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Indian scientists ignorant of the art of teamwork: C.N.R. Rao

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Major accomplishments in science will not be possible unless Indian scientists put aside their differences and learn to work together in groups, C.N.R. Rao, Head, Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, said here on Tuesday.

He was delivering the inaugural address at Nano India 2013, a national conference organised by the Nano Mission under the Department of Science and Technology and the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology, a constituent laboratory of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

Criticising Indian scientists for their reluctance to work together, Prof. Rao said it was difficult to make them recognise the value of teamwork. "Here nobody will work under anybody. Every assistant professor wants to be independent. We cannot work in a group. Unless large groups work together closely for long periods, major accomplishments are not possible," he said.

Contrasting the situation in India with that in China, he said one laboratory in China, equivalent to the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, had 1,200 Ph.D. students and 300 senior scientists working together. "Their productivity is enormous. The amount of effort is unbelievable. They are also proud to be Chinese," he said.

China, he said, is emerging as a major power in science, threatening to unseat countries such as the U.S. and Japan from their premier position. "The only reason China is frightening others is the enormous amount of effort they are making. The next five years, China is investing \$1.3 trillion in science and technology."

Prof. Rao said a small country such as South Korea had registered remarkable growth over the past two to three years, enough to frighten Japan. He attributed this to the extraordinary investment in education and science and the importance given to teaching.

"If there is no respect for learning and scholarship, science will not do well. I think learning is respected more in China than in India. If you do well, you are respected much more abroad than in India. We should get rid of that mentality," he said. He exhorted scientists to forget pettiness, become generous and learn to tolerate.

India, Prof. Rao said, has to do well in science. "Our politicians, administrators and planners do not realise that there is no choice for India except to succeed. There are so many things that can be done.

"Much more money is likely to come to science. The 12th Plan outlay for science and technology is expected to be Rs.125 lakh crore. If it comes, it must be used fruitfully," he said.

Prof. Rao gave away the awards instituted by the Nano Mission. D. Bahadur of the IIT Bombay received the National Research Award in Nano Science and Technology. Arun Chatopadhyay, IIT, Guwahati, and B.L.V. Prasad, National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, received the young career award in nano science and technology.

A.K. Sood, chairman, Nanoscience Advisory Group, Praveer Asthana, Director, Nano Mission, and Suresh Das, Director, CSIR-NIIST, spoke.