



PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS

ATTA-UR-RAHMAN HONOURED

• The Research Institute of Natural Products at Universiti Teknologi Mara, the largest Malaysian university, has been renamed the 'Professor Atta-ur-Rahman Institute' in recognition of Rahman's international accomplishments in science.



Atta-ur-Rahman, president of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences and a TWAS Fellow since 1985, is also an esteemed chemist, with more than 900 publications in organic chemistry, 25 patents and 116 books. He received this honour in particular for his scientific contributions in biological sciences and in the field of natural products.

During his career, Rahman has been honoured with a number of prestigious awards, including the UNESCO Science Prize (1999), the 'Grand Decoration of Honour in Gold with Sash' (2007), which is the highest civil award given by the Austrian government, and the TWAS Prize for Institution Building (2009).

Atta-ur-Rahman was also elected Honorary Life Fellow of Kings College, Cambridge University, United Kingdom, in 2007. Currently, he is the coordinator general of COMSTECH, the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, estab-

lished by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

WORLD FOOD PRIZE

• **Marc van Montagu**, the founder and current director of the Institute of Plant Biotechnology Outreach in Ghent, Belgium, is the 2013 winner of the prestigious World Food Prize. Van Montagu, professor emeritus at Ghent University, gained global recognition for his groundbreaking discovery of the Ti plasmid. Ti plasmid is a circular DNA molecule that bacteria such as *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* host in their cell. This plasmid acts as a natural gene carrier that microbes use to insert genes into plants and create a favourable new environment to live in. As a side effect, it causes tumours called crown gall.

With his findings, obtained in collaboration with late colleague Jeff Schell, van Montagu paved the way to the modern technologies for plant gene transfer, pushing plant biotechnology into the limelight. Van Montagu himself used his technology to obtain transgenic rapeseed, tobacco and corn and he is now among the most passionate advocates of the usefulness of plant genetic engineering.

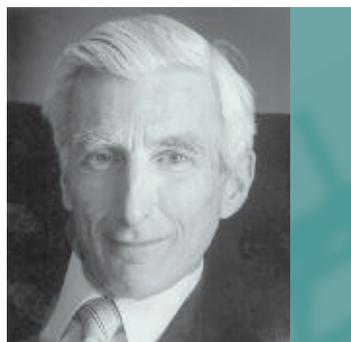
Van Montagu is president of the European Federation Biotechnology and the Public Research Regulation



Initiative. He is also the founder of two biotech companies: Plant Genetic Systems, which is focused on insect-resistant and herbicide-tolerant crops, and Crop Design, focused on the genetic improvement of specific features of corn and rice seeds.

THE DIRAC MEDAL

• **Martin John Rees**, professor emeritus of cosmology and astrophysics at the University of Cambridge (UK), has been awarded the 2013 Dirac Medal and Prize, a prominent award named after theoretical physicist Paul Dirac.



Rees, who has been the director of Cambridge Institute of Astronomy and a Royal Society research professor from 1992 to 2003, is a prominent name in the field of cosmology and high-energy astrophysics. He has carried out innovative work on the origin of quasars and has predicted that the centre of galaxies could host a supermassive black hole.

Rees was educated at Trinity College and obtained his doctorate under the supervision of Dennis Sciama. In 2005, he was awarded the Crafoord Prize, an annual science prize established in 1980 by Holger Crafoord, a Swedish industrialist, and his wife Anna-Greta Crafoord. In December 2005 he was also elected president



of the Royal Academy and continued until 2010. He has been a TWAS associate fellow since 2007. In 2011, he received the Templeton Prize, an award that honours people who make meaningful contributions to affirming life's spiritual dimension, through insight, discovery or practical works.

Rees has authored more than 500 research papers, bringing important contributions to cosmological theories about galaxy formation and clustering, and about gamma-ray bursts. He is also a leading proponent of the idea that multiple universes may exist.

IN MEMORIAM

- **David Dickson**, long-time journalist and founder of the influential science development news website SciDev.net, passed away suddenly on 31 July 2013 after being stricken with a heart attack. Dickson last year received the 2012 Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of British Science Writers.

Born in 1947, Dickson became a Washington correspondent and news editor for *Nature*, and had also reported on science policy issues for *Science* and *New Scientist*. In 2000–2001, he dedicated his work to the founding of SciDev.net, a unique website committed to covering science and policy issues in the developing world. Dickson had retired in 2012.

TWAS was an early, vocal supporter of his project, and the Academy remains an affiliate of the news organization. In late 2000, while SciDev.net was in the works, Dickson detailed the site's rationale in the TWAS Newsletter: "By creating an intelligent gateway to the world's scientific events, literature and debates, the aim is to empower both individuals and communities in



ways that will increase the impact of science and technology on sustainable development and the reduction of poverty."

"I was deeply saddened by the sudden and untimely death of David Dickson", said TWAS Treasurer Mohamed H.A. Hassan, who earlier served for more than a quarter-century as TWAS executive director. "David was a staunch supporter of promoting STI (science, technology and innovation) in developing countries and a great friend of TWAS. His brainchild, SciDev.net, will ever remain his legacy. He will be sorely missed by all of us."

Current TWAS Executive Director Romain Murenzi said he shared "a strong friendship" with Dickson. "This is indeed sad news", Murenzi said. "The developing world loses a champion for its socio-economic development through the use of science, technology and innovation."

- **Mustafa Shameel**, a renowned phytochemist and algae expert and a pioneer in the study and classification of marine benthic algae, passed away in May 2013.

Born in Rudauli, Uttar Pradesh (India), Shameel earned a botany degree (1962) at the University of Karachi, Pakistan, followed by a PhD in marine botany (1972) from the University of Kiel, Germany.

His natural curiosity led him to explore subjects as varied as homeopathy and marine biology. He obtained the Gold Medal in Homeopathy from the International Medical College Lahore, but never made this discipline his career. Instead, he became an expert in marine science and took on a post as assistant professor (1973–1978) first, and as associate professor later (1978–1979), at the Institute of Marine Biology, University of Karachi. From 1994 to 1998 he was appointed the director of the Institute of Marine Science, and from 1999 to 2001 he was the director of the Centre of Excellence in Marine Biology, both in Karachi. He retired in 2001, but continued to nurture his passions and interests.



Shameel was the first to describe the effects of high pressure on the physiology of marine algae, found 24 new chemical compounds, and gave his name to 28 new groups of marine algae. After retiring, he used part of his pension to help found the *International Journal of Phycology and Phytochemistry*. A TWAS fellow since 2008, Shameel published more than 330 scientific articles and also 23 poems for children.