

thrown away or dumped for a while to be sold as paper waste.

In case of those selected, they have to produce the original documents, which are checked and verified at different points. If this is the case, why should everybody enclose a huge mass of supporting papers duly attested, more than 99% of which is never even sifted through! Why cannot the application (whether on plain paper or in an issued proforma) be submitted along with a CV duly signed and declared to be true by the candidate? If a copy of any really essentially important document needs to be enclosed, why cannot this be self-attested? At best, a summary of qualifications and testimonials may be asked for from the candidate. All this infor-

mation can easily be verified at the time of joining. The authorities may well seek confidential reports from three or four different corners, as is usually done by many government and non-government agencies through police verification or references to educational institutions attended by the candidate. We must realize that no system is absolutely fool-proof. But we can minimize wastage of time, money and manpower in our poor country and ensure selection of the most competent candidate by acting rationally.

My specific proposals are: (i) Let every person eligible to attest, stop attesting documents to be enclosed with an application; (ii) Let every applicant send in applications and accompanying documents, if necessary with self attestation;

(iii) Let every government or non-government agency take steps to discontinue the practice of attestation by proper notifications; (iv) Let our Hon'ble High Courts and/or the Hon'ble Supreme Court take up this matter *suo moto* and issue directives to stop the practice of attestation.

SUBIR K. SEN

*Department of Library and Information Science,  
University of Calcutta,  
Asutosh Building,  
College Street,  
Kolkata 700 073, India  
e-mail: subir-s@hotmail.com*

## SciDev.net – Inputs from reputed journals are but crumbs

The Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) Newsletter, said to be available on-line at <http://www.ictp.trieste.it/~twas/Nlonline.html>, is not quite current in that as on 7 January 2002 it did not contain the July–September issue (2000, 13) which was lying on my desk already. Be that as it may, this latest issue contains a news item regarding the web portal SciDev.net. This article stated that it is 'a new free-access web portal sponsored by *Nature* and *Science*, in cooperation with the Third World Academy of Sciences, set to take off this (2001) December. The focus: *Science and Technology in the Developing World* (emphasis mine)'. Naturally, I was curious to see the contents of SciDev.net. It is available on-line at the website <http://www.SciDev.net/>.

The site contains the following information: News, Features, Opinion and Editorial, Book Review, Comments and Feedback.

Detailing the objectives of this new portal the homepage states, 'SciDev.net seeks to provide concise, accurate and topical news coverage of the principal issues and events relevant to the areas covered by the website. . . . Feature items will focus in greater depth on the background to the topics covered on the website. . . . The centre column of the

homepage contains a summary of the most recent opinion items to appear on the website. This item is either commissioned by SciDev.net or reproduced from another publication, in which case a summary will appear with a link to the original site. The Book Review section provides links to book reviews appearing on other sites, particularly in *Nature* and *Science*, that are relevant to the themes addressed by the website. . . . Regional gateways provide a collection of news, features and opinion items relevant to different parts of the world.'

From this description, it is obvious that the only inputs from *Nature* and *Science* are to be found in the Book Review section. Further exploration showed that as on 7 January 2002, in the archives of SciDev.net, nine books were listed. When the book reviews were examined, the status was that links or references to *Nature* and *Science* had been given to six books, one to *British Medical Journal* and no reviews were available for the remaining two.

Recently *Current Science* had published a News item entitled 'Medical journals for free' (2002, 81, 635–636). On 9 July 2001, the WHO and six medical journal publishers announced an initiative which will enable close to 100 developing countries to gain access to

vital scientific information that they otherwise could not afford. 'The arrangement agreed to by the six publishers would allow almost 1000 of the world's leading medical and scientific journals to become available through the Internet to medical schools and research institutions in developing countries for free or at deeply-reduced rates'. In addition, it is also noted that some non-medical periodicals also seem to be available for free on the web, for example, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA*.

In the light of these global changes that are taking place, in my opinion the inputs from *Nature* or *Science* to SciDev.net do not touch any hard-core science information, access to which the developing countries cannot afford. The inputs on news and book reviews can be conveniently missed without much loss, but the crucial opening of windows to scientific literature, per se, is sadly still wanting to be available to the developing world.

K. R. RAO

*'Gokula', 29/2, 11th Cross,  
Third Main (Margosa) Road,  
Malleswaram,  
Bangalore 560 003, India  
e-mail: krrao@ias.ernet.in*