Scientific Research in India – The Challenges

What is the issue?

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Systemic issues that hinder research needs to be addressed.

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What are the administrative challenges?

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- The system is also largely run by scientists-turned-bureaucrats and “nepotism, patronage culture” are prevalent.
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- Notably, Indian scientists perceive success as ‘becoming an administrative head in research institutions’, rather than advancing research.
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- Also, the prevalent incompetence across the spectrum has taken a toll on ‘peer reviewing’ where incompetent scientists get to reinforce their mediocrity.
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- There is a culture of elitism in our labs, were the manual work is done by lab assistants and scientists mostly just command orders.
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- Also, rather than contributing to social debates, Indian scientists shun public commentary, unless it is to serve as government spokespersons.
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- This has led to a situation where prominent politicians pass off popular myths as science, without attracting a backlash from the scientific fraternity.
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What are the challenges regarding funds?

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- Currently, it has been observed that, small elite research institutions get most of the grants, while universities get very less research funds.

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- Consequently, universities focus mainly on teaching, which has resulted in a clear segregation of education & research – thereby affecting both.
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- Due to funding constraints, almost all the significant work from India is in the theoretical domain, as these are less burdened by money requirements.
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- Poor performance in experimental sciences is attributed mainly to the lack of significant collaborative efforts and sustained long-term funding.
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What could be the way forward?

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- With globalisation, it is easier to notice the growing contrast between the designs for promoting innovation in the western world and in India.
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- Having a young population and a strong Diaspora that is more affluent than any other country, India has the potential pioneering high-tech innovation.
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- As a first step, it is important to acknowledge the significant contributions of Indian scientists aboard and capitalise on their learning through collaboration.
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Source: The Hindu

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