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# 1,000 Bengaluru scientists, students will march for science today

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BENGALURU: Four months after thousands of scientists in over 600 cities across the world marched to celebrate science, the scientific community in India has come together to replicate the same on August 9 in 35 cities. In Bengaluru, over 1,000 students, scientists and scholars will participate in the event at Town Hall on Wednesday to bring back scientific temper to society.

The event is being spearheaded by Breakthrough Science Society (BSS), an all-India science organization. Rajini K S, state secretary of BSS, said several Indian scientists started drafting an appeal to the government along the same lines after the global event that was held on April 22. The petition claims that 'scientific research is suffering serious setback due to

dwindling governmental support.'

"Prof Soumitro Banerjee, founder of BSS, was one of the scientists drafting the appeal. There aren't enough opportunities for research here despite calls for Make in India. Moreover, even though the amount allocated for science and education has increased over the years, when you factor in inflation, there's no increase at all," said Rajini.

BSS was set up in 1995 by professor Banerjee when he was in IIT Kharagpur and professor Dhruvrajyoti Mukherjee, then

chairman of department of geology, University of Calcutta.

S Mahadevan, professor of molecular reproduction, development and genetics at Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, was the first signatory to the petition that has been signed by 3,000 scientists. "The August 9 event is an apolitical appeal to governments to accord a higher priority to scientific research and education. Funding has been slashed steadily over the years. Several programmes are flagged off with fanfare. The problem arises when a business model is applied to scientific research, without understanding that science is creative and time-consuming. It is often done for the sake of knowledge itself and not to come up with a certain product," he said.

Ignoring recommendations of scientific committees, participation in propagation of pseudo-sciences like astrology, politicization of educational institutions and neglect of primary science education are some of the issues being raised. Bengaluru institutions like Isro, IISc, Raman Research Institute, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, National Centre for Biological Sciences and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research will be participating in the march.

"At the time of planning this event, we also received support from several Indian scientists settled abroad, who said lack of support for their research here was the reason for their departure. The environment isn't conducive to promoting science," added Rajini.