

If not, it is time that academies woke up to this need before matters precipitate.

1. At the recently concluded meeting of the ICSU General Committee and Extraordinary General Assembly, it has been decided to rename ICSU as the International Council for Science (ICS).
2. 'Guidance on Indian and Pakistan Sanctions'. Memorandum from Federico Pena, US Secretary of Energy, dated 16 June 1998. (what has come to be called the Pena Memorandum) provides an interim list of institutions under the DAE, the DRDO and the ISRO with which all US Department of Energy sponsored activities are to be suspended. As a consequence, for example, Indian scientists participating in the prestigious D-Zero collaboration at Fermilab have been asked to go back and apparently even the Indian flag there has been brought down. Judging from the termination of collaborative (material science) projects at the National Institute

of Standards and Technology (NIST), an institution under the US Department of Commerce, and the subsequent termination of the non-immigrant visa status of the Indian scientists involved in them, it is likely that similar memoranda have been issued by other departments too.

3. Cable dated 28 January 1998, from the US Secretary of State to all US diplomatic missions titled 'Using Technology Alert List: Help Take a Byte out of Crime'.
4. In response to a DAE scientist's application in June to an IAEA Technical Workshop related to nuclear safety in Ontario, Canada, the IAEA, refusing his application, quoted this from Canada's notification to it: 'In light of India's testing of nuclear explosive devices, the government of Canada does not welcome the participation of nuclear experts from India in meetings in Canada until further notice.'
5. NAFSA.news 3.28, 31 July 1998.
6. The complete TAL may be obtained from the author or can be downloaded

from <http://www.NAFSA.org/retrieve/3.24/324.1.txt>.

7. According to NAFSA.news 3.24, 26 June 1998, as of 19 June, about 30-40 SAOs had been sought on Indian and Pakistani scientists. How many were finally denied is not known. Based on this figure, the total number of SAOs till date could be about twice the number.
8. Siskind's Immigration Bulletin, August 1997. <http://www.visalaw.com/~gsiskind/bulletin.html>.
9. Now renamed Standing Committee on Freedom in the Conduct of Science (SCFCS).
10. *Universality of Science*, Handbook of SCFCS (called the Blue Book).
11. Peter Schindler, private communication.
12. Para 9 of the Blue Book.
13. Private communication from Svetlana Kostic-Stone, Spokesperson for NYAS.

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OPINION

***Biswamoyopterus biswasi* (Saha 1981) or *Ichthyophis tricolor* (Annandale 1909)?**

*Ajith Kumar*

The recent publication of suggested common names for Indian reptiles by Indraneil Das<sup>1</sup> prompted me to write this note. I am neither a layman nor a taxonomist, but somebody who does ecological studies on animals. People like me are, unlike the layman, interested in identifying species that we find in the forest or elsewhere, as easily as possible. This is easy in the case of well-known mammals and birds, a few of the reptiles and amphibians. For many of the not so well-known species, I would like to depend on the common names and scientific names to provide a reasonable description of the species, which would help to identify the species. This is where the problem lies if we examine the recent trends in naming species. In the recent years, Indian taxonomists have been naming species either after people (either to please or to respect) or after localities from where the type specimens were obtained. I have attempted to analyse this trend using

information I have on amphibians and reptiles. I divided the recent past into four periods, pre-1900, 1901 to 1950, 1951 to 1980 and after 1980. I then examined whether there had been any trend in naming species after person,

place or some feature of the species. The last of these would be of value in identifying the species, and could be a name that describes some distinguishing morphological feature of the species, or its habit. The results are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Number of species described and the percentage of these which has been named after a person, place or some feature of the species such as morphology and habit

Time periods	No. of spp. described	Percentage named after		
		Person	Place	Spp. feature
<b>Amphibians</b>				
< 1900	93	15.1	16.1	68.8
1901-50	46	17.4	37.0	45.7
1951-80	39	25.6	38.5	35.9
> 1981	17	35.3	47.1	17.1
<b>Reptiles</b>				
< 1900	388	27.6	16.2	49.4
1901-50	46	34.2	14.6	39.0
1951-80	22	57.1	33.3	9.5
> 1980	14	58.3	16.7	25.0

Nearly 50% of the Indian amphibians were described prior to 1900. Of these, as much as 69% were named after some morphological feature or habit of the species, and only 15.1% and 16.1% after persons and places respectively. The drastic and steady decline from 1900s to the present in the percentage of species named after some species feature is very obvious from Table 1. The percentage of species named after persons and places has increased during the same period, the former being the most striking. A very similar trend is also evident in the case of reptiles. More than 75% of nearly 500 species of Indian reptiles were described before 1900. Nearly 50% of these were named after some species feature, compared to only less than 25% after the 1950s. Compared to the amphibians, more reptiles have been named after people even prior to 1900.

There are perhaps many reasons why there has been such a change. The most obvious is that it is much more taxing to name a species on the basis of its morphological features or habit. Physical features, colouration, etc. have to be noted in detail in the field, before these are lost in preservation. These then have to be compared with other similar species in order to identify its characteristic features and an appropriate name. On the other hand, it is so easy to dedicate a

species to a person or a place! We must note that most of the Indian species (of plants, vertebrates and even invertebrates) had been described by the 1940s; e.g. as much as 85% of amphibians and reptiles. If the taxonomists of those times could have had the time and patience to describe most of the species after some species feature, why could not the later taxonomists, who only had to describe relatively very few species? Or have we lost the art of naming species? Or do the Indian taxonomists (as other Indian scientists) have too many bosses that they have to please?

Names given to species by local people (but not scientists) almost always describe the species in some way, and thus help us identify the species. Such names are very rarely after a place or persons (except many common English names of tropical species). Since most Indian reptiles do not have common English names, Das<sup>1</sup> has done the most laudable task of giving such names. However, what he has done is to convert the specific names into common names. As a result, most of the species are called after a place or person, just like their scientific names. For example, *Cnemaspis jerdonii* is called (guess what?) Jerdon's day gecko, *C. Kandianus* is called Kandy day gecko, and *C. mysorensis* and *C. sisparensis* are called ... you should know what. This

would in no way meet one of the objectives of giving common names to species, which is to help people like us to identify them in the field to the extent possible. Maybe Das should use his tremendous taxonomic knowledge to come out with more meaningful common names! The recently suggested revision of common English names for birds of the world<sup>2</sup>, and the Indian subcontinent<sup>3</sup>, however much the present birdwatchers hate them, are good examples of such an attempt. Field ecologists would be grateful if taxonomists rediscover the art of naming species and stop calling them after persons and places. The first of the species names in the title of this article is perhaps the extreme to which naming a species can, but should not, go.

1. Das, I., *Hamadryad*, 1997, 22, 32-45.
2. Sibley, C. G. and Monroe, B. L., *Distribution and Taxonomy of the Birds of the World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990.
3. Anonymous, Common name changes of the birds of the Indian subcontinent, *Buceros*, Bombay Natural History Society, 1997, vol. 2.

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## The missing link—The mainstream-peripheral science communication

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In describing one of the sessions at the last European Association of Science Editors (EASE) Conference in Helsinki<sup>1</sup>, Chris Zielinski explained that in his 'development-set' days, he had formed opinions about the need for a two-way flow of information, yet the 2% presence of Third World journals in *Index Medicus* and the *Science Citation Index* (SCI) was still very meagre.

In 1979 I began criticizing the SCI coverage of journals from peripheral scientific communities (see the references in 2). To cut the story short, let me say that there is quite a respectful body of

literature dealing with the problem of two-way communication between the mainstream and peripheral scientific communities. As an example of the mainstream-scientists' consciousness about this global problem is the conference held in Philadelphia in 1985 - 'Strengthening the Coverage of Third World Science'<sup>3</sup>. This problem was also covered recently by the *Scientific American*<sup>4</sup>.

There are two lines of development so far in the secondary/tertiary science information services of importance which are relevant to our problem. Although they are as yet completely independent

and different, they could be made quite complementary to each other after 'the missing link' has been established.

### ISI's citation indexes

The Philadelphia Conference<sup>4</sup> recommended a substantial expansion of the SCI journal coverage from the Third World (whatever it meant - I prefer the term 'peripheral scientific communities', independent of geopolitical notions). Although these countries were expected to submit proposals for inclusion of journal titles into SCI, nothing was done about