

## Urgent need for State Biodiversity Board in Orissa

The Biological Diversity Act 2002, which came into force in February 2003, aims to promote conservation, sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits of India's biodiversity resources<sup>1</sup>. It provides for establishment of a National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at the national level, State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) at the State level and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the level of Panchayats and Municipalities. Later, the NBA was established in Chennai, which plays a regulatory role with regard to access to biological resources by foreign citizens and grant of intellectual property rights. It also plays an advisory role in matters relating to the conservation, sustainable use and equitable distribution of biological resources.

As per the provisions of the Act, each State in India has to set up a SBB, with a chairperson, five ex-officio members from the concerned departments and five non-official members from amongst experts in matters relating to conservation of biological diversity, sustainable use of biological resources and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of biological resources. The SBB is sup-

posed to advise the State Government on matters relating to conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of its components, etc. It regulates the access of biological resources by Indian citizens. The SBB can also restrict any irregular activities in the State regarding biodiversity, if it is of the opinion that such activity is detrimental or contrary to the objectives of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. So far, only 20 out of 28 States in India have SBBs<sup>2</sup>. Only three States, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal have appointed a fulltime chairman as an eminent person and the rest of the States need to re-notify for chairman with eminent persons so as to adhere to the legal provision of the Biological Diversity Act. Eight States are yet to be notified about the formation of SBB since 2003, Orissa being one of them. The State has a vast stretch of luxuriant forest cover as part of the Eastern Ghats of India. Recently, there have been several legal disputes between the inhabitants of Niyamagiri hill range, the Vedanata Group and the State Government of Orissa to protect the biodiversity in the hill range. There have also been disputes in the

Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts, Orissa on the POSCO movement. Protests were carried out by all sections of people in fear of losing the ecological as well as biological diversity of the specified areas. The SBB can act upon these matters for betterment of the society and environment. It can take vital decisions on conserving the biological diversity of Orissa, which is in jeopardy. Thus, there is an immediate need for a SBB in Orissa to protect its biological diversity.

1. [http://envfor.nic.in/divisions/biodiv/act/biodiv\\_act.htm](http://envfor.nic.in/divisions/biodiv/act/biodiv_act.htm), accessed on 12 November 2008.
2. [http://www.nbaindia.org/docs/sbb\\_interactive\\_reviewmeeting\\_apr08.pdf](http://www.nbaindia.org/docs/sbb_interactive_reviewmeeting_apr08.pdf), accessed on 12 November 2008.

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## Need for a student congress in India

Indians have been considered to be apprehensive when it comes to drafting applications and innovation in research<sup>1</sup>. This initial enthusiasm displayed by a student-researcher might die down, which would ultimately lead to incompetence and lack of commitment towards research. A student congress in India is therefore a necessity and would be a promising factor for young scientists to do high-quality research.

In the field of life sciences, I see two challenges ahead for our country to grow:

1. An open-source community for students to discuss the latest research is foreseeable, thus bringing in productivity and connoisseur thinking in Indian research.

2. Students generally lack the opportunity to meet experts in newly developing areas of research. This could be backed through a strong mentor-mentee relationship. Scientists can devote time to these promising researchers by mentoring them on-line. At the same time, a new course curriculum should be pursued in India for graduate students. Efforts should be made to set up organizations embodied and recognized by CSIR/DBT/UGC coming under the department of bioinformatics.

It is time for the Indian Science Congress, considered to be the driving force for Indian academia, to start a professional-cum-student organization which would allow young Indians to stay back in the country, gain expertise and thereby

serve the nation. Quoting Napoleon Bonaparte, 'Take time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in', would aptly apply in this context.

1. <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/rural-talent-should-be-tapped-ramasami/366775/>

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