Ever since the setting up of a string of national laboratories by CSIR there has been a debate regarding the migration of talented researchers from the universities to these well-endowed laboratories. It is interesting to note that Bhatnagar had also thought through this issue and answered some of this criticism in a convocation address which is excerpted below. He has also addressed the problem of student unrest in universities which seems to have started in early 50s. A brief history of CSIR written by S Sivaram serves as a backdrop to this address by Bhatnagar.

Editor

The genesis of CSIR can be traced to the persistent effort by Sir Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar who as a member of Viceroy’s executive council persuaded the Government of India to set up a Board of Scientific and Industrial Research. Bhatnagar was invited to pilot this and through his efforts the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research was formed on September 26, 1942 as an autonomous institutions.

Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar was called upon by Jawaharlal Nehru to build the scientific and industrial infrastructure for the newly independent India. The conceptualization of such an organization began even before the formal transfer of power. The Governing Body of CSIR approved the proposal of Bhatnagar to establish five national laboratories. The foundation stone for the National Chemical Laboratory at Pune was laid on 6 April 1947, four months before India became independent. National Physical Laboratory, Delhi, National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur, Central Fuel Research Institute, Dhanbad, Central Glass and Ceramics Research Institute, Calcutta and Central Food Technological Research Institute, Mysore were established in 1950.

From this humble beginning, CSIR has now grown into a chain of forty laboratories with a total scientific and technical staff strength of 10,000. CSIR is amongst the largest scientific organizations in the world. The laboratories of the CSIR are grouped under five disciplines, namely, physical and earth sciences, chemical sciences, biological sciences, engineering sciences and information sciences. The total annual operating budget of the CSIR exceeds Rs.1000 crores. CSIR earns an income of about Rs.250 crores per annum by way of extra budgetary resources, mainly out of R&D services. The annual industrial production in India based on the CSIR know-how is approximately Rs.5000 crores. CSIR files about 1000 patents per year with roughly half in countries outside India. CSIR has also played a stellar role in promoting scientific research in universities through award of junior and senior research fellowships to students and research grants to faculties.

CSIR today is a resurgent organization, with an outstanding research infrastructure and a wealth of experience, poised to take on new challenges. CSIR’s mission is to provide scientific industrial research and development that maximizes the economic, environmental and societal benefit for the people of India. Its portfolio of projects encompasses strategic, societal and industrial spheres. In the last few years, CSIR has also emerged as a credible platform for competitive R&D based on high quality science for several global companies.

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