

Fast track funding units – an option to attend international conferences

I agree with the views and concern of Singh¹ that researchers require international exposure for enhancing their research quality, but the procedure to get even partial support from Indian funding agencies is cumbersome. Participation in international meetings and conferences is also important to initiate useful research linkages. To promote the quality of research and to motivate the researchers, Indian funding agencies should have 'Fast track funding units', to disburse the quick release of funds to suitable candidates for attending overseas meetings

and conferences. Singh mentioned some of the new institutes in Singapore that provide full support to their scientists to attend international meetings. In this regard I am happy to share, for instance, that even in India the Jaypee University of Information Technology (a private establishment by Jaypee Education Group) has a similar policy to fund 100% expenses in advance not only to faculty, but to deserving students as well for participation in international conferences and symposia. This policy has benefited our faculty to establish international col-

laborations and for writing new research projects.

1. Singh, J., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **99**, 712.

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Vigilance awareness in science

The observation of vigilance awareness week during 25 October 2010–1 November 2010, is a laudable initiative to instill in us the often overlooked moral values and ethical issues in science. Are we adhering to these and are we fair enough to ourselves and our fellow workers? The issues on scientific misconduct¹ and the eroding trust of scientific publishing² need immediate consideration and eradication measures.

Science is associated with meritocracy and universal standards. Paradoxically, it is often witnessed that in publications with a team of authors, the lead author often exerts a condescending right over other team members. The inclusion of the authors' names rests upon his will, and is not based on the quality and quan-

tity of an individual's contribution. Such an act results in stress among the team workers and also in an unethical scientific ambience. As was mentioned by Balaram¹, an announcement was made by Alberts, the editor-in-chief of *Science*, on the new requirement that the senior author will be asked to 'confirm that he or she has personally reviewed the original data generated by that unit ascertaining that the data selected for publication in specific figures and tables have been appropriately presented'. Such a significant stride in the scientific world would discourage 'honorary authors' and help keep strict vigilance on scientific data generated through books and publications. While obtaining such a certificate from the senior author, it is recom-

mended here that the consent (preferably 'confidential') of the other team members, with regard to individual contributions, may also be obtained. To appreciate vigilance awareness, we all must extend our support to fight against scientific misconduct.

1. Balaram, P., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 5–6.
2. Agoramorthy, G., *Curr. Sci.*, 2010, **98**, 995.

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Analysis of Kalinga awardees confers enhanced science and technology support in the developing countries*

Although there is universal recognition that science and technology is an engine of economic growth and societal development, the generation of knowl-

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edge is extremely asymmetric especially in developing countries either due to inadequate funding and/or a lack of political commitment to science. In the recent past, there has been significant support to research and development with concomitant increased generation of new knowledge in terms of research papers. This should also lead to dissemination of new knowledge to general public

through science popularization. Awards and such recognitions are important indicators of success in such endeavours in the developing countries. The profile of Kalinga awardees is analysed since inception of the award as an indicator of quantum of communication of science and technology to public.

The Kalinga Prize for the popularization of science is a national initiative of

Table 1. Kalinga Prize winners in the first decade (1952–1961) and the last two decades (1993–2009) and also seven Nobel Laureates and five Indians

Year	Name of Prize winner	Nobel Prize	Country
1952	Louis de Broglie	Nobel 1929	France
1953	Julian Huxley		United Kingdom
1954	Waldemar Kaempffert		USA
1955	Augusto Pi Suner		Venezuela
1956	George Gamow		USA
1957	Bertrand Russel	Nobel 1950	United Kingdom
1958	Karl von Frisch	Nobel 1973	F.R. Germany
1959	Jean Rostand		France
1960	Ritchie Calder		United Kingdom
1961	Arthur C. Clarke		United Kingdom
1963	Jagjit Singh		India
1969	Konrad Lorenz	Nobel 1973	Austria
1976	George Porter	Nobel 1967	United Kingdom
	Alexander Oparin		USSR
1985	Peter Medawar	Nobel 1960	United Kingdom
1986	Nicolai G. Basov	Nobel 1964	USSR
	David Suzuki		Canada
1991	Radu Iftimovici		Romania
	Narender K. Sehgal		India
1993	Piero Angela		Italy
1994	Nikolai N. Drozdov		Russia
1995	Julieta Fierro Gossman		Mexico
1996	Jiri Grygar		Czech Republic
	Jayant V. Narlikar		India
1997	Dorairajan Balasubramanian		India
1998	Regina Paz Lopez		Philippines
	Ennio Candotti		Brazil
1999	Marian Addy		Ghana
	Emil Gabrielian		Armenia
2000	Ernst W. Hamburger		Brazil
2001	Stefano Fantoni		Italy
2002	Marisela Salvatierra		Venezuela
2003	Pervez Amirali Hoodbhoy		Pakistan
2004	Jean Audouze		France
2005	Jeter Jorge Bertolotti		Brazil
2006	Could not be awarded due to change of UNESCO Rules		
2007			
2008			
2009	Yash Pal		India
	Trinh Xuan Thuan		Vietnam

global character for international cause^{1,2}. It was established by UNESCO in 1951, following a donation from Bijoyanand Patnaik of Orissa, India, the Founder and President of the Kalinga Foundation Trust. The winner of the UNESCO Kalinga Prize receives £10,000, a certificate and the UNESCO–Albert Einstein silver medal. The prize winner is offered Kalinga Chair by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and is invited to travel to India for a two–four week period to interact with scientists and science communicators. The prize is now awarded biennially in the same year of the UNESCO General Conference at an official ceremony held

for that purpose in the place where UNESCO celebrates World Science Day on 10 November^{3,4}.

The authentic and updated list as available with UNESCO was analysed with respect to country of the awardees since inception in 1952 till 2009 (refs 3 and 4).

During the period (1952–2009), 65 individuals (including seven Nobel Laureates and five Indians) from 24 countries received this honour, a majority being from the developed countries^{1,2} (Table 1). UK, USA and France accounted for over one-third (Table 2) with UK leading the tally with 10 awardees (15.38%). On five occasions (1973, 1975, 2006–2008),

this prize was not awarded and two awardees shared this honour on 12 occasions. Twelve countries have won this acclaim once, two countries twice (USSR and Venezuela), Mexico thrice, four countries twice (Canada, FR Germany, Italy and Pakistan) and two countries five times (Brazil and India; Table 2).

There is a welcome shift towards developing countries, especially in the last two decades or so (1993–2009: 12 of the 18 awardees are from developing countries: Mexico (1), India (3), Philippines (1), Brazil (3), Ghana (1) Venezuela (1), Pakistan (1) and Vietnam (1)). The first decade (1952–1961), however, witnessed complete domination of the

Table 2. Geographical distribution of Kalinga awardees

No. of awardees (n = 65)	No. of countries	Country
1	12	A.R. Egypt, Armenia, Austria, Bangladesh, Czech Republic, Finland, Ghana, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, Russia and Vietnam
2	4	Canada, F.R. Germany, Italy and Pakistan
3	1	Mexico
4	2	USSR and Venezuela
5	2	Brazil and India
6	1	France
8	1	USA
10	1	UK
Total	24	

developed countries in the Kalinga Prize list (9 of 10 are from developed countries: France (2), UK (4), USA (2) and Germany (1)). It can be concluded that the increased number of awardees, of late, from the developing countries seem to reflect the increased support to sci-

ence, generation of new knowledge and dissemination of scientific information.

Also, realizing the importance of public understanding of science, countries like China, which does not figure in the coveted list of Kalinga awardees (Table 2), has rightly proposed to double its

number of science communicators to four million by 2020 (ref. 5).

1. Jain, N. C., *Curr. Sci.*, 1993, **65**, 441–442.
2. Jain, N. C., *Curr. Sci.*, 1993, **66**, 618–620.
3. Kalinga Foundation Trust, <http://www.kalingafoundationtrust.com/website/kalinga-prize-for-the-popularization-of-science.htm>
4. UNESCO Kalinga Prize for the Popularization of Science; <http://www.unesco.org/science/psd/prizes/kalinga/kalinga2005.shtml>
5. Jie, D., China to double science communicators by 2020; <http://www.scidev.net/en/news/china-to-double-science-communicators-by-2020-1.html>

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Pulicat – threatened lake of the year 2010

Wetlands are important repositories of biodiversity; one such ecosystem is a lake. Along the east coast of India, three large lakes are situated, viz. the Pulicat Lake, the Kolleru Lake and the Chilika Lake – each of them is unique and rich in biodiversity. The Pulicat Lake is the second largest lake (720 sq km)¹ and the entire area is vast with brackish to saline water and extensive mud flats. The lake has three openings (Durgarajupatnam, Rayadurg and Pazhaverkadu) from the sea which play a vital role in its flora and fauna.



Nesting of Asian Open-billed storks

The history of the Pulicat has immense heritage value right from the 6th century² and its importance for waterbirds is widely recognized^{3,4}. It is identified as a potential Important Bird Area⁵ and as one of the coastal flyways used by a number of pelagic and coastal migrants, linking Point Calimere in Tamil Nadu with Chilika in Orissa⁶. The Pulicat Lake attracts large concentrations of waterbirds, significant among them being the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber*, Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* and Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*. Apart from these large waterbirds, the Pulicat also draws several species of ducks, teals, gulls, terns and waders.

Sadly, due to increasing human population and hunger for land over the years, the need and care for this lake is drastically diminishing. Despite its ecological, economic, social and cultural importance, the Pulicat Lake is under serious pressure. The major threat is siltation and sandbar formation at the mouth of the lagoon which endangers the complete ecological balance of the area. The rivers Swarnamuki and Kalangi bring in enor-

mous quantities of water loaded with silt during the monsoon which drain into the Pulicat Lake. This phenomenon regularly occurs year after year and has turned the lake into extensive mudflats. Due to this, a large part of the lake becomes unproductive for fisheries and is available for shorter periods for the waterbirds' usage. The fast spreading *Prosopis juliflora* is another menace in the reserved forests of the islands in the lake; it is drastically replacing the unique vegetation of the southern tropical dry evergreen forest.

The Global Nature Fund has also declared the Pulicat Lake as threatened lake of the year 2010. There is an urgent need to conserve this waterlogged wealth before it fritters away. Evolving a technically sound and comprehensive approach with people's participation to preserve this natural treasure is essential. Habitat loss and alterations should be assessed as soon as possible after natural disasters and management strategies such as removal of silt deposition, opening of closed river mouths, prevention of soil erosion and maintenance of fresh-water discharge should be adopted to restore the habitat to its natural shape. 'Early