

## Publishing in Indian journals

R. D. Goel in his write-up (*Curr. Sci.*, 2001, **81**, 627) laments over the non-publication of top-class research findings in Indian journals in spite of huge expenditure (amounting to about 50 billion rupees annually) on research and development. He has attributed this to 'the malpractices by administrators and higher authorities of research institutes and universities of India'. The following views are in response to the said correspondence.

Knowledge being universal, research publications should be assessed through objective universal parameters like 'citation counts', 'impact factors' etc. rather than through local factors like 'Indian', 'State', 'Departmental' journals. It is a matter of regret that the impact factor of Indian journals is abysmally low. This is possibly because of the non-publication of 'top-class research findings' having potential for high citation counts on the one hand and publication of many 'junk papers', on the other. Referring to the decline in the quality of research in India

Kalshian<sup>1</sup> states, 'In the entire history of CSIR, only three out of over 20,000 papers published by its scientists have been cited more than 100 times against a world average of one out of every 250'.

It is unfortunate that a paper with 'hundred citation counts' is a rare phenomenon among researchers from the state-funded Indian Universities and a paper with 'thousand citation counts' is either nonexistent or rare among researchers from the national research institutes with fabulous funding. It may not be unreasonable to expect that papers coming from national research institutes should have citation counts at least ten times more than those from the ill-funded state universities, in view of the asymmetrical and fabulous funding for the national research institutes with hardly any pressures of teaching.

Without improving the quality of Indian journals, the promotion of researchers 'on the basis of their work published in Indian journals only' will be myopic and suicidal. Clearly, the agenda

should be to enhance the quality of Indian journals by improving the parameters that are responsible for producing high-quality journals such as the editor, editorial board, referees and also improving the quality of the reviewing process, to make the standard of Indian journals comparable to international journals having high impact factor. This is possible only if a genuine concern and respect for quality through citation counts<sup>2</sup> is demonstrated.

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1. Kalshian, R., *Outlook*, 23 October 2000, pp. 56–66.
  2. Basa, D. K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2000, **79**, 1042–1043.
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## War and its effects on environment

The death of thousands, millions rendered homeless and orphans, redrawing of maps and collapse of economic systems are the most widely debated consequences of any war. But the havoc war plays on the environment is generally ignored. The effects of a war on the environment are just as fatal as its effect on human beings; and ignoring these is even more fatal. The war may come to an end, normalcy may return, peace may get a chance, but the changes brought about in the environment remain and continue so for long.

In two months of the current Afghan war, nearly four thousand sorties flown by the war-planes and nearly five hundred tons of war material could initiate undesirable effects on the environment there, while a prolonged war may force these changes to continue for long.

Numerous sorties flown by war-planes have already resulted in taking noise pollution to sky-high levels. These planes fly at a far lower altitude than other

planes. This might give rise to lowering of ozone levels in the ozone layer. The already depleted ozone layer may suffer further damages due to pollutants emitted by planes, because of the burning of fossil fuel and the increase in suspended particulate material (SPM). During the Gulf War an increase in SPM was recorded. These particles provide a surface for numerous chemical reactions to take place and thereby the concentration of the pollutants in the atmosphere goes on increasing, a further threat to the ozone layer.

While the US has not made it clear to the world what material has been dropped over Afghanistan, the BBC has said that in some of the bombs and cruise missiles, depleted uranium may have been used. This is far more alarming because uranium is a heavy element and it is poisonous.

These substances may enter our food chain and may cause severe damage to the biological system. The on-going war

might have affected the migratory birds. Each year, during winter, Siberian cranes arrive in India to avoid the harsh winter of Siberia. During this time they generally reach India and the neighbouring countries. With the war going on, they might have changed their flight path.

During the Gulf War, Iraqi troops deliberately polluted sea water with crude oil, while setting oil wells on fire. This caused the death of many birds, while the entire marine flora and fauna of the region was under a threat.

The most horrifying prospect is the use of nuclear weapons. Once, and if this is done, there will be no cause for concern about damage to the environment, because only ash and dust will remain.

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