if so, whether they could be amenable to modifications by chemistry approaches to define activity–toxicity profiles. It is to be noted that out of a total of 175,000 extracts, 16,000 showed activity in four therapeutic areas, among which only a 1000 were examined further. Even then, four NCEs and three NCAs could be detected. This encouraging result indicates that if properly exploited, the microbes collected through this programme could lead to the discovery of many more useful molecules.

Creation of a repository

This exercise also resulted in the creation of a repository of microbes collected under the project. All the 175,000 isolates are being characterized, maintained and preserved here, making it the largest collection in the world and the only one that is biotechnology linked. The microbial culture collection at National Centre for Cell Sciences, Pune set up by Department of Biotechnology, Govt of India has acquired the status of International Depositary Authority under the Budapest Treaty and is also designated as National Repository by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, GoI, under the Biodiversity Act, 2002. This is the single largest repository in the Asian region. It has recently been renamed as the 'National Centre for Microbial Resource'. The cultures collected under this project are available to any desirous researcher for large-scale screening under a Material Transfer Agreement. Besides this, the collection also offers a variety of microbial storage and identification services.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. The authors thank the Director, CSIR-NEERI for providing constant support and infrastructure for the research work, and manuscript has institute's publication reference number KRC\2017\NOV\EBGD\3.

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C. N. R. Rao wins the Materials Research Society's Von Hippel Award

The Von Hippel Award, the Materials Research Society's (MRS) highest honour, recognizes brilliance and originality of intellect, combined with vision that transcends the boundaries of conventional scientific disciplines. The award that includes a cash prize, honorary membership in MRS, and a unique trophy was presented to Rao in Boston on 29 November 2017 during the Materials Research Society's Annual meeting. Rao who is the first Asian to receive this award is the National Research Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bengaluru, India. He received this award 'for his immense interdisciplinary contributions to the development of novel functional materials, including magnetic and electronic properties of transition metal oxides, nanomaterials such as fullerenes, graphene and 2-D inorganic solids, superconductivity and colossal magnetoresistance in rare-earth cuprates and manganates.'

Rao started his independent research efforts in materials chemistry when the subject was in its nascent stage. With the meagre facilities available then, he investigated phase transformations of TiO_2 and CsCl, and also carried out defect calculations. While working on rare-earth oxides, he made TbO_2 and PrO_2 using a simple solution route – this is an early example of chimie douce. He started working on metal oxides by building simple instruments including a thermobalance and furnaces. In 1987 he was able to fully characterize the first N_2 superconductor ($YBa_2Cu_3O_7$) using a home-built AC suseptometer. He has worked on various aspects of transition-metal oxides including metal-insulator transitions, colossal magnetoresistance and multiferroics. In the last two decades, he has been engaged in the synthesis, characterization and measurements of properties of various nanomaterials, especially 2D nanosheets (graphene and its inorganic analogues). As part of his interest in designing new materials, he has covalently cross-linked 2D sheets and other nanomaterials to derive new materials with novel properties. Rao is actively working on water splitting and reduction of CO2, besides using aliovalent anion substitution to generate novel inorganic materials (Zn2NF in place of ZnO). He has authored more than 1500 research papers and 45 books.

Current Science had intended to publish the news of Rao winning the award under the news section in its 25 November 2017 edition. The misclassification of this news in the 25 November issue of the journal is deeply regretted by the Editor and Editorial staff.

1. https://www.mrs.org/fall-2017-von-hippel

Infosys Prize 2017

The Infosys Science Foundation announced the winners of the Infosys Prize 2017 on 15 November 2017. Every year, the foundation gives away awards for outstanding achievements to contemporary researchers and scientists in the areas of Engineering and Computer Sciences, Humanities, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Social Sciences.

The winners of 2017 were shortlisted from over 236 nominations by a scholarly