

BioSpect

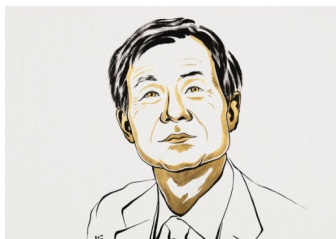
the business of Bio

24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.com

Duo wins Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2026 for their work on homochirality

08 October 2026 | News

For the discovery of non-linear effects and autocatalysis in asymmetric organic synthesis



The 2026 Nobel Prize in Chemistry was awarded to Henri B. Kagan (an emeritus professor at the Université Paris-Sud in France) and Kenso Soai (a Japanese organic chemist, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Applied Chemistry at Tokyo University of Science) for the “discovery of non-linear effects and autocatalysis in asymmetric organic synthesis.”

Henri Kagan took the first decisive step in 1986, when he discovered a new way of manipulating chemical reactions. This allowed him to create a greater excess of one of the mirror images than had previously been thought possible.

Kenso Soai took the next step. In 1995, a key publication describes how he designed the first ever chemical reaction that had the potential to be homochiral. In 2003, he finally succeeded. He presented a reaction in which only one of the two possible mirror images was formed. Other than life itself, no one had previously achieved this feat.

Thanks to Henri Kagan and Kenso Soai, we now know how homochirality can emerge. Their discoveries have been decisive for chemists who design reactions for the manufacture of pharmaceuticals.

The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2026 recognises discoveries that have enabled chemists to drive chemical reactions that lead to homochirality.