Kathmandu Humboldt Kolleg  
September 10 – September 13, 2010

Vishwanath P. Agrawal

A conference (Kolleg) of 58 Humboldt fellows [10 from Bangladesh, 25 from India, 9 from Nepal, 7 from Pakistan and 7 from Sri Lanka] will take place in Kathmandu in September 2010, provided the Alexander von Humboldt approves funding for the proposal submitted by Professor Vishwanath P. Agrawal on behalf of the organizer – Humboldt Club Nepal and co-organizers – Humboldt Academies of Panjab University, Chandigarh and Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur of India.

CONFERENCE CONCEPT

Scientific research allows exploration, development and sustainable utilization of natural resources. Scientific research can help identify problems in human, animal and plant health and find solutions thereof. The people and governments of South Asian countries are gradually realizing that their prosperity heavily depends upon the status and advancement of science and technology. As a result, they are struggling or actively promoting the development of their research capability and strengthening their core specialty areas. Except few elite institutions, the majority of the South Asian region is lagging in quality research and development, scientific inquiry and manpower development. Some of these countries are unable to procure state-of-the-art instruments and spend sufficient resources in scientific research which has caused disparity in capacity building in science.

It is indeed unfortunate that most of the scientists working in South Asian countries are suffering from isolation: they plan for research in isolation, they look for funding in isolation, and they execute the research in isolation. Despite the fact that substantial population of mankind lives in South Asia, there is virtually insignificant movement and collaboration of scientists within this region. As a result, instead of harnessing the potential of mutual experience and expertise within the region, majority of workers head to the Western countries for training and knowledge generation.
It is now increasingly being realized by the experienced scientists at various levels of decision making that we can flourish if the process of exchange of ideas and students, pooling of resources, thinking and planning together and helping each other out within the South Asian framework can be expedited.

Towards this end, the Humboldt – Club Nepal, and the Humboldt Academies of Panjab University, Chandigarh, and Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (India) have decided to hold a joint Kolleg to discuss the issue of cooperation through scientific dialog. It is envisaged that this Kolleg will bring together Humboldtians from participating South Asian countries such as Nepal, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. We will conduct the Kolleg in order to harness the Humboldt connection with the hope that exposure to the availability of human resources and scientific expertise can be augmented through such interactions.

The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany, has ceaselessly worked towards international scholarship and it has contributed enormously towards the enhancement of the research capability of South Asian scientists. Keeping the high tradition of the Humboldt network and close association of former Humboldt colleagues, the present proposal of Kathmandu Humboldt Kolleg would endeavor to bring together established and junior researchers for lectures and discussions, and expose youth to the possibility of international collaboration and exchange. The Kolleg is aptly titled as “Collaborative Research as an Integrative Tool for strengthening Science and Technology in South Asia”. We firmly believe that such a meeting will not only bring together leading Humboldtians, but also provide a platform for future interactions and collaborative research, for creating a blueprint for integrating our shared resources.