

in matters of appointment. (iii) The University Grants Commission (UGC) should lay down selection criteria for appointment of Vice-Chancellors, to be followed by all universities funded by it. Surprisingly, there are minimum qualifications laid down for all the posts, from a peon to a professor, but there are none for the topmost post in the university. (iv) In addition to admin-

istrative experience of a candidate, the highest consideration must be given to research contributions made by him. The citation analysis may be used to determine the quality of research output. (v) There should be a mid-term review of the progress made by the university, so that the Vice-Chancellor may be made accountable for his actions. (vi) Above all, political interference

should be reduced to the minimum in running the affairs of Indian universities.

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Role of funding agencies for the betterment of taxonomy

The article by Pushpangadan and Narayanan Nair (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 631–638) rightly addresses the poor state of a highly relevant and indispensable tool – taxonomy. The fact that we lack expertise in the field is revealed by the simple fact that most of the floras being worked out in India are based on those published by the British. Over the past fifty years, our taxonomists have not been able to publish a flora that could be used as a replacement for/compared with Hooker's or Gamble's. What they are doing is simply relocating the plants mentioned in these references from different parts of the country and creating new names, just for the purpose of enriching their bio-data. A taxonomist used to say that creation of new names and new taxonomic groups is indispensable as stability has not yet been achieved in taxonomy. Since evolution does not take place in a day or two, there is no possibility of changing the floristic characters within a short period. So this comment is indigestible.

Regarding the poor state of taxonomy, the funding agencies play a prominent role. There are numerous research institutes and university departments doing different types of taxo-

nomic work using the funds provided by different government agencies like Ministry of Environment and Forest, DBT, ICAR, CSIR, etc. In some cases, due to lack of coordination among these agencies, the same or a closely-related problem is being run by two or more institutes using the funding provided by different agencies. For achieving stability in taxonomy, all the available floras of the world should be worked out. In order to achieve this objective, taxonomists should, for the time being, concentrate on flora that has not been exploited. Publishers of journals should also discourage relocations and rediscoveries based solely on morphological characters.

Pushpangadan and Narayanan Nair point to the fact that taxonomists need to work in a multidisciplinary manner. There is certainly a misunderstanding among the scientific people that taxonomy means morphological characters only, without incorporating aspects from other areas like cytology, biochemistry, molecular biology, etc. into the classical taxonomy, either due to lack of knowledge or for the fear of losing their identity. External morphological characters in most cases will be

dynamic. We are aware that in the case of humans, morphological characters cannot solve disputed parentage. Likewise, while addressing the characters of taxa they should use all the available sources like cytology, chemistry, molecular biology, etc. This should be done in the taxonomic group of an individual institute itself. The present scenario, where multidisciplinary work is being carried out, is that it is being run by different persons in different groups. If this goes on, how can a taxonomist become an expert in understanding the plant system?

The funding agencies, instead of giving away lakhs of rupees for study of flora of vast areas, should concentrate on smaller problems like study of a single genus which incorporates all such methods by which a plant can be addressed properly. This could eventually be useful in creating a national database on our flora.

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EERC and closure of Earthquake Division of GSI

This refers to the news item 'More plans afoot for earthquake management and research' by Nirupa Sen (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **80**, 1095–1097). The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has merged earthquake-prone zones of least and

negligible significance zones I & II in the Seismic Zonation map of India. Accordingly, now India is comprised of just four seismic zones. Unfortunately, BIS has failed to publish the same till date, although it has appeared in the

Vulnerability Atlas of India, published by Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Government of India in 2000. District maps affected by natural hazards, i.e. earthquake, flood and cyclone over entire India are given in the