

A new passage to India

EMBO strengthens exchange between European and Indian life scientists and helps recruit a new generation of outstanding researchers.

India is on its way to becoming a global power in the life sciences. Ensuring fast development is also high on the agenda of the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh who recently announced doubling of the investment in science from 1% of the GDP to two and launched five new institutions dedicated to education and research. But scientific success cannot rely on financial resources only. The greatest challenges for the advancement of Indian science seem to be educating highly skilled researchers at home and attracting back those who have been trained abroad.

Fostering scientific exchange between European and Indian scientists is just one goal of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO). The organization was founded by leading life scientists in 1964 to advance the life sciences in Europe and beyond (see Box 1). More recently, EMBO has also intensified its links with India through a number of new activities.

For the past decade, EMBO has also been involved in community-building efforts directed at talented, young,

group-leaders who lack the necessary financial and scientific recognition. The EMBO Young Investigator Programme currently lends support to more than 200 researchers. This includes not only three years of financial funding, networking and training, but also a helping hand when recruiting qualified PhD students and postdocs for their laboratories. EMBO advertises the vacancies in well-known scientific magazines such as *Nature*. This year, the advertisements will also be published in leading Indian magazines like *Current Science*, hoping to attract students from all over India. India-born Young Investigator M. Madan Babu, group leader at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, UK, will help pre-screen the best applicants in the next stage. Thomas Lecuit, another EMBO Young Investigator, has recently decided to spend an eight-month sabbatical at the National Centre for Biological Sciences in Bangalore.

‘Molecular and evolutionary genetics of malaria’ and ‘Molecular mechanism of protein transport’ are topics addressed

by two lecture courses funded by EMBO and due to be held in New Delhi and Bangalore respectively, at the end of November. This is just one example of activities supported by the new programme EMBO Global Exchange (<http://www.embo.org/programmes/global-exchange.html>). The courses address PhD students and postdocs working in India and are jointly organized by European and Indian scientists.

The EMBO Meeting 2010 – one of the largest meetings of molecular life scientists in Europe – hosted a satellite meeting attended by more than 80 scientists of Indian origin working in Europe. During the Life Science Research in India session, co-organized by the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance, Nobel Laureate and EMBO Member, Venki Ramakrishnan gave the keynote lecture and reputed life scientists of Indian origin spoke about their research and the increasing research opportunities in India. EMBO is reaching out to scientists who have received excellent education abroad, hoping to entice them to return home, where they are needed to foster innovation and improve scientific output.

Additional EMBO commitment includes the participation at the Indian Science Congress slated for January 2011. This high-level event will be inaugurated by the Indian Prime Minister, and attended by five Nobel Laureates, including EMBO Members Venki Ramakrishnan and Sir Tim Hunt. This time, the Indian Science Congress will also host a delegation from EMBO. According to the organizers, the focus of the next meeting will be quality education and excellence in scientific research – an area that EMBO can definitely contribute to with its expertise.

Box 1. About EMBO

The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) promotes excellence in molecular life sciences in Europe by recognizing and fostering talented scientists. Since 1964, leading scientists are elected annually to become EMBO members based on proven excellence in research. Members number more than 1400 today. Fifty-three scientists from the EMBO membership have received the Nobel Prize. Four leading peer-reviewed journals – *The EMBO Journal*, *EMBO Reports*, *Molecular Systems Biology* and *EMBO Molecular Medicine* – span a broad spectrum of topics of molecular biology and reflect how science is shaping the world.

EMBO funding, training and networking activities impact thousands of scientists every year, promoting collaboration in all areas of molecular biology – within its 27 member states, in Europe and neighbouring countries, and also worldwide.