

NISCAIR'S BOOK RELEASE FUNCTION

Exciting Children About Science

"Science communication is the key element in exciting children about science," said Dr Kiran Karnik, former President of NASSCOM, the first Director of the Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) and someone who spearheaded the launch of Discovery Channel and Animal Planet in South Asia.

He was the Guest of Honour at a function organized to release two new books published by the National Institute of Science Communication And Information Resources (NISCAIR), Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), New Delhi. Also present on the occasion were Prof. S.K. Sopory, Vice Chancellor,

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Prof. Mridula Mukherjee, noted historian and former Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, and Mr Ge Songxue, Counsellor of Science & Technology Office, Embassy of China in India.

The first book, *Constructing Culture of Science: Communication of Science in India & China*, is an effort to put a wide range of issues related to communication of science and public understanding of science in India and China on the anvil of a serious debate. The second book, *Quality Education & Excellence in Science Research in Indian Universities* gives a bird's eye view of the significant deliberations at the 98th Indian Science Congress held at Chennai in January 2011.

Dr Kiran Karnik cautioned that with very little science being undertaken in universities and with very little science funding, India had fallen far behind South Korea and China. He lamented that the content and facilities for science were missing from the majority of schools in India. And, he said, although we have a few science centers, looking at the vastness and the population of the country the scale is not there. The need of the hour was communicating science more effectively. The challenge for science communication, he said, was creating an excitement in children about science by looking at the method of science.

Talking about the book, *Constructing Culture of Science: Communication of Science in India & China*, Dr Karnik congratulated NISCAIR and China Research Institute for Science Popularisation (CRISP), Beijing for having documented science communication in the two countries in such an excellent fashion.

Earlier, Prof. Mridula Mukherjee, noted historian and former Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, who released the book *Constructing Culture of Science: Communication of Science in India & China*, said that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would have been the most happiest person, not only because the book talks about his favourite topic of science and scientific temper, but also because the book reflected the kind of cooperation and coordination between India and China that he always yearned for. This was the vision he had for the post-colonial world.

Prof. Mukherjee said that Nehru was fascinated by scientific phenomena and science for him was a vehicle for giving people a better life. He believed that we could not have a modern society without a rational society. She was happy that NISCAIR was working towards making that Nehruvian framework a reality.

"CONSTRUCTING CULTURE OF SCIENCE—COMMUNICATION OF SCIENCE IN INDIA & CHINA"

This book is an attempt to narrate the story of science communication in the two most populous and also the fastest emerging economies of the world. For the first time, this volume presents a comprehensive overview of science communication in India and China. There is no book that compares science communication efforts being made in two cultures, in such detail.

The book touches upon the role, efficacy and problems of formal and informal channels of communication in communicating science and also gives an overview of models, methodology, development of indicators and conceptual models that have been used for assessment of the present level of public understanding of science.

The book while giving a glimpse of history of science communication in the two countries, also deals with recent history of development of research in public understanding of science or scientific literacy. There are chapters that focus on the advent and role of science museums, and there are also articles that discuss social movements that have helped in communicating science to large sections of society. The book also deals with the specific problems of science communication to the rural public.

The book is based on 18 chapters—eight by Chinese authors and ten by Indian authors. The book is a collaborative venture between CSIR-NISCAIR and the China Research Institute for Science Popularisation (CRISP).

"QUALITY EDUCATION & EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE RESEARCH IN INDIAN UNIVERSITIES"

The 98th session of the Indian Science Congress, held at SRM University, Chennai during 3-7 January 2011 chose "Quality Education & Excellence in Science Research in Indian Universities" as the theme for the congress.

Around 8,000 delegates, six Nobel laureates and around 130 leading scientists from India and abroad participated in it. The book records the debates, deliberations and discourses in the 14 Sectional Sessions and the 17 Plenary Sessions addressing key issues such as science policy agenda for the next five years, challenges of maintaining quality education, enhancing academia-industry interaction, addressing challenging science issues of climate change, threat to fragile coastal ecosystems, food and nutrition security and so on.

The book also reports on the Children's Science Congress, the Science Communicators' Meet, and the first National Science Film Festival that were held on the sidelines of the Science Congress.



पुस्तक विमोचन Release of Books

कन्सट्रक्टिंग कल्चर ऑफ साइंस-कम्युनिकेशन ऑफ साइंस इन इंडिया एण्ड चाइना
Constructing Culture of Science-Communication of Science in India and China
and
क्वालिटी एजुकेशन एण्ड एक्सेलेन्स इन साइंस रिसर्च इन इंडियन यूनिवर्सिटीज
Quality Education & Excellence in Science Research in Indian Universities

11 October 2011



Top : Dignitaries on the dais-from left Dr. Gangan Prathap (Director-NISCAIR), Prof. S.K. Sopory (VC-JNU), Dr. Kiran Karnik (Former President NASSCOM), Prof. Mridula Mukherjee (Former Director-NMML) & Mr. Ge Songxue (Counsellor of S & T Office, Embassy of China)

Above left : Prof. S.K. Sopory releasing the book on the 98th Science Congress

Above right : Prof. Mridula Mukherjee releasing the book on science communication in India & China

Mr Ge Songxue, Counsellor of Science & Technology Office, Embassy of China in India, said that the book should be seen as a landmark collaborative effort in the field of science and technology between two of the world's fastest emerging economies that were facing similar challenges. He said it was good to exchange experiences and learn from each other.

Earlier, delivering his welcome address, Dr Gangan Prathap, Director, CSIR-NISCAIR, said that the book *Constructing Culture of Science* had emerged out of the joint efforts of two leading institutes on science communication, one from India and the other from China. "It is welcome," he said, "that for the first time, the wisdom of China and the wisdom of India, at least in the specialized field of science communication, had joined to put together this book."

Prof. S.K. Sopory, VC-JNU, who released the book *Quality Education & Excellence in Science Research in Indian Universities*,

congratulated the NISCAIR team for having done an excellent job of recording what transpired at the 98th Indian Science Congress, preserving it for future generations. He said that quality education has been the key concern of the Planning Commission and excellence was where the country was lacking.

Prof. Sopory said, it was not only necessary to reach science to students but also to those who were not aware of science. However, for that we have to make people ready for receiving science. People, in general, may be interested in gadgets and machines, but the curiosity component was missing. Prof. Sopory said that it was here that institutes like NISCAIR could play a big role by communicating science to the masses. He also commended NISCAIR's scientific journals that were making scientific information available to the people of the country at an affordable cost.

Hasan Jawaid Khan