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# PM presents Bhatnagar prizes

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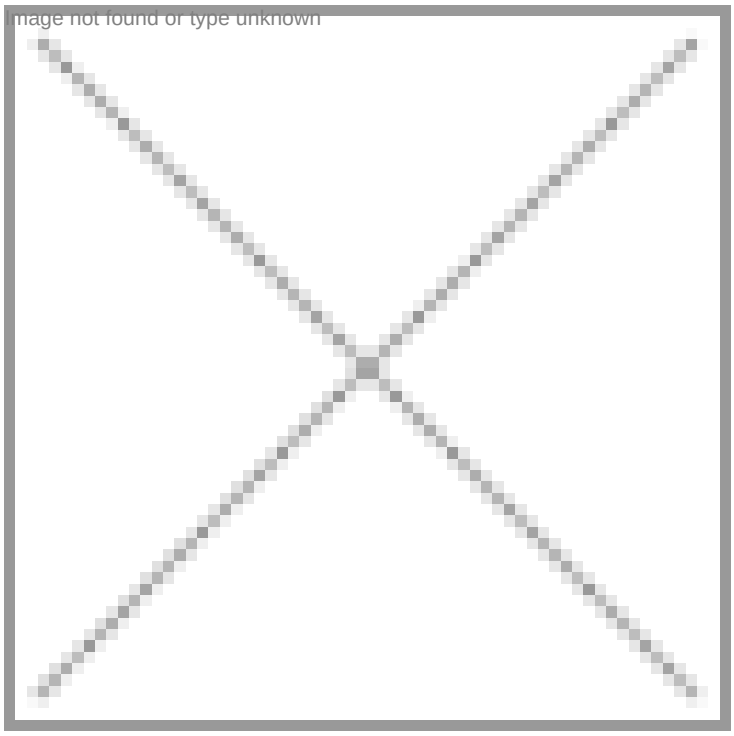



## PM presents Bhatnagar prizes

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh presented the prestigious Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize to 21 young scientists for their achievements in science and technology in 2004 and 2005 on September 28, 2005 in New Delhi. With this, the number of Bhatnagar laureates so far has gone to 419.

Congratulating the winners, Dr Singh said they were the real creators of new India.

He thanked the young scientists for their role in nation building. "This award confers on you the responsibility to continue to engage yourself in pursuit of good science," he said, adding that "India must assume the role of leadership among the developing countries through their innovations in science and technology."

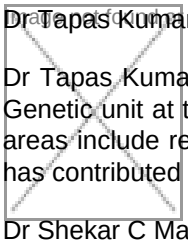
While Dr Gopal Chandra Kundu of the National Centre for Cell Science, Pune and Dr Ramesh Venkata Sonti of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad received the award in the biological sciences category, Dr Chetan Eknath Chitnis of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, New Delhi received the award in medical science cateogory.

Dr Singh also presented S S Bhatnagar Prize for 2005 to Dr Tapas Kumar Kundu of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore and Dr Shekhar Chintamani Mande of the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad (biological sciences) and Dr Javed Naim Agrewala of the Institute of Microbial Technology,

Chandigarh (medical sciences).

Kapil Sibal, minister of state for science and technology and ocean development and Dr RA Mashelkar, director general, CSIR were also present.

They basked in the limelight...



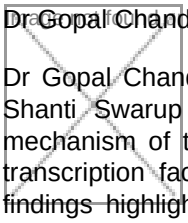

Dr Tapas Kumar Kundu

Dr Tapas Kumar Kundu is an assistant professor at the Transcription and Disease Laboratory of the Molecular Biology and Genetic unit at the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) in Bangalore. Dr Kundu's research areas include regulation of eukaryotic (human) transcription from chromatin template with special emphasis on diseases. He has contributed articles for several science publications.

Dr Shekar C Mande

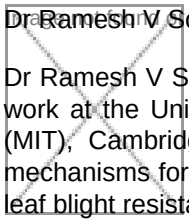
Dr Shekar C Mande heads the Laboratory of Structural Biology at the Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad. He did his MSc in Physics from Nagpur University, Nagpur and his PhD from the IISc, Bangalore.

Speaking to BioSpectrum, he said, "My work revolves around understanding structure- funtion properties of M. tuberculosis proteins, and trying to correlate their significance to the clinical manifestations of the disease. In a recent work, we determined the structure of the M. tuberculosis Chaperonin-10, and proposed that it chelates calcium ions. The protein is unexpectedly known to be secreted, and therefore chelation of ions might explain its role is bone degradation, through Ca2+ mediated signalling pathways. In another work, we have determined the structure of Chaperonin-60, and proposed that it functions in such a manner that utilisation of ATP is minimized. This may have a relevance in the survival of M. tuberculosis in its latent phase."




Dr Gopal Chandra Kundu

Dr Gopal Chandra Kundu is a cancer biologist at the National Centre for Cell Science, Pune. He has been awarded the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, 2004 for his outstanding contributions towards the understanding of the molecular mechanism of the regulation of metastatic potential of melanoma (skin cancer) and breast cancers through activation of transcription factor mediated gene expression by a chemokine like extracellular matrix protein, osteopontin (OPN). His findings highlight the oncogenic potential of OPN and this will be useful in developing novel molecular diagnostics and targeted therapy for the treatment of cancer. Dr Kundu has received several other awards including National Bioscience Award, 2003-04, by the Department of Biotechnology. He has published about 36 papers in peer reviewed, high impact factor international journals including Science, Nature Medicine from USA and a series of papers in The Journal of Biological Chemistry from NCCS, Pune and obtained one
US patent.




Dr Ramesh V Sonti

Dr Ramesh V Sonti is currently working at the Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology, Hyderabad. He has done his doctoral work at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City in the US and post-doctoral work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, USA. Dr Sonti bagged the SS Bhatnagar Prize 2004 for his research on understanding virulence mechanisms for the important bacterial leaf blight pathogen of rice. His research has also focused on introduction of bacterial leaf blight resistance characteristics into the background of commercially important but disease susceptible rice varieties.

Dr Chetan Eknath Chitnis

Dr Chetan Eknath Chitnis is an assistant scientist/principal investigator at the ICGEB, New Delhi. His research interests include understanding molecular interactions that mediate pathogenic processes such as red cell invasion and cytoadherence by malaria parasites. His laboratory also studies host immune responses that provide protection against malaria to residents of malaria endemic regions. Information from these basic studies on host-parasite interactions and immune responses is used to develop vaccines that will provide protection against P. falciparum and P. vivax malaria. Dr Chitnis has many other awards to his credit including the MOT Iyengar Award for Research on Malaria (Indian Council of Medical Research) 2000.