

Indian science slows down: China–India comparison

The recently released 2008 report of Science and Engineering Indicators¹ shows

again how the dragon has soared while the elephant stumbles along unhurriedly.

Table 1 and Figure 1 a–c show the total number of Ph Ds, Ph Ds in science and engineering (S&E) disciplines and Ph Ds in engineering from China and India for the period 1985–2003. These are self-explanatory.

Table 1. Ph Ds from China and India from 1985 to 2003

Country	China			India		
	All	All S&E	Engineering	All	All S&E	Engineering
1985	234	125	68	7438	4007	509
1987	622	218	127	7603	4123	603
1989	1904	1024	726	8284	4209	586
1991	2556	1198	767	8383	4294	629
1993	2114	1894	1069	9070	4320	323
1995	4364	3417	1659	9070	4000	335
1997	6793	5308	2643	10,408	4764	298
1999	10,160	6778	3269	10,951	5317	696
2000	11,383	7766	4484	11,296	5395	723
2001	12,465	8153	4341	11,544	5394	778
2002	14,638	9523	5252	11,974	5527	734
2003	18,806	12,238	6573	13,733	6318	779

1. Science and Engineering Indicators, National Science Board, National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA, USA; <http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/seind08/>

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Figure 1. Total number of Ph Ds (a), science and engineering Ph Ds (b) and engineering Ph Ds (c) from China and India during 1985–2003.

Indian Science Congress – Time for reflection

In the olden days, various scientific disciplines did not have their own associations and hence met under the banner of the Science Congress to discuss and outline their vision for Indian science. Today, every discipline has its own association – some more than one – which holds annual or biannual, national and regional conferences, where the concerned scientists meet and discuss their work and draw out future plans for their discipline. Hence the role of the Science Congress under these circumstances has become redundant.

It is now time that the Indian Science Congress Association changes the way the Congress is conducted. It was our

first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who decided to attend the Congress every year and state his scientific vision for India. It was an exercise worth the effort, but some of the Prime Ministers who came after him have lacked his scientific temper. As a result, it has become an unwanted, routine affair for the Prime Minister. It is better that the Science Congress Association now makes this as an association meeting and reduce the cost and duration. They may invite the PM – if capable of stating his views on Indian science – to present his vision of Indian science, followed by a few lectures on selected themes by reputed scientists. This should be combined with the

annual association activities, presentation of awards, felicitations, etc. All this can be done within two days at a reduced cost. The money saved can be used to encourage the Student Science Congress, which perhaps achieves more than what this bigger Science Congress does.

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