

Accountability of senior and superannuating scientists

'Science is on the death bed in India', is the opinion expressed by C. N. R. Rao, Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister of India. In his letter addressed to Manmohan Singh, Rao has expressed deep concern over the deteriorating condition of science teaching and research in this country (*Hindustan Times*). Whatever progress we see in the field of science and technology today is because of people educated about three decades ago, occupying apex positions in scientific organizations engaged in research and developmental activities in this country. It is difficult to visualize a situation when the products of our present university system will occupy such positions a decade or two later.

On the other hand, a large number of scientists quitting prestigious organizations like ISRO and DRDO (*Rajasthan Patrika*, 7 September 2007) to join private sector and multinational companies for a better package, is a serious issue which should be attended to immediately. About 392 trained scientists out of 1060 recruited by ISRO in the last three years have left the organization to join the private sector (News Agency/Bureau, 6 September 2007). In view of better job opportunities in the private sector, 1107 scientists have left DRDO between 2003 and 2007 (*Rajasthan Patrika*, 28 April 2008). By and large, the position is similar in the DAE. This is shocking and the situation is quite alarming, especially when multinational companies with a profit motto are creeping into the country under the umbrella of globalization and many international secret agencies are becoming active (*Rajasthan Patrika*).

It is true that every citizen of this country has the freedom to work and has

a right to leave any organization or a company at any time at his own discretion, without hesitation. Intellectual property rights and the human rights support an individual in this endeavour. But when we examine the matter in its totality, a question arises: 'Does the institution or the organization not play any role in developing one's skill and knowledge?'. In fact, it does. But generally the senior scientist holding the apex position solely enjoys the credit of this total endeavour, especially when the career advancement process takes place or when the scientist leaves the organization and joins another one.

Infrastructural facilities available in a research organization, encouraging and conducive work environment, supportive attitude of superiors, a good team of competent associates and work culture in the organization are components that decide the success or failure of a scientist. Of course, family environment, educational background and the society as a whole in which one lives also play an important role in building one's physical and mental abilities. In fact, the recognized experience and technical know-how acquired by a top scientist of any scientific organization is due to information collected or data generated by a large number of individuals, in a long time span, under his leadership. But unfortunately, in today's world of fast-growing technological advancements, it is quite easy to store the entire information generated by the organization on a pen drive and take it away in couple of seconds.

Under these circumstances, when a scientist at the top position in a Government organization or a public sector undertaking, especially when he is the sole

custodian of the entire information or data of strategic importance, joins a private sector organization or a multinational company on his superannuation, he is in a position to provide the same to the new employer for slightly better emoluments or some attractive perks. This way the information generated by a large number of individuals of a public sector organization in the course of several years become easily available to a private sector organization or a multinational company at a small price.

When a senior scientist gets retirement benefits like pension or provident fund and gratuity after superannuation for the services rendered by him to the organization, the public sector organization has a legitimate claim over the data generated by him or the technical know-how developed by him during the entire period of his active service. The data generated by the scientist should be treated as the property of the organization and he should not be allowed to transfer them to any private organization or multinational company.

In case the superannuating scientists fail in their duty, the Government should prohibit them by enforcing a suitable law on this illegal transfer of strategic information or data from public sector to private sector and multinational companies.

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