Book release ceremony at Life Sciences Auditorium, Jawaharlal Nehru University on Feb. 19, 1998. (Seen from left to right) Dr. Narender K. Sehgal, Director, Vigyan Prasar; Dr. Asis Dutta, Vice Chancellor, JNU; Prof. Yoginder K. Alagh, then Minister of State for Power and Science & Technology and Prof. V. S. Ramamurthy, Secretary, Department of Science & Technology.

Vigyan Prasar Objectives
Creation of science awareness
Dissemination of S&T information
Development of science communication materials
Utilising all possible media forms to reach the people
Organisation of workshops, seminars, trainings etc.
Collaboration with like-minded organisations
Networking institutions and individuals
Instituting awards, fellowships, etc.

VP news
Kudratnama
An engrossing NCSTC quiz on
Star Plus
Sundays, 1.30 P.M.

Paryavaran Calling
A phone-in environment quiz on
AIR Bhopal
First and third Sundays
10.30 - 11.30 A.M.
Relayed by all AIR Stations in MP
(Also on SW-41m band)
Let's make a beginning!

It gives me great pleasure in presenting to you, dear reader, the inaugural issue of DREAM-2047, the monthly newsletter of Vigyan Prasar (VP).

The need for a newsletter of VP has been felt for a very long time. Only we were not quite ready to take on such a responsibility of a recurring kind — not having the requisite human resources! We overcame that and here we are!

Next: about the name! Does it strike a chord in you? It should!

We would be celebrating the first centenary of India’s Independence in the year 2047. “Dream-2047” ought to be able to convey a great deal to almost every Indian. In 1997, we celebrated fifty years of our independence with mixed feelings — both of joy at our achievements (which are not inconsiderable) as well as of regret at our failures and non-accomplishments (which are too many, stark and obvious to need any recounting). Can we make 2047 different? I, for one, certainly think that together we can and will! “Dream-2047” is symbolic of what it signifies — i.e., all of our hopes and our dreams for India by 2047.

To begin with, the focus of this newsletter would be on VP activities and programmes. But a small popular science section would also begin as an integral part of the Dream-2047 shortly. This latter part would grow, slowly or speedily, depending upon the response it is able to generate among the readers as we go along. More on this, later.

This VP newsletter will mainly aim to serve three specific objectives: as a reporter of VP activities (completed as well as ongoing); as a sounding board for eliciting reactions/critiques/suggestions on VP activities being envisaged, formulated or getting ready for implementation: and as a vehicle for dissemination of information with which VP may be concerned, and information about VP which is likely to be of interest to our readers. We will also carry advertisements about vacant positions and opportunities in VP, our publications, and other items/materials available from Vigyan Prasar. Since the newsletter part is intended for free distribution among our potential readers, we may also accept outside advertisements (provided they conform to certain criteria to be laid down and announced in due course), to recover at least part of the production cost.

Lastly about our readers. Who would or should be reading this newsletter? First and foremost, all those involved in science communication and science education of any kind through any medium and in any language ought to be in our first list — including all individuals and organisations involved in science popularisation activities; science students and teachers in schools and colleges; those involved in science clubs; and so on. Next on our list would be scientific and technical personnel working in academic, research and development institutions, university departments, ministries at the centre and in the states, state S&T councils/departments, librarians and those charged with purchase of popular science books and other materials for children, science centres and science museums; editors of newspapers and magazines; science writers, editors and translators and so on and on. In general, anybody interested in science could be in our list.

-NKS

Science and Society

There can hardly be a more competent person than Sir Bertrand Russell to sum up the impact of science on society — “Man has existed for around a million of years. He has possessed writing for about 6,000 years, agriculture somewhat longer, but perhaps not much longer. Science, as a dominant factor in determining the beliefs of educated men, has existed for about 300 years; as a source of economic technique, for about 150 years. In this brief period it has proved itself an incredibly powerful revolutionary force. When we consider how recently it has risen to power, we find ourselves forced to believe that we are at the very beginning of its work in transforming human life. What its future effects will be is a matter of conjecture, but possibly a study of its effects hitherto may make the conjecture a little less hazardous.”

The relevance of Russell’s observations made about 50 years ago is valid even today. Over the past years, a class of people — science popularisers, with the inclusion of Russell — has been obsessed with comprehending the outcome of scientific and technological advancements and enlightening the common man so as to prepare him for adapting himself to the changing social and political scenario. The role of such popularisers can never be over-emphasised. Nor can there be too many of them. Given the rapid rate of advancements and the direct impact on society, a concerted effort at creating a scientifically aware population is a task worth undertaking. Then what does the task involve and what should the end result be? A mankind whose urge to know is satisfied. A mankind capable of right thinking and right action. Consequently a mankind that is truly happy. Great goal no doubt! But not insurmountable. It is this thought that has kept the class of science popularisers going ahead in their well chosen path.

Zeroing in on India, the task is indeed stupendous, what with the great regional, social, ethnic... diversity and the strong underlying beliefs in superstition and myths. Add to this the complex problem of communication. How does one get across to people in so many languages? Such issues pose great challenges and science popularisers are here to meet them.
As an autonomous organisation established in the year 1989 under the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, Vigyan Prasar has a commitment towards science popularisation. Its strength lies in a dedicated core group with a deep conviction for enhancing science awareness of the community. Firmly believing that science popularisation is a self-sustaining activity, Vigyan Prasar has been engaged in conceiving and implementing various programmes. Extensive usage of all available media has proved invaluable in reaching out to more and more people.

The Publication programme has emerged as one of the major activities of the organization. Various projects are also underway to exploit media other than the print medium. Audio-visual programmes, multimedia and the internet are just a few examples. The Vigyan Prasar Information System (VIPRIS) is another novel scheme for establishing accessible repository of data and information on various aspects of science and technology. We share here our viewpoints regarding the various activities and welcome your suggestions and opinions.

Publications Programme

How does one go about popularising science? The options are many. Especially after the explosions in information technology, the world has been literally transformed into a ‘Global village’. But there exists one conventional mode that is not only popular but also capable of enduring the onslaught of other media. This is none other than the print media. Books have their own impact. The library is still a much sought after place and a good book can very well make one’s day. And coming to science itself, we generally find scholarly books that succeed in putting off common readers or books that are more of the ready reckoner type. Quality books in science are the need of the day. When such books are available, we find them to be generally expensive. In this background, providing authentic information on science and making available affordable quality books capable of provoking curiosity and inquisitiveness of the reader can be regarded as the primary objective of our publications programme. Another important objective is to highlight Indian contributions to the field of science and technology. Publishing books that conform to these objectives in English alone will be of little use in a country like ours. Vigyan Prasar understands the need of addressing people in their own language and has included publications in many regional languages to its list. By drawing up a publications programme, we have been in a position to identify those areas that have the maximum impact on the readership.

Continued on page 4
Books in this series help in providing information on the management and treatment of some of the common diseases. Doctors of repute have been associated with this series and many more titles are being planned.

- **Eclipse Series**

The series, which was extensively used in organising a countrywide awareness campaign during the 1995 total solar eclipse, contains a set of books, kits and charts which aims at dispelling age-old myths and beliefs related to eclipses. The countrywide participation in the observance of the eclipse was overwhelming and was a clear pointer to the positive influence of science popularisation efforts, accompanied by well focussed publications.

Other publications such as “Mad, Mad, Mad Cow” or “Kyon Aur Kaise” or the recent reprints of J B S Haldane’s works add to our bookshelf. In addition Vigyan Prasar is also vested with the responsibility of marketing NCSTC publications.

**In the next issue: Vigyan Prasar Information System (VIPRIS)**

We are eager to know about our valued readers. May we request you to fill up the form and mail it to us!!

Name _______________________________________________________

Designation __________________________________________________

Work Area ___________________________________________________

Areas of interest _______________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________

What would you like to read in the popular science section of DREAM 2047?

______________________________________________________________________________________________

Would you like to suggest anyone else to be included in the mailing list?

Name _______________________________________________________

Address _______________________________________________________

Shri Nikhil Chakravarty, the President of the Vigyan Prasar Society since its inception, passed away on 27 June 1998 at Delhi. A journalist of repute, he will forever be revered for his contributions to the press and related institutions. He was well known as the founder editor of Mainstream and as the first Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board.

Vigyan Prasar will miss him, his guidance and the deep interest and concern he evinced in its work and activities in the area of science popularisation and promotion of scientific temper. He was particularly appreciative of the year-long campaign Vigyan Prasar had launched against superstitious beliefs in connection with the total solar eclipse of October 1995.

Mail To

DREAM 2047
Vigyan Prasar
C – 24 Qutab Institutional Area
New Delhi - 110 016

E-mail: vigyan@hub.nic.in