

Minutes of the First meeting of the Management Committee under the National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme held on 17.4.2010 at the Planning Commission.

The first meeting of the Management Committee under the National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme was held on 17.4.2010 at Room No. 134, Planning Commission, Yojana Bhawan under the Chairmanship of Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Member (Science), Planning Commission. The list of participants of the meeting is enclosed at **Annexure-I**.

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to all the members of the Management Committee and said that though Dr. Mrs. Kalpana Balakrishnan could not participate in the meeting due to prior commitments, her comments on the agenda have been received, and included for discussions. He then initiated the discussion by stating that the main purpose of this meeting was to identify/assign specific areas of research to be undertaken under the Fellowship Programme. An illustrative list provided for this purpose could be reviewed in the context of its adequacy or if any further areas are to be added. He further stated that the Management Committee may also review the guidelines of the programme to suggest improvements, if any. The deliberations of the Committee, he said, should eventually lead to finalising the advertisement in such a way that the Ministry is able to draw the best of the talent available in the country for coming forward to participate in this Fellowship Programme. He then invited the members for broad observations on the Fellowship Programme at the first instance before taking up each of the agenda item for discussion.

The broad observations/suggestions of the members of the Management Committee on the National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme are summarised below:

- 1) Policy development on environmental issues is heavily dependent on science & research, unlike other areas. In the current global scenario, Environment is an important international subject and vast amounts of material and data on different aspects of environment are constantly being put out on the internet. There is a real and

urgent need for making available authentic Indian information of world class quality on contemporary environmental issues. This will enable the country to make meaningful interventions on current environmental issues at international conventions /meets, which could eventually be converted into environmental policies at the national level. As this Fellowship Programme is ideally suited for enhancing & strengthening this mechanism, suitable themes under this category could be identified.

2) This Fellowship Programme must be utilised, in the next four to five years, to build up a cadre of young scientists capable of holding their own at international fora.

3) While there is no doubt about the relevance/significance of this Fellowship Programme, the Ministry must be fully aware of the reality that such programmes are rarely able to attract outstanding Fellows. The real challenge therefore, is to address the issue of how to attract the best of our talents to this Fellowship Programme.

Before taking up the agenda items for discussion, Chairman invited Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam, Adviser, MoEF to give a background of the National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme. Tracing the genesis of this programme to the first meeting that MOS (I/C) E&F had with the scientists of the Ministry, it was mentioned that the main objectives of the fellowship programme are to strengthen the scientific formulation of National environment agenda and to attract/encourage most promising young scientists to undertake cutting-edge research on contemporary environmental problems facing the country today in collaboration with leading institutions and scientists in India and abroad.

After this the agenda items were taken up for discussion. The main points that emerged after discussion are summarised below :

Agenda Item No.2 – Finalization of Thrust Areas of Research.

It was agreed that specifying the thrust areas is very important as it will define the whole Fellowship Programme. The thrust areas have to be related to the country's needs and the role it is required to play at the international level.

The areas of research under Environment shall be grouped under the following three broad categories : *

Category I Land, Forest, Biodiversity, Water, Marine & Coastal Areas

Category II Energy, Climate and Atmosphere

Category III Industrial Pollution and Waste Management

These categories, should be looked at, through the four lens of :-

- (1) **Social Sciences**
- (2) **Technology – Pollution abatement & recycling**
- (3) **Basic Science**
- (4) **Observational- Modelling and simulation**

The thrust areas for undertaking research under the Fellowship Programme can thus be expressed in the following matrix:

Category *	Social Sciences	Technological Including Pollution abatement & recycling	Basic Science	Observational Modelling & simulation
Land, Forest, Biodiversity , Water, Marine Coastal Areas	1	2	3	4
Energy, Climate & Atmosphere.	5	6	7	8
Industrial Pollution and Waste Management	9	10	11	12

*includes research in the area of policy and legislation cutting across all the categories.

The 12 broad areas/categories of research emerging out of the above matrix could thus be taken up under the Fellowship Programme to begin with.

Agenda Item No.3 – Review of the list of Host Institutions

1. This Fellowship Programme is expected to support world-class research. There is therefore a need to go beyond the Environmental Institutions/Schools identified at present. Research on environment can not be done in silos and environment being one of the most inter-disciplinary subjects, laboratories/institutions focussing on pure sciences (as opposed to environmental sciences) must also be identified and brought under this programme.

2. Instead of having an *apriori* list of Institutions/Schools, areas of research should be finalized and then appropriate institutions could be identified and fitted into the Programme. Views/opinions of the selected Fellows would also be invited/taken for identifying the host institution.

Agenda Item No.4 – Review of the guidelines

1. Almost all Govt. funded Fellowships have undergone drastic revisions in the last 3-6 months and some extraordinary Fellowships have been created with significantly enhanced emoluments. MoEF shall prepare an inventory of existing Fellowships along with details of emoluments offered and this Fellowship must be at par with or even exceed other such prestigious Fellowships.

2. A suitable name for the Fellowship may also be thought of. The original proposal of naming it as the Prime Minister's National Environmental Sciences Fellowship Programme may be pursued.

3. Selected Fellows can also collaborate with other institutions than the one to which he/she is attached.

Agenda Item No.5 – Finalization of the Advertisement

- 1) The persona of the applicant under this Fellowship Programme, as envisaged is that he/she should be a Post Doctoral person. The advertisement may also

explicitly state that this Fellowship Programme is interested in people with unique ideas and capable of thinking out of the box.

- 2) The advertisement itself should be such that it sets people thinking.
- 3) While it may not be made mandatory, it would be desirable if the applicant has already carried out at least 10-20% of the research work proposed to be undertaken under the Fellowships Programme. The advertisement may call for submission of a short paper by the applicants on his/her proposed research proposal clearly identifying the new knowledge that it will help to generate, based on which they shall be called for an interactive discussion with the Management Committee.
- 4) In the meantime, the members of the Committee may also work out a set of 'Grand Challenges' in Environment that are required to be focused upon on priority and which could be taken up under this Fellowship Programme. Prof. R.A. Mashelkar kindly agreed to provide a listing of such 'Grand Challenges'.

Based on the broad parameters detailed above, a suitable advertisement shall be prepared and circulated to the Members of the Committee for comments/suggestions.

The meeting ended with a Vote of Thanks to the Chairman.

Annexure I

List of participants of the first meeting of the Management Committee under the National Environmental Sciences Fellows Programme held on 17.4.2010 at the Planning Commission.

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| 1. | Dr. K. Kasturirangan
Member (Science), Planning Commission | Chairman |
| 2. | Prof. V.L. Chopra
Ex-Member, Planning Commission,
Palampur, H.P. | Member |
| 3. | Dr. R.A. Mashelkar
Bhatnagar Fellow, Pune | Member |
| 4. | Prof. Nitin Desai
Former Dy. Secy.General, UNCED
New Delhi. | Member |
| 5. | Dr. G.V. Subrahmanyam
Adviser, MoEF | Member-Secretary |
| 6. | Dr. Indrani Chandrasekharan
Adviser, Planning Commission | Spl. Invitee |
| 7. | Mrs. Usha Subramaniam
A.D (S), MoEF | MoEF |