

Infosys Prize for Mathematics 2008

Highlights of the Press Conference

Prof. Sunder Sarukkai, Professor and Dean, School of Humanities

“We have a very unique opportunity of establishing an international prize in the Indian context with substantial prize money of Rs. 10 lakhs in the sense of motivating excellence in research and also having a transparent international structure which can choose appropriate winners for such a prize. The basic expectations we had were that we wanted candidates who were below 45 years of age, keeping up with the other international prizes. Also, along with the other Indian prizes we wanted to have the criteria that the candidates should have held a permanent position in India for at least 5 years as on the year of the award. This is to encourage people to work in India and to support and encourage work done in India over the last so few years.”

“The uniqueness of Infosys Mathematics Prize is that the domains for which one would give the prize is not restricted to pure mathematics alone, but it also includes any field of mathematics such as mathematical foundations of computer science and applied mathematics in natural life and social sciences. The fact that we have been able to bring in together innovative work in different disciplines, ranging from the natural life and social sciences, is a very important part of this particular prize.”

Mr. T. V. Mohandas Pai, Member of the Board and Director - Human Resources, Education and Research, and Administration, Infosys Technologies

“We are in the process of creating an economy which is based upon knowledge and dissemination of knowledge. It requires the creation of an ecosystem where intellectuals and knowledge creators are held in high esteem. All around the world, economies are being built on innovation and not on the production and sale of commodities. It is built upon the use of intellectual capital, and as we grow we need to emulate that and ensure that adequate intellectual capital is being created in India.”

“We are seeing youngsters join corporations and work to enhance their economic condition. We all felt that we need to do something to create excitement in science to create role models for younger people so that could aspire to be great scientists, to be creators of knowledge, to be teachers in colleges and ensure that future generations will continue to have the benefit of their wisdom and their intellectual capital.”

“Mathematics is the queen of science and the foundation for all areas of science and we felt that we ought to create a prize for which would recognize a seminal contribution by an Indian under the age of 45 in the field of mathematics for original research and original intellectual capital. That is the reason we created "Infosys Mathematics Prize" in association with the National Institute of Advanced Studies headed by Dr. Kasturirangan.”

Dr. K Kasturirangan, Director, National Institute of Advanced Studies

“India has a long tradition in mathematics. From the ancient times mathematics was one of the strong disciplines in India. It was not only of the highest quality but also discoveries unknown to the rest of the world. There have been eminent mathematicians, statisticians and scientists in India over the last many decades. But, between 1990 and 2000, if you look at the number of publications in mathematics, you will see they have remained more or less static, around 1500 papers per year. If seen from the national perspective, the quantity and quality of work in mathematics is far from satisfactory. China today sees 361 per cent more papers being produced in Mathematics than India. In 1986, it was only a 76 per cent lead.”

“Given that mathematics has become indispensable of our many disciplines, such a poor quality of mathematical research and teaching will have a detrimental impact on the nation as a whole.”

“The breadth and depth of which mathematics has been brought to bare on a variety of subjects today is incredible and that essentially sends the signal that we cannot be lagging in this particular area. If we have to make our impact as a nation which is going to be a science power, thus is where we need to put all the efforts to improve. Promotion of mathematical thinking is an important aspect of the work in NIAS. We are also very happy to partner with Infosys, especially, Mr. Narayana Murthy and Mr. Mohandas Pai, who so generously provided us with a kind of a financial support which enabled us to process the idea of instituting a prize.”

“I would also like to express our appreciation to both of them for having a vision in promoting mathematics by having the necessary courage of conviction to ask us to do this work of finding out suitable candidates and supporting us all the way through with their advices and critical inputs.”

Mr. N. R. Narayana Murthy, Chairman of the Board and Chief Mentor, Infosys Technologies

“The prize has been jointly instituted by Infosys and NIAS to encourage and foster an interest in mathematics. The Infosys Mathematics Prize recognizes contributions of extraordinary depth and influence to mathematical sciences. It will be awarded to a nominated candidate below 45 years every year for outstanding contributions - fundamental or applied - in any field of mathematics.”

“We hope that this award will reiterate importance of mathematics across different sciences and encourage students to cultivate an interest in the subject. At Infosys, we firmly believe in strong industry-academia partnership for the advancement of academic research. Infosys congratulates Dr. Agrawal on being awarded this prize and applauds his work.”
