
CURRENT SCIENCE—50 YEARS AGO



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The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Calcutta.

The annual grant of Rs. 20,000 which the Central Government has been awarding to this institution has suffered a cut on account of the financial stringency and the offer of Rs. 18,000 for the next financial year by the Standing Finance Committee of the Assembly was based on the report of the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India who inspected the institution in September last. We have always thought that it is an extremely short-sighted policy to curtail subsidies to research institutions in general and in particular to those whose work has earned for India a distinct position in the world of international science. The inveterate tendency on the part of Governments to measure the value of scientific research in terms of its practical applicability to the administrative affairs is hard to cure and the utilisation of its results for increasing the material wealth of the Nation, while necessary and important, must be subordinate to the claims of wider knowledge and deeper penetration into the mysteries of Nature. Judged by this standard, the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science under the inspiring guidance of Sir C. V. Raman has achieved remarkable results and his successor Dr. K. S. Krishnan whose zeal and devotion for scientific research are well known, requires perhaps greater financial encouragement than has hitherto been accorded to the Association. Scientific work should not be made to

depend on the financial vicissitudes of Government, for its orderly and uninterrupted progress must be assured of a steady and satisfactory income, without subjecting the grant to be based on "a review of the position and the work of the Association annually"

The 150th Anniversary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

On the 15th January the Asiatic Society of Bengal celebrated the 150th anniversary of its foundation by an afternoon *conversazione* in the Indian Museum, and a banquet in the evening followed by a special anniversary meeting. The *Conversazione* was attended by the Mayor of Calcutta and about five hundred ladies and gentlemen, the leading citizens of Calcutta. It took the form of a garden party on the lawn of the Museum and special and most interesting collection of exhibits, consisting of paintings lent by the Academy of Fine Arts, copies of old documents from the Imperial Records Department, mostly of the eighteenth century and some concerning the Asiatic Society, paintings of plants from the Botanical Survey, Javanese and Siamese sculptures from Dr. S. K. Chatterji, chemical and physical processes in action by the University College of Science and Technology, prehistoric and tenth century finds from the Archaeological Survey, fossils, crystals and economic products from the Geological Survey, birds of Bengal from Dr. S. C. Law, diseases, their prevention and treatment, by the School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, medals and coins by His Majesty's Mint, Kaffir attire, fish, crustacea and insects from the Zoological Survey.

The Banquet was honoured by the presence of His Excellency Sir John Anderson, Governor of Bengal, who is the Patron of the Society, and took place in its 126 year old hall, surrounded by portraits and busts of former members who have made history in Bengal. Ninety-three members and guests took part, including the Consular representatives of France, Germany, Holland, Sweden and the United States of America, the Archbishop of Calcutta, the Hon. Sir M. N. Roy Chowdhury, Sir David Ezra, the Hon. Nawab K. G. M. Farouqui, Sir C. C. Ghose, the Hon. Sir A. K. Ghuznavi, Lord Sinha, the Hon. Sir B. P. Singh Roy, and Sir Jadu Nath Sircar. The toast of the Guests was proposed by the President, Dr. L. L. Fermor, to which

Mons. J. Delacour of the National Museum of Paris replied, and also proposed the Asiatic Society, but speeches were brief in view of the meeting afterwards.

At the Special Anniversary Meeting His Excellency the Governor took the chair and the President delivered his Anniversary Address, outlining the history of the Society and naming the distinguished contributors to its publications, more especially in the last half century. He pointed out that many of the specialist departments and institutions founded in India originated from the Asiatic Society, in particular the Indian Science Congress, and mentioned the proposals which had been made for the formation of an Indian Academy of Sciences to effect co-ordination between these various interests in the sphere of science.

Following the President's Address, congratulatory messages were read from His Excellency the Viceroy, the Mayor of Calcutta, the League of Nations, Prof. C. Rockwell Lanman, Sir George Grierson, and Sir Thomas H. Holland, Honorary Fellows. Seven addresses were read from the British Museum, the Linnean Society, the Zoological Society of London, the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences, the Indian Institute, Oxford, the Schopenhauer Society,

Frankfurt, and the Prussian Academy of Sciences. Congratulations were presented by 26 delegates from 58 learned institutions, and in all 19 countries were represented,—Australia, Austria, Belgium, Ceylon, Canada, France, Federated Malay States, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tasmania, United States and India.

In his speech His Excellency the Governor stressed the vigour of the Society in spite of its age, its permanence since the days of the French Revolution, and the esteem in which it is held abroad, as manifested by the spontaneous tributes received from all over the world. He drew attention to the traditional connection of the Ruling Princes with the Society, and hoped that this tradition might be widened, to the benefit of scholarship, by the inclusion in the Society's list of members of the name of every substantial Ruler in the country.

His Excellency paid special tribute to three members of the Society, Sir Rajendranath Mookerjee, Mr. Johan Van Manen, the General Secretary, and Dr. S. L. Hora, the Honorary Secretary of the Celebration Committee.

ANNOUNCEMENT

POCKET THERMOMETERS

'Technoterm' miniature pocket thermometers are offered as a low-cost alternative to the glass thermometer for liquid and air temperature measurements. The ranges are -100°C to $+200^{\circ}\text{C}$ and -20°C to $+1000^{\circ}\text{C}$, with accuracies ranging from 0.1°C at the low end to 1% of the measured value at the high end.

Weight including the probe is 130 g. Display is liquid-crystal, $3\frac{1}{2}$ digits.

Further information may be had from: John Morrison, *Search*, Lloyd Media, PO Box 340, Mona Vale, NSW 2103.

ISLAMIC SOCIETY FOR SCIENCE AND CULTURE (INDIA)

The First Annual Conference of the Islamic Society for Science and Culture (India) will be held at Calcutta on 24th and 25th March, 1984. Eminent personalities and scholars from different parts of the world are expected to participate in addition to the National delegates.

The Conference will focus on cultural and social aspects of the Scientific and Technological

Development. The Conference Program is planned to include invited lectures, oral presentations and poster sessions.

Further information may be had from: Abdus Samad Sheikh, General Secretary & Convenor, 1st Annual Conference of the Islamic Society for Science and Culture (India), P.O. Box No. 7840, 20, Phears Lane, Calcutta 700 012.