



Infosys fetes five leading minds with science honour (Lead)

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In an attempt to encourage quality scientific research and bright young minds to pursue science as a vocation, the Infosys Science Foundation Monday conferred five leading scientists and scholars with achievement awards for their ground-breaking research.

The winners of the awards, which will become an annual feature, include K. Vijay Raghavan, a neurobiologist and gene expert at the National Centre of Biological Science in Bangalore; mathematician Ashoke Sen; economist Abhijit Banerjee; scientist Thanu Padmanabhan and historian Upinder Singh - who is Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's daughter. The prizes, given away by Vice-President Hamid Ansari, carried a citation and a purse.

The guests of honour at the star-studded ceremony at the Durbar Hall of the Taj Palace Hotel included the prime minister and his wife Gurcharan Kaur, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen, president of the board of trustees of the Infosys Science Foundation N.R. Narayana Murthy, Unique ID card project chairman Nandan Nilekani, politician Arun Shourie, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, eminent professors, scholars and IT heavyweights from across the world.

Addressing the gathering, Ansari said research in applied and pure sciences has not received its due in the country.

"The quantity of research is insufficient for our development affecting patents and advance scientific breakthroughs. It compares unfavourably with our peers elsewhere in the world. The initiative take by Infosys in changing the business landscape is of the country is truly commendable," he said.

Lamenting the lack of motivation among students to take up scientific research as a career, the vice-president said: "I am aware that prospects of remunerative employment guide choice of subjects for students in cities across India. They do not want to pursue science because they look for salaried jobs."

Lauding the effort, Amartya Sen said "scientific research was poised at an exciting stage".

"It is good that Infosys has taken the initiative to do something," he said, introducing winner for the award in economics, Abhijeet Banerjee.

Speaking on the objective of the awards, N.R. Narayana Murthy said the aim of the award was to "create a positive environment for science".

"The Science Foundation will help nurture research, fulfil the resource need and help scientists do the most important thing - make a discovery, to pursue an idea and to bring innovation," he said.

The jury comprised of eminent scholars from top universities from across the globe while the winners were honoured for their significant and unusual contribution.

While K. Vijay Raghavan, a neurobiologist and gene expert at the National Centre of Biological Science in Bangalore, won the award for his work on the link between the development assembly of the nervous system, Sen, a professor at the Harish Chandra Research institute in Allahabad, was honoured for his contribution to mathematical physics and string theory.

Life scientist Thanu Padmanabhan was awarded for his deeper understanding of Einstein's theory of gravity and cosmology, while the prize in social sciences and economics was awarded to Banerjee for his contribution to economic theory of development. He is a Ford International professor of economics at MIT in the US. Upinder Singh, a teacher at Delhi University, was honoured for her research in early medieval Indian history.

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