

USERS scheme for retired scientists

This is with reference to the editorial 'Supporting retired scientists' (*Curr. Sci.*, 1999, 77, 205–206).

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has been operating a scheme for Utilization of Scientific Expertise of Retired Scientists (USERS) since the Seventh Five-Year Plan.

As pointed out by Balaram, many of our senior scientists at the time of retirement are in good health, energetic and enthusiastic to continue with their academic pursuits. They are also deeply motivated to participate in S&T activities. Besides this, the country should be able to benefit from the immense knowledge and expertise that they have.

This concern was expressed at various scientific fora. Hence, the Science Advisory Committee to the cabinet set up a Committee under the Chairmanship of Nayudamma which submitted its report to the Planning Commission. As a result, the retired scientists' scheme was initiated during the Seventh Five-Year Plan.

The main objective of the scheme is to make effective utilization of the large potential of retired scientists' on a selective basis.

An Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation of the scheme was constituted, which held its first meeting in

October 1986 to discuss broad policy guidelines. It was decided to support the following activities: R&D projects; rural development projects; educational projects, popularization of science; and preparation of state-of-the-art reports/books/monographs, etc.

Unfortunately, the scheme suffered from some of the problems pointed out by Balaram in his editorial for other emeritus scientist schemes. It was soon realized that in view of the limited resources of universities and institutions, the host institutions were finding it difficult to continue providing facilities for retired scientists. These scientists were thus unable to undertake activities like rural development, education or popularization of science.

Besides this, DST had other schemes that catered to above activities and retired scientists were also eligible to apply.

As a result of some detailed discussion by the Expert Committee for the USERS scheme in 1994, it was decided to focus on the last activity, viz. book/monograph writing only.

Scientists up to the age of 65 years at the time of submission are eligible to apply. In addition to an honorarium, DST provides support (for a period of two years) for technical/secretarial assistance,

travel, contingency, etc. Overheads are also provided to host institutions. As DST does not provide any funds for publication, the scientist has to tie-up with a publisher/society for publication of the book.

The projects are processed through the mechanism of peer review by inviting comments from experts in the area. The projects are then placed before an interdisciplinary expert committee which meets 3–4 times in a year.

Since 1994, after the activities were focused, about 100 projects have been funded. Books/monographs from projects funded in 1994 and 1995 have already been published or are under publication.

Though the Human Resources Unit of DST has brought out an information brochure which was widely circulated, many senior scientists are not aware of this scheme.

It is hoped that this note would also serve the purpose of making the scheme more widely known to retired/retiring scientists.

PARVEEN FAROOQUI

*Department of Science and Technology,
Technology Bhavan,
New Mehrauli Road,
New Delhi 110 016, India*

NEWS

Lube extraction technology

Lubes are high value petroleum products which have a very dominant role in boosting the national economy. Produced in lube refineries, these are actually complex formulations containing highly refined base stocks and specialized additives and are used to perform a variety of static and dynamic functions.

In the recent past, major strides have been made in understanding the basic chemistry involved in lube processing and a new quality concept has emerged. Progress has also been made in understanding the role of solvents in lube extraction. Considering these advance-

ments and to meet future challenges of stringent environmental regulations, the Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun in association with Centre for High Technology (CHT), New Delhi organized an interactive workshop on lube extraction technology during 26–28 July 1999.

The theme of the workshop was on technological aspects of lube extraction, however, it was mainly intended to acquaint the participants with the working of lube extraction plants and the various steps involved in the development of the technology starting with the conception to lab experiments and engi-

neering inputs. Around 50 senior refiners from major Indian refineries including executives from Engineers India Limited (EIL) and CHT participated in this three-day workshop.

Inaugurating the workshop, Sudhir Singhal (IIP) said that the world petroleum industry is in a new paradigm of dramatic and rapid change. Describing the future scenario, he warned that the biggest challenge lying before the future petroleum industry, because of the non-availability of liquid hydrocarbon, is to search for newer technologies, feed stocks and raw materials.