

Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)

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Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy: Indian Science Congress is an important annual event, plenary sessions of which give fodder for essay and Science and Technology questions in Prelims and Mains. Theme of the event is important too.

In news: Bengaluru recently hosted the 107th edition of the Indian Science Congress.

Placing it in syllabus: Science and technology events

Static dimensions: Objectives of ISCA

Current dimensions:

- Pseudoscience controversy in 106th ISC
- 107th ISCA theme
- Important sessions in 107th ISCA

Content:

Objectives of ISCA:

The ISCA owes its origin to the initiative of two British Chemists, **Professor J. L. Simonsen and Professor P.S. MacMahon**. It was set up on the lines of the British Association for the Advancement of Science annual meetings.

Objectives:

- To advance and promote the cause of science in India
- To hold an annual congress at a suitable place in India
- To publish such proceedings, journals, transactions and other publications.

- To secure and manage funds and endowments for the promotion of Science including the rights of disposing of or selling all or any portion of the properties of the Association.
- To do and perform any or all other acts, matters and things as are conducive to or necessary for the above objects.

Pseudoscience controversy in 106th ISC:

During a session for children in 106th ISC held in January, 2019 in Jalandhar, Punjab, **G Nageswara Rao, vice-chancellor of Andhra University**, made some outrageous statements at the “Meet the Scientist” event of the Children’s Science Congress section.

He claimed that India was well aware of stem cells, test tube fertilisation and guided missiles thousands of years ago, citing tales from Mahabharata and Ramayana.

He told that the 100 Kaurava princes of the Mahabharata could have been born only as test-tube babies and that stem cell technology existed in ancient times. He also claimed that Ravana, the mythical king of Lanka, had 24 types of aircraft besides the Pushpaka Vimana mentioned in Ramayana.

Kannan Krishnan, an energy systems specialist claimed that Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein were wrong and that **gravitational waves should be renamed (Narendra) Modi waves**.

Science bodies in many states protested that scientists should not mix mythology with science. Many demanded that pseudoscience wrapped in divisive communal Hindutva agenda needs to be countered by the scientific community.

107th ISC theme:

- Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated 107th ISC at the University of Agricultural Sciences

(UAS), Bengaluru.

- **'Science and technology: Rural development'** was the theme.
- To give impetus to farming technology, **for the first time, a Farmer's Science Congress was part of it**, thus providing a platform for innovative farmers.
- The farmer's congress discussed agrarian distress and strategies to mitigate and navigate the impact of climate change on agriculture.

Why this theme?

Many of the inventions and innovations have found applications in enhancing crop productivity, improving market access, enhancing and diversifying rural livelihoods profiles. But the benefits have not been explored fully due to the **gap between the innovators and farming community**.

The **rural-urban divide is widening** and the theme is meant to deliberate on the **role of science to bridge this gap**. Hence to broadcast new ideas that help farmers across the country and thus give a boost to the socio-economic development of rural population was the main agenda.

Important sessions in 107th ISC:

107th ISC saw **Children's Science Congress, Women's Science Congress Vice-Chancellors' Science Congress** along with Farmer's Science Congress. Honourable PM Modi exhorted students to **"innovate, patent, produce and prosper"**.

There were **28 plenary sessions** at the event on areas including-

- 'Climate Smart Agriculture for Food Security',
- 'Crop Improvement Towards Food and Nutrition Security',
- 'Materials Science and Technology for Rural Development',
- 'Challenges and Opportunities in Cancer Drug

Discovery’,

- ‘Artificial Intelligence and Medical Technology’,
- ‘Advances in Basic Medical And Clinical Interactions’,
- ‘Non-Communicable Diseases in Rural Population’,
- ‘Cancer Research – Therapeutic Applications’,
- ‘Nano Materials for Energy’,
- ‘Environment and Health Care’,
- ‘Novel Solutions for Oil and Gas Industry Problems’

The Farmer’s Congress focussed on **innovation for integrated agriculture** and entrepreneurship for doubling farmers income, climate change, biodiversity, conservation, ecosystem services and farmers empowerment to agrarian distress, rural bio-entrepreneurship and policy issues.

The Children’s Science Congress saw students of several thousand schools to hear Nobel Laureates speak and watch science projects and experiments by their peers. They were also shown scientific projects by the DRDO, several labs of the Department of Science and Technology and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).