

reimbursed local conveyance charges; such reimbursement is otherwise permitted to Government servants under the rules. These anomalies have arisen as the consequence of a strange (mis)interpretation, by which invitees have been classified as 'non-officials'.

Of course there is something amiss here, and it is not enough that the rates for invitees are revised upward. I believe that it is reasonable to demand that invitees for official meetings be treated on par with officers of equivalent rank in the Government. I further believe that the extant rules may easily be re-interpreted more appropriately, or may be rectified by a simple order from the Secretaries of the science departments.

Why has no one complained on this anomaly earlier? I can think of three reasons: ignorance; or a sense of frustrated resignation to the situation; or a subconscious feeling of subjugation to the authorities who dispense our grant moneys. With respect to the second reason, I hope that a voice raised collectively will succeed in being heard; members of the various expert committees may also wish to make this point, and perhaps by adopting even more telling means, in their subsequent meetings.

With respect to the third reason (and although one hesitates to say it), this example might appear to be yet another instance of the bureaucratic tail wagging

the dog. The unconscionable delays that now occur between project approval and release of grant moneys has already been the subject of editorial comment in these pages. We are beholden, not to the babu seated in the finance section of the Government department, but to that poor faceless citizen of India. So, in matter of fact, is the babu.

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Honey bee-resembling flowers of *Arenga*

The report of flowers of *Arenga pinnata* (Arecaceae) mimicking the form of honey bees by P. S. N. Rao and Sampath Kumar¹ reminds me of my Platinium Jubilee Lecture at the Indian Science Congress in 1989 (ref. 2) wherein I mentioned the discovery of the phenomenon of 'pseudocopulation' initially reported in *Ophrys* by an engineer Pouyanne³ and later confirmed by Correvoon and Pouyanne⁴, Godfrey⁵ and Coleman⁶ in flowers of *Ophrys speculum*, *O. apifera*, *O. musciflora* and other orchids. In these cases, the flowers of the orchids mimic the females of insects to males of *Campscolia ciliata*, *Gorytes*, *Lissopimpla semipimetata*, *Paragymnomma* and other insects not only by closely imitating the form and colour of their females but also by emitting the respective female odours so that the males of the species are

deceived to the extent of pseudocopulating with the respective flowers and in that process pollinating them when they visit other flowers. In the case of *Arenga pinnata*, the foragers could not be males of the bee species but workers. It is therefore important for us to know the underlying purpose of the mimicry which lures hordes of bees to the flowers of *A. pinnata*. In contrast, the ordinary functions attributed to mimicry are: safety from predators or deceiving the prey by animals but these are ruled out in the case of the bees and flowers of *Arenga*. Further observations are therefore needed on this interesting phenomenon which could possibly be a chemical attractant as observed by Kullenberg in *Ophrys*⁷⁻⁹.

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