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The Max Planck Institute of Immunobiology and Epigenetics in Freiburg, Germany is offering a Postdoctoral Position in Bioinformatics in the Laboratory of Chromatin Regulation (Head: Dr. Asifa Akhtar). The position is available for an initial two-year appointment with the possibility of extension.

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Max Planck Institute of Immunobiology and Epigenetics, Ms Klank

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Advancing Science in India

Science in India is on the move in a big way. The government has initiated multibillion dollar investments to kick start research, education, and innovation over the next five years. Though several challenging issues remain for the country, India’s best and brightest expats living in the United States and Europe are being enticed back to ‘Mother India’ with the promise of world-class research infrastructure and solid funding. By Adarsh Sandhu

In early 2013, India’s government announced an ambitious science, technology, and innovation funding protocol: in the next five years, double its investment in science and technology and, by 2020, drive India’s output of scientific publications to be among the top five nations globally. “The government is going to inject $5 billion into science and technology over the next five years,” says C.N.R. Rao, the founder of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and chairman of the Science Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. “This doubles the investment to-date from 1% to 2% of GDP.” This increase in funding is aimed at creating jobs, educating technical leaders, and improving the quality of science in this country of 1.2 billion people, he notes.

The announcement is just one of a recent number of nationwide initiatives that have been inaugurated as India seeks to improve its global scientific reputation. The creation of new institutions and universities, opportunities for independent leadership training, and efforts to expand translational research and cultivate a culture of technology transfer are just a few of the federal components encouraging young researchers to set up shop in their homeland. In addition, international alliances, between India and organizations in the United States, United Kingdom, and other countries, are also making an impact in bolstering collaboration across borders and building strong scientific capacity within the subcontinent.

But despite these outreach and funding programs, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed before scientists in India can stand shoulder to shoulder with their counterparts in the West. Recent infrastructure investment programs have successfully produced new facilities and institutions all over India, but this has created a shortage of scientists and experts to run and manage the new universities and research institutes. Specifically, according to university administrators, India needs an estimated 40,000 qualified scientists to fill positions currently vacant. However, there is insufficient talent within India to take up this slack, which is being compounded by current labor laws that can sometimes make hiring foreign nationals a complex and difficult process. (Autonomous institutions have provisions for hiring foreigners, albeit on a non-permanent basis.) Nonetheless, both theoretical and translational research in India is moving forward with areas such as nanotechnology, energy, and health at the forefront.

Expanding Facilities and Infrastructure

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are among India’s most prestigious academic institutions. These autonomous institutes were established in the early 1960s, and the government has since expanded their number from the original five—Kharagpur, Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai), Kanpur, and Delhi—to a total of 16. This increase reflects the government’s new policies to give students from a wider range of social backgrounds the opportunity to study at India’s top-tier universities.

Sudhir Chandra, a professor at the Centre for Applied Research in Electronics at IIT Delhi, has witnessed dramatic changes during continued>
his 32 years as an academic. “In the early days, the IITs concentrated on education,” says Chandra. “Then, a decade or so ago, we started to place a greater emphasis on research. Perhaps the most dramatic recent change has been that there is no shortage of funding for research.”

Recent research funding surges have led to the development of high-profile projects including the national nanotechnology network, which includes the approximately $11 million Nanoscale Research Facility (NRF) at IIT Delhi and the $40 million Centre for Nano Science and Engineering (CeNSE) at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore. The nanotechnology facilities were established to train experts and provide experimental facilities for scientists across all of India.

In fact, India has done much to magnify its infrastructure. According to a January 6, 2013 article in University World News online, in recent years the nation has launched five new Indian institutes of science education and research, eight new IITs, 16 new central universities, 10 new national institutes of technology, six new research and development institutions in biotechnology, and five institutions in other branches including biomimetic materials and solar energy.

“We are building a new 250-faculty campus with an initial thrust on interdisciplinary research in Hyderabad,” says Mustansir Barma, theoretical physicist and director of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) in Mumbai, one of India’s oldest and premier basic research institutes. The new 200-acre campus will be significantly larger than the Mumbai facility. “We have also established the new International Centre for Theoretical Sciences in Bangalore—similar to, but broader in scope than, the Isaac Newton Institute for Mathematical Sciences in Cambridge, which organizes international research programs in pure and applied mathematics.” Although, Barma notes, “finding high-quality staff to teach and manage the new centers will be a challenge.”

In an effort to fill the abundance of new positions, the government has established programs to court Indians working abroad back to their home country. The Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship, funded by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology (MST), is designed to attract highly skilled researchers working overseas in a variety biotechnology disciplines. Fellows can have a Ph.D., M.D., M.Tech, M.VSc, or equivalent degree, and are given a stipend, grants, and even a housing allowance. The equally competitive Ramanujan Fellowships, supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), also aims to lure senior scientists and engineers, both originally from India and elsewhere, to the country.

### Increasing Career Opportunities

With the increases in funding and rapidly expanding institutions, opportunities are becoming more readily available for scientists who want to work in India. “We currently have about 300 vacancies for faculty,” says Shiban K. Koul, deputy director of strategy and planning at IIT Delhi. “Our faculty search committee operates all year round, interviewing candidates overseas, and when necessary, offering positions on the spot—this is unprecedented.”

However, the choice of recruits for IITs is limited because India’s labor laws do not allow these institutes to hire foreign nationals for tenured positions, and the salaries are not as competitive as those in the United States and European Union.

But not all institutions in India encounter these problems. “IISc is the first destination for returnees to India,” says Kamanio Chattopadhyay, professor of materials engineering. “Our commitment to excellence in research, the facilities on campus, and our interdisciplinary approach to education are some of the reasons for this.” Indeed, IISc has a unique history as a research institute: it was established in 1909 with the support of the late industrialist Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata and the Maharaja of Mysore Krishnaraja Wodeyar.

One challenge that is on the minds of both Indian academics and government representatives is the ability to draw and retain talented postdocs and other early-career scholars into India’s institutions. Some researchers are less than optimistic about finding a solution to attract postdocs to India when higher remuneration packages are available in the West. “I am finding it very difficult to find well-trained postdocs,” confirms Madhusudhan Venkadesan at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bangalore. Although this situation is not uncommon in India, certain national, international, “and institutional programs may be helping to alleviate this problem,” notes DNA chemist Yamuna Krishnan at NCBS, who is collaborating with scientists in France and Germany with funding from the United Kingdom’s Wellcome Trust.

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Nehru Science Postdoctoral Research Fellowship is one such program designed to engage younger scientists. This postdoc opportunity seeks to identify promising young researchers with innovative ideas and provide them with training to transition into independent research continued>
The Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF), established under an agreement between the Governments of India and the United States of America in March 2000, is an autonomous, not for profit society and in India, co-funded and co-governed by both the Governments.
careers. The DBT Rapid Grant for Young Investigators and the DST Swarnajayanti Fellowships Scheme provide comparable support for younger scholars. And the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance, an £80 million initiative funded equally by the Wellcome Trust and the DBT, provides competitive life sciences and biomedical fellowships for postdocs and other early-career scientists. Furthermore, numerous universities and research centers, such as the NCBS and the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Biotechnology, also have their own in-house fellowship programs for postdocs.

Growing Talent Early
The new funding may prove fruitful for innovation, but there is a need for greater access to education for Indians—approximately half of whom are under 25 years old. The government has responded to calls for greater educational opportunities for young people from a wider spectrum of society, and recently the DST launched the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) program, with the aim of attracting students to science and expects to have funded one million young scholars by 2014. This is just one program that seeks to build research capacity by giving students the opportunity to gain vital research-related skills. This is important in order to sustain global competitiveness among progressive nations like China. China, states Rao, currently produces almost as many journal articles as the United States, and he believes that the country will soon overtake the U.S. He further estimates that China graduates some 20,000 Ph.D.s annually. Says Rao, “How can we compete with this?”

Policymakers want India to increase the number of top scientific publications. “To achieve this we need more high-quality submissions, and to achieve that we need more good people,” says Rao.

One of the challenges to finding “good people” is that many Indian students prefer to major in engineering rather than science, because of the promise and prestige of lucrative industrial career opportunities. But India’s leaders recognized the need to motivate more youngsters to pursue science careers and hone research skills by forming five Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) in 2007. Here, faculty members have the freedom to pursue interdisciplinary projects while engaging their undergraduates in research.

“I watched K. Ganesh [the director of IISER Pune] build IISERs from the ground up,” says Aseem Ansari, a professor of biochemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW) in the United States and director of the Khorana Program, a cross-cultural exchange program for Indian and American students. “I believe IISERs are going to do for science (not just Indian science) what IITs did for technology and engineering. The first batch of students graduated recently and the impact of these ‘research-oriented’ students will be felt in the next five to 10 years.”

The Khorana Program is an international consortium also designed to enhance research capacity within India and across borders. Jointly supported by UW, DBT, and the Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF), and launched in 2008, the program grants Indian and American students the opportunity to pursue research at universities in each other’s nations. continued>
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Developing Research Areas

The new funding policy will advance India’s prowess in a number of strategic industries, such as space, energy, and the life sciences as well as important research areas in physics, materials science, and atmospheric science. Planned missions to Mars and a neutrino observatory will receive financial support under the new framework.

But it is also the new policy’s acknowledgement of the role of innovation in targeted technological industries that is contributing to a renewed excitement among India’s scientists. Energy is one of those strategic sectors, and many of India’s scientific leaders are leveraging the government’s interest in it to enhance vital research programs. For example, as materials science plays a central role in developing innovative technologies for the growing energy market, scientists like Arindam Ghosh at IISc are advancing materials research in graphene for solar cells and nanoelectronics.

India’s scientists are also working with their counterparts in the United States on a major new Indo-U.S. initiative called the Solar Energy Research Institute for India and the United States (SERIIUS), funded through the U.S.-India Partnership to Advance Clean Energy and administered by IUSSTF. “This is an important project for India,” says IISc’s Chattopadhyay, leader of the Indian team. “India needs every drop of power we can produce.”

Affordable health care and medical devices not requiring external electrical sources of power for operation are high-priority projects being undertaken at the CeNSE at IISc. “India has the largest number of people with diabetes in the world,” says Rudra Pratap, chairperson of the CeNSE. “We want to use nanoelectronics to produce cheap wireless biosensors to monitor this disease in people living in rural India.”

The Institute of Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine (inStem), and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) on the NCBS campus are at the forefront of life sciences and translational medical research. “We offer an excellent environment for engaging in fundamental interdisciplinary research and also for early translation,” says Satyajit Mayor, dean of NCBS. “We have mechanisms to hire scientists from anywhere in the world, and in fact many foreigners are working at NCBS.”

NCBS is committed to translational research and recently hired S. Ramaswamy, a biophysicist who had been considered for the New York University associate dean of research, as the director of C-CAMP. “My mission is to find industrial applications for research being conducted at NCBS,” he explains. “We want to encourage our researchers to move ideas from discovery to innovation.” To do so, NCBS has partnered with industry leaders to accelerate commercialization. Recent examples of successful projects include an inexpensive kit to test for HIV/AIDS, the licensing of this technology being negotiated with global companies.

This emphasis on translational research and technology transfer is being amplified throughout the country. The Tata Innovation Fellowship, a highly competitive scheme instituted by the DBT, recognizes and rewards innovative and productive life science researchers. Its specific prominence is on interdisciplinary, translational research with a potential for technology commercialization.

Future Challenges

Both challenges and hope lie ahead for India. Other often neglected but important science-related issues to address include establishing university curricula to improve the ability of young students to communicate in English, especially technical writing; the introduction of coordinated proactive strategies by research institutes to improve the ‘visibility’ of their scientists; incentives and financial support for entrepreneurial scientists to set up companies to commercialize ideas; and changes in labor laws to enable universities to hire qualified scientists irrespective of nationality.

The general mood of scientists—both veterans and young returnees—in India is positive. “India needs to build many more ‘innovation ecosystems’ like NCBS where there is a lot of intellectual freedom and a drive to define the cutting edge at an international level,” notes UW’s Ansari. With many institutions now focusing on nurturing research talent in undergraduates, “I am optimistic that this will yield the innovation dividend.”

And as Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recently said in an interview with Science, “One has to be optimistic. (…), unless one is optimistic, one is overwhelmed by the dimension of the development task that we have to accomplish.”

Adarsh Sandhu is a freelance science writer based in Tokyo, Japan. Alaina G. Levine, a science writer based in Tucson, AZ, contributed to this article.

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Applications and nominations should be sent to the Chair, SNPRC Regenerative Medicine Search Committee, c/o Human Resources Office, P.O. Box 760549, San Antonio, TX 78245-0549, and should include a letter outlining qualifications and research interests. Applications, but not nominations, must also include a CV, and the names and contact information for at least three references. Additional information about the SNPRC can be found at www.snprc.org. Additional information about Texas Biomed can be found at www.txbiomed.org.

EOE

Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai is one of the world’s leading biomedical institutions and internationally acclaimed for excellence in scientific research, clinical care and education. It is among the nation’s top twenty medical schools in NIH funding and U.S. News and World Report rankings. The School offers education programs leading to M.D., Ph.D. and master’s degrees, and attracts outstanding students to its highly competitive programs and invigorating academic environment.

Chair, Department of Pharmacology and Systems Therapeutics

Mount Sinai’s Department of Pharmacology and Systems Therapeutics is a vibrant, interactive department dedicated to research, teaching and development of novel therapeutics. The robust research portfolio of the Department places it among the top-ranked in the nation for NIH funding.

Department faculty plays a critical role in the education of both graduate students and medical students. The Department has 30 full-time faculty members, and is one of eight basic science departments at Mount Sinai. Our leadership is committed to provide the resources needed not only to maintain but also to grow our outstanding Department of Pharmacology and Systems Therapeutics.

We seek a recognized leader with an outstanding academic background, including strong research credentials, commitment to education, mentoring experience and proven leadership and management skills. Direct experience in industry through biotechnology company formation or pharmaceutical employment and/or development of novel therapies is highly desirable, as are industry connections that will facilitate and foster translational research within the Department.

We offer a highly competitive remunerative package commensurate with the scope of this position, along with an opportunity to join our world class organization. Please email a letter of application or nomination, a curriculum vitae and three letters of reference to: pharmresearch@msm.edu

To receive full consideration, applications should arrive by April 1, 2013.

Mount Sinai Medical Center is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. We recognize the power and importance of a diverse employee population and strongly encourage applicants with various experiences and backgrounds.
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AAAS is helping the Rwandan government rebuild its educational infrastructure as a way to help drive economic growth and development. By providing materials such as the Project 2061 Atlas of Science Literacy, lesson plans from Science NetLinks, and access to Science digital libraries, AAAS is helping the people of Rwanda work toward a future built around science and technology. As a AAAS member your dues support these efforts. If you’re not yet a AAAS member, join us. Together we can make a difference.

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THE 2014 HFSP NAKASONE AWARD

In keeping with its mission to promote innovative international research, HFSP invites nominations for the 2014 Nakasone Award which honors ground-breaking contributions in the life sciences. Typically these will be breakthroughs in understanding the complex mechanisms of living organisms that have important consequences for scientists throughout the world. Experimental, conceptual and technological contributions are eligible. This award recognizes the vision of former Prime Minister Nakasone of Japan in the creation of HFSP.

The winner of the 2013 award was Stephen Quake of Stanford University, USA, for pioneering work that advanced biological measuring techniques.

The competition is open; it is not limited to HFSP awardees and there is no age limit for candidates. However the jury will pay particular attention to recent breakthroughs by younger scientists. Nominations should be made before 5 April 2013 by submitting the standard one-page nomination form and the nominee’s CV (see the HFSP website for more information). The selection will be made by the HFSP Council of Scientists at its meeting in July 2013.

The awardee will receive an unrestricted research grant of 10.000 USD, a commemorative medal and an invitation to deliver the Nakasone lecture at the 2014 HFSP Awardees Meeting.

HFSP, 12 quai Saint-Jean, 67080 STRASBOURG Cedex, France, www.hfsp.org/awardees

Junior Professor (W 1) position for Ancient DNA Analysis

Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Germany aims to attract more qualified women for professorships. The Medical Faculty of Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel invites applications for a full-time

Junior Professor (W 1) position for Ancient DNA Analysis

initially for 3 years with a tenure track option starting as soon as possible. The Junior Professor will be employed as a civil servant (Beamtenverhältnis) on a temporary basis.

We are seeking an energetic and highly motivated scientist to conduct world-class research in the field of ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis. The applicant is expected to address research questions in Evolutionary Medicine and Archaeology with a focus on the genetic and genomic analysis of aDNA. Special emphasis will be placed on the establishment of a state-of-the-art aDNA laboratory and the development of innovative research methods, e.g. Next Generation Sequencing technologies.

A PhD in a discipline relevant for the project and qualifications in both molecular life science and pre- and protohistory are a prerequisite. Preference will be given to individuals with a solid publication record.

The successful candidate possesses excellent knowledge in the field of genome sequencing and data analysis as well as broad experience in aDNA lab work, standard molecular genetic methods, archaeological theories and archaeological fieldwork. Familiarity with setting up and managing an aDNA laboratory is advantageous.

The position will be assigned to the Johanna-Mestorf-Academy, and a major aspect of this professorship is the contribution to the interdisciplinary research environment of this academy. Close collaborations with institutes and scientists from various disciplines is explicitly expected. The professor will be involved in the supervision of PhD students and teaching of undergraduates. The position is primarily based in the Medical Faculty and has secondary memberships in the Philosophical and Mathematical-Natural Sciences Faculties.

Applicants must have the necessary formal qualifications as set out in § 64 of the Universities and Colleges Act of Schleswig-Holstein (HSG). For more information, please refer to the webpage www.berufungen.uni-kiel.de.de. After a positive evaluation and if the qualifying requirements according to § 62 HSG are met, a tenure option will be offered, i.e. a change of status into a permanent W 2-professorship of the position. At Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, for this a separate evaluation process will be performed during the second phase of the junior professorship in addition to the standard evaluation procedure for junior professors.

The HSG asks the Medical Faculties of Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel and Universität zu Lübeck to collaborate closely with each other and with Universitätsschlinikum Schleswig-Holstein, to establish and coordinate research foci. Moreover, the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein expects clinics, institutes and newly appointed professors to collaborate with each other.

Women with equivalent qualifications, competence and expertise will be given preference. The university therefore strongly encourages women with appropriate qualifications to apply for the position. The university supports the employment of disabled persons. Persons with disabilities will, with appropriate qualifications and aptitudes, be employed preferentially.

Applications, including a curriculum vitae, qualifying documentation (publications, evidence of external funding, teaching experience) and a short research plan should be addressed to the Dean of the Medical Faculty of Kiel University, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, Christian-Albrechts-Platz 4, 24098 Kiel, Germany.

The closing date is 29th of March 2013. Candidates willing to apply should read the application guideline and fill in the profile form available on our website: www.uni-kiel.de/landscapecallgemein/jobs/jprof_adna.shtml

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Our institute’s research interests emphasize on programs in the studies on human diseases using different model animal systems such as mouse, zebrafish, fruit fly, and nematode worm. Now MARC has established an excellent platform for functional analysis of transgenic and knockout mice, with AAALAC accredited SPF animal facility with 90,000 mouse cages till end of 2013. Interested individuals, regardless of their nationalities, should submit a detailed letter of interest, curriculum vitae, PDFs of three of their best publications, and three letters of recommendation to: Dr. PAN Dejing, Deputy director of Model Animal Research Center, Nanjing University, 12 Xuefu Road, Nanjing, Jiangsu 210061, China or preferably electronically to pandj@nicemice.cn or pandj@nbri-nju.com. The positions are available immediately. Applications will be evaluated by faculty search committee upon receipt until the positions are filled.
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