sarovar Newsletter: Wetlands International-South Asia has devoted its second issue of Newsletter "Sarovar" on the theme water and wetland management, presenting important perspectives on the way managers of water and wetland resources can benefit by cooperative action.

During the day long event , an Expert Consultation Meeting on Water and Biodiversity, between policy-makers, decision-makers, research institutions, NGOs etc. related to water and biodiversity conservation and management sectors will also be organised. The Consultation aims to encourage a participatory approach, by involving not only various governmental agencies but also the users and other stakeholders, in an effective and decisive manner, in various aspects of planning, design, development and management of the water resources schemes. One of the components of the Consultation will be to discuss the necessary legal and institutional changes that are required to be made at various levels supporting mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation within water resources planning and decision making.

As COP Presidency India had launched the Science Express Biodiversity Special (SEBS) train, which received over 2.3 million visitors on its journey covering over 50 stations across India, and played a key role in creating awareness about biodiversity in the country. After the resounding success of SEBS in 2012, the iconic train has been flagged off for its 2013 run on 9th April 2013. It is scheduled to cover 62 locations during its journey till 28th October 2013. The International Day for Biological Diversity was also celebrated aboard the SEBS train which is presently stationed at Bhagalpur in the eastern part of the country. The state-of-the-art exhibition aboard SEBS is making significant contributions towards achieving Aichi target 1 during the UN Decade on Biodiversity by creating widespread awareness on biodiversity.

RM/RJ