

Insect Science Congress held in the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore between 14 and 17 February 2013, experts from more than 35 countries participated. In addition to discussions on various aspects of insects and their relation with the human society, one of the interesting resolutions was to declare some of the unique bee trees in a few villages near Bangalore as world heritage sites in order to protect them. Some trees of banyan and peepal have been found to harbour more than 600 colonies of rock

bee, *Apis dorsata* per tree, which is more than that reported from any part of the world. A tree located around 40 km from Bangalore city in Ramagovindapura Village deserves to be declared as a world heritage site because it reflects the importance of honey bees in agriculture, horticulture and in preserving the local environment (Figure 1). A world heritage site status would facilitate agricultural stability, enhanced fruit, vegetable production, agri-tourism and livelihood security. Such conservation efforts are

required throughout the country to conserve bees for food security and stability of the environment.

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Bringing back overseas Indian scientists

In the inaugural speech of the recently concluded Indian Science Congress at Kolkata, our Prime Minister has strongly advocated to bring back overseas Indian scientists for quality improvement of our scientific institutes. He emphasized that we should bring back those outstanding scientists who want to work temporarily or permanently in the country. Actually the quality of scientific institutes depends on the quality of students we attract towards science so that they can do excellent research of global standard.

During the last 65 years, India has made considerable investments for the development of S&T. During the last 8–9 years, the government has opened 5 new IISERs, 8 new IITs, 16 new Central Universities, 10 new NITs, 6 new R&D institutes in the field of biotechnology and 5 institutes in other fields. But it will take at least a decade for India to make any difference and catch up with China, Korea and Taiwan which are racing ahead in S&T. Institutes like IIMs, IITs and IISc have their own importance in professional education, but the vast majority of the younger generation should derive benefit from higher education. There is no denying the fact that the standard of our higher educational institutes as a whole has been declining and is not up to the mark to attract and generate the quality required for the nation to become a global power in the field of education. In many of these institutes, a healthy scientific environment is totally lacking causing frustration among the younger generation. A healthy scientific

environment is one which is free from prejudices, bureaucratic formalities, dishonesty, false propaganda, sycophancy, political manoeuvring, etc. 'Big science' atmosphere has gripped many Indian scientists, who think that doing research with small funds is below their dignity. It is the quality of leadership, and the level of scientific honesty and transparency that is required for a breakthrough in Indian science¹. The castigation of scientific leadership by Bhargava² is a bit harsh, but needs thinking that the scientific leadership, with some exception, rewards sycophancy and punishes independence, integrity, effective communication, credibility and competence. Hierarchy is perhaps much stronger and more fossilized than necessary in many institutes. The plight of the increasing number of PhDs produced by Indian universities who struggle hard to find academic and research positions is a glaring example of scientific illness³. If we have to attract brilliant scientists from abroad, we must improve quality and standard of many scientific institutes. It is rightly pointed out⁴ that in the Indian science scenario heavy 'elitism' prevails and those occupying 'managerial posts' continue short-sighted policies over successive generations.

It is hearting to note that the Planning Commission is now working on a scheme to get top Indian scientists working abroad to spend some time doing research and teaching in India (www.thehindu.com). According to the plan, such 'very high quality' scientists would

be offered annual emoluments of USD 100,000 in addition to all other facilities. The main point is that it would be offered to selected scientists who have achieved a degree of international distinction in areas of scientific research that fit to our national priorities. China had succeeded in attracting 1000 of its top scientists working abroad by implementing a similar type of scheme. Further, these scientists should be free from bureaucratic formalities and political interferences. However, a word of caution is necessary – if instead of 'outstanding' internationally reputed scientists some ordinary scientists are invited giving them huge emoluments, it may cause frustration among scientists working in India. Some of the specific recommendations suggested in a recent article⁵ would definitely bring excellence in education and high-quality research in India, which may enable overseas Indian scientists to work efficiently.

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4. Bhat, S. P., *Science*, 2012, **336**, 295–296.
5. Lakhota, S. C. *et al.*, *Curr. Sci.*, 2013, **104**, 163–165.

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