CORRESPONDENCE

IGC 2020: ARE WE READY?

The geoscience community in India (and SAARC nations) will experience a major international event, '*The 36th International Geological Congress*' during March 2020. The five Nation's bid to organize the 36th IGC at New Delhi during 2020 is planned with major funding from Ministry of Mines and the Ministry of Earth Sciences (GOI). The Geological Survey of India is the nodal agency with support from Indian National Science Academy (INSA) and similar agencies from SAARC countries. The congress will be an unique occasion to stage geoscientific developments, futuristic trends and meet international cooperation for the host as well as the guest countries; and is an attraction for emerging geologists. For India, it is an opportunity to take a lead in geosciences with South Asian representation. Organizing this event is not only of logistics (to which GSI is very well accomplished); but it envisages support and cooperation from the entire geoscientific community in the region. A great number of Earth Science/geology departments from universities and colleges, research organizations, IIT's and IISER etc., not only in India but within SAARC countries exist in the subcontinent working on many 'local to regional' aspects in geological parlance. The Indian subcontinent has varied geological aspects and conditions that are an attraction to global geoscientific community. Some of the unique geological features like Deccan volcanism, the Himalayas, the Precambrian crust, the submarine fans and the monsoon system across the borders can impact future geoscientific research by the SAARC countries.

The efforts being made by GSI to organize the event are commendable and it is incumbent on all the geoscientific organisations to see that a greater number of geoscientists from this region will be represented at IGC 2020. It is time to evaluate, plan and be organised for the event.

The planned themes displayed on the *igc36* portal are: 1. The Three Poles and its climatic implications, 2. Tectonics, Topography and the Monsoon, 3. The Critical Zone in the Tropics, 4. Geology and Geophysics of the first kilometer, 5. Climate: Causes, Amplitudes and Timescales, 6. Extreme Events: Modelling and Prediction, 7. The Water Cycle, 8. Dynamics of fluid transport through the crust, 9. Molecular Palaeontology, 10. Nanogeosciences, 11. Earth Processes and material properties, and 12. Earth Surface Processes-Large scale connections.

The first theme giving significance to the three poles is indifferent in the above context as none of the SAARC countries geographically represent these poles. The geologists from these countries do not have their thrust area on this aspect to have any organised output. The themes 1 to 7, 11 and 12 (i.e. 9 out of 12) revolve around Quaternary Processes, Climate and tectonics overlapping each other at large. The theme of Nanogeoscience and Molecular palaeontology are too advanced to have any good representation from SAARC geologists. While the themes are more focused on Quaternary, the Bengal fan and Arabian sea playing regional significance, are missing. Topics emphasizing upon seismology, isotope geology-geochronology, geotechnolgy, geoenvironment, disaster management, remote sensing and economic geology are not visible. The very significant geological entity of Deccan traps is noticeably missing. Themes covering broad

geographical and conceptual impressions such as 'Cenozoic basins of the Himalaya: Sedimentation, Tectonics and Climate' under which many sub-themes could be organized. The themes like 'Evolution of the Great Submarine Fans: Bengal and Indus' can cover international collaborations and integration amongst various interdisciplinary fields. Several such aspects can be discussed and finalized before we are too late.

The planned field excursions should include the classical examples like Mesozoic sequences in Spiti, Indus molasses, ophiolites, glacial moraines and the Tatrot-Pinjar type localities, paleolake sequences in the Himalaya, laterites and red beds in the coast; and so many other attractions that can be practical to plan. While the announced excursions like 'Deserts-hot and cold- The Thar and Ladakh' or 'Anatomy of accretionary prism- Andaman Islands' appears to be logistically difficult. It is time to have more detail thoughts on all these aspects. The sessions also need scope to attract dynamic foreign workers to display their work. Active participations and sponsoring from organizations like ONGC, CSIR-NGRI and NIO, WIHG, BSIP, IIG etc and many mining industries are missing. Active role of agencies and geoscientists from other SARRC nations is not visible so also the Indian effort to play a leading role.

The research organizations and university departments need individual efforts to make IGC2020 as benchmark for geoscientific resurgence. Several pre-IGC conferences on the better planned IGC themes can be conducted as preparations and rehearsal. Efforts are required from the university departments and organization to increase the impact and citations of existing Indian journals and to start new journals on specialized themes. The event is an opportunity to boost a transformation in geosciences in the region by increasing dynamism, interaction, advancement, and training to make global representation. There is enough time for logistically hosting the event but very little time for the above preparations. At this juncture one can foresee optimum utilization of the existing resources (laboratories), research projects and PhDs, unpublished reports to kick-start the activities and it is the responsibility of all geoscientists in the region and not the GSI alone. Involvements from students, scholars, university/college faculty and scientists; to reorganize or undertake research projects, register new relevant PhDs is needed in order to make the impact in 2020. It can be a national geoscience agenda beyond the committees and by motivation. The futuristically planned sessions of IGC can be declared as thrust areas by funding agencies like MoES, DST and CSIR to generate new data and organize pre-IGC conferences or small seminars. A database and statistics is necessary to find the present status of geologists, PhD's and ongoing researches in various topics of geoscience to see the imbalance and promote the thrust areas. The planned event of 36th IGC has great scope to elevate the regional co-operations, teamwork and the leadership for India and an opportunity for the country for Geological Renaissance.

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