

## Report

### Conference on Plant Life Through The Ages

The Conference on Plant Life Through The Ages organized by Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany and the Palaeobotanical Society from November 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at Lucknow and was inaugurated by Mr D.K. Pande, Director Exploration, Oil & Natural Gas Corporation Limited. Chairman of the Organizing Committee Dr N.C. Mehrotra, Director, Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany and President, Palaeobotanical Society welcomed the guests. Dr A.K. Srivastava, Organizing Secretary of the Conference and Secretary of the Palaeobotanical Society introduced the themes of the Conference. One of the senior most palaeobotanists of the country Dr R.N. Lakhanpal, Founder Member of the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany and the Palaeobotanical Society blessed the organizers for the success of Conference. Prof Ashok Sahni, INSA Senior Scientist, Geology Department, Panjab University, Chandigarh presided over the function and delivered the Presidential Address on Indian Raft: On Collision Course. Prof De-Yuan Hong Academician and Head of the Chinese Delegation presented his views about the Palaeobotanical researches being carried out in China and extended profuse greetings on behalf of the Chinese delegation.

There was overwhelming response from all over the country to attend and participate in the conference. Contributions from outside the country were also received. The Conference was organized under 15 themes and there were 8 Oral and 2 Poster Sessions. More than 140 research contributions from 160 delegates representing different colleges, universities, research institutes and industrial organizations and UNESCO South Asia office and US-India Educational Foundation, New Delhi were delivered during two days deliberation.

#### Special Session on Fossil Fuel

Prof Robert Spicer of Department of Earth Sciences, Open University, Keynes, U.K. presided over the special session on Fossil Fuel, the session was

especially designed to discuss the importance of Palaeobotanical researches in the exploration of fossil fuel, i.e. oil and coal. For the first time in the platform of Palaeobotany the representatives of two big industrial organizations, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited and Western Coalfields Limited came together to present their views on the Relevance of Palaeobotany in Fossil Fuel Exploration. Mr D.C. Garg Chairman-cum Managing Director of Western Coalfields Limited inaugurated the session and Mr D.K. Bhowmik, Executive Director and Head, Keshav Dev Malaviya Institute of Petroleum Exploration, ONGC discussed the application of palynology in dating the oil-bearing strata. The Key Note Addresses delivered by the delegates of ONGC and WCL on the significance of Palaeobotany in the exploration of Coal Bed Methane and Hydrocarbon potentiality in India illustrate that Palaeobotany is in motion to play a dynamic role in fossil fuel industry. Prof Robert Spicer discussed the significance of plant fossils in climatic interpretation and need to protect the fossils in natural condition.

#### Academic Session

Conference proceedings dealt in detail the classic and fundamental aspects of Palaeobotany, i.e. morphology, taxonomy, origin, evolution, survival, extinction and continuation of plant characteristics through their extinct and extant representatives. The conference discussed the antiquity of life, significance of coal forming vegetation, coal characteristics, giant gymnosperms of Mesozoic, emergence and evolution of Angiosperms, Quaternary vegetation and forest history, palynology and palynostratigraphy of different sedimentary basins of India, micropalaeontology and sea level changes and palaeoethnobotany and dendrochronology.

Themes were also aligned to include the modern and relevant topics of the competitive world of science like the biotechnological advancement, insect-plant interaction, microbial association and factors

responsible for the disturbance of present and past ecosystem dynamics.

The impact and significance of the conference can be recognized with the fact that number of research scholars, students and their senior professors attended the conference only to know the latest trend in the Palaeobotanical researches and to advise the young generation to take up the Palaeobotany as career and to popularize the discipline at university and college levels. Prof Manju Banerjee of Botany Department, Calcutta University presided the Valedictory Session and highlighted the immense potentiality of Palaeobotany.

During the conference Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany and the Palaeobotanical Society as responsible custodian of Palaeobotanical researches in India and abroad decided to get reaction from palaeobotanists, experts of related disciplines, academicians and research oriented industries about the Relevance of Palaeobotany in modern context and encouraging responses were received to make the Palaeobotany exciting in the modern world of Science.

### **Outcome of the Conference**

Contributions on different aspects of Palaeobotany highlighted the vibrant and dynamic characters of

Palaeobotanical researches in tune with the modern disciplines of science.

The participation of high officials of ONGC and WCL signifies the role of Palaeobotany in prognostication and hypothecation of Coal Bed Methane in different coalfields and in understanding the hydrocarbon potentiality in the oil bearing strata.

The records of well preserved plant fossils with different morphotypes and relationship advocate the need to undertake field work and to discover plant fossils from new areas.

The morphotaxonomical study of plant fossils is useful to understand the evolution, biostratigraphy and climatic interference of past and present floras.

It was suggested to provide technical knowledge to protect and preserve the fossils and fossiliferous sites in different parts of the country.

The suggestion to have University-Institute Interactive programme was appreciated for the dissemination of Palaeobotanical knowledge at university and college levels.

**A.K. Srivastava**  
**Organizing Secretary**  
**Conference on Plant Life Through The Ages**