

## Kerala Science Congress\*

Kerala was one of the few states in India to promulgate the Science and Technology Policy Resolution in 1972, followed by setting up of a State Committee of Science, Technology and Environment (STEC). In 2002, the STEC was re-structured as Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment (KSCSTE), and the six R&D institutions, namely Centre for Earth Science Studies (CESS), Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI), National Transportation Planning and Research Centre (NATPAC), Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology (RGCB) and Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI) were amalgamated into it for concerted and coordinated approach to R&D activities in the S&T area. The primary objective of KSCSTE is to implement science, technology and environment programmes to enhance socio-economic development as well as quality of life and environment of the State.

The Kerala Science Congress (KSC) conducted by KSCSTE encourages effective participation of fresh talents and inculcates scientific temper for advancement of scientific research in the state. The 20th KSC had sessions in which selected general papers, contest papers and posters in several subject areas were presented. Young Scientist Awards were presented to the winners of the contest papers under different broad subject areas.

The special theme for the 20th KSC was 'Kerala's Health Challenge – Emerging and Re-emerging infections'.

V. S. Achuthanandan, the Chief Minister, Kerala, who inaugurated the Congress, spoke on the importance of S&T

in the context of Kerala, and advised the scientific community to rise to the occasion for facing the challenges due to various calamities and disaster situations. He informed about future plans of the Government for encouraging R&D facilities in Kerala. On the second day, the Prof. Pisharoty Memorial Lecture was delivered by M. S. Valiathan. He spoke on 'A mission for instrumentation in India'. The talk was an eye-opener for both academicians and entrepreneurs. He mentioned that India is lagging behind in its scientific instrumentation production primarily because of the lack of interdisciplinary work and culture as well as interaction between industry, academia and R&D institutions. He also mentioned that though there is scope for Rs 5300 crore scientific instrumentation production industry, only 15% of the demand is being met nationally and for the rest we depend on imports. He advised on a mission-mode approach, to meet the domestic development of instrumentation of our country.

The keynote address on the special theme by Eqbal highlighted the achievements and limitations of the health sector of Kerala. The speakers of the special theme discussed about the various infections and epidemic diseases occurring in Kerala. The expert panel noted that there is the possibility of an outbreak of yellow fever.

This was followed by the P. K. Gopala-Krishnan Memorial Lecture by P. Balaram (Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore). He spoke on Scientometrics – the study of measurement of scientific and technological progress. Balaram dealt with the impact of publications and its importance and the method of measurement of impact using various indices.

People's science corner and exhibition was inaugurated by P. V. Unnikrishnan (State Planning Board). There were about 35 exhibits/innovations presented by various institutions/agencies. People's science corner helped inculcate closer interac-

tions and tie-ups with research institutions and experts in various fields.

The P. T. Bhaskara Panicker Memorial Lecture was delivered by T. Ramasami (Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi).

The third day programme began with the Young Scientist presentations in ten broad subject areas. Forty-four papers were presented for the contest. In the non-contest session, 88 papers were presented. Besides, 27 poster presentations were also made. Young Scientist award winners were presented with Rs 5000 and a merit certificate. A contingent grant of Rs 15,000 towards projects for two years was also awarded.

Presentations by children scientists was another attraction of the KSC, with children presenting their findings and interacting with senior scientists. About 190 students attended the Congress.

In the valedictory session, awards were distributed to the winners of the Young Scientist contests. Awards were also given to children scientists, best poster and exhibition by M. A. Baby, Minister for Education and Culture. A. E. Muthunayagam (IIT, Chennai) mentioned that we need to innovate to improve the quality of life. While giving his impressions about the Congress, C. G. Ramachandran Nair (former Chairman, STEC) mentioned that Keralites were curiously blind to the need of major S&T institutes in the state. 'This negative web of thought and monstrous lethargy must go. There should be a vigorous new booming of science and technology activities in Kerala and the State should make its contributions', he said.

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