

held at the Indian Academy of Sciences in July 1999. Research activities reflecting the need for conserving our water reserves have been reported in journals of national and international significance. However, knowing the plight of our water resources, these are only a few initiatives and lot more awaits to be done.

The last session was presided over by Ramaswamy R. Iyer and was aimed at focusing on summarizing ideas expressed by the participants throughout the meeting. Issues such as overlapping of data (groundwater and surface water) during estimations were discussed and set aside. Available figures<sup>4</sup> suggest that the annual current water utilizable is 654 cubic km and water use is estimated at 634 cubic km, but it does not imply that we can utilize the entire water available. Water needs to flow in rivers, replenish the ground water table, support aquatic life and purify itself. It was pointed out that a National Water Research Council was set up in 1980 to solve interstate disputes occurring over water, and that with the Environmental Protection Act 2006, India has enacted new laws. These have diluted the previous acts, making it easier

for the industries to exploit our water resources. A concern was shown over the secrecy of data by the higher authorities. Plausible solutions were put forth: water needs to be supplied to the poor at nominal charges or for free; science can be used to trap monsoon water; water can be diverted from agriculture being the major consumer, to industry; industries must recycle the used water; and so forth. Chiranjeev cautioned that the compartmentalization of science in India was having serious consequences. The issue of early school dropouts needs to be addressed. As a matter of fact, about 50% of the children drop out of school at class V in India<sup>9</sup>. Groundwater depletion was also brought to the fore. In spite of awareness on the unsustainable withdrawal of groundwater, not much has been done by the Central Ground Water Authority, established way back in 1986 (ref. 10).

The meeting was a showcase of the importance of interdisciplinary sciences in framing our policies, during which there was reasonable consensus on (a) the need for awareness and education about water, (b) open access to scientific data and transparency, and (c)

science-based appreciation of water management.

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**Richa Malhotra**

## Bhatnagar Awards 2009

The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology was announced on 26 September 2009. It was instituted in the name of the founder Director-General of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Prizes comprising a citation, a plaque and cash award of Rs five lakh each are given every year to scientists below 45 years of age.

This year winners of the Award are as follows: **Biological Sciences**: Amitabh Joshi (Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore)

and Bhaskar Saha (National Centre for Cell Science, Pune); **Chemical Sciences**: Charusita Chakravarty (Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi) and Narayanaswamy Jayaraman (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore); **Earth, Atmosphere, Ocean and Planetary Sciences**: S. K. Satheesh (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore); **Engineering Sciences**: Giridhar Madras and Jayant Ramaswamy Haritsa (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore); **Mathematical Sciences**: Venapally Suresh (University of

Hyderabad, Hyderabad); **Medical Sciences**: Santosh Gajanan Honavar (L. V. Prasad Eye Institute, Hyderabad); **Physical Sciences**: Abhishek Dhar (Raman Research Institute, Bangalore) and Rajesh Gopakumar (Harish-Chandra Research Institute, Allahabad).

**Richa Malhotra** (*S. Ramaseshan Fellow*), H. No. 10, Jaladarshini Layout, off New BEL Road, Mathikere, Bangalore 560 054, India. e-mail: [rehmalhotra@gmail.com](mailto:rehmalhotra@gmail.com)