



# PEOPLE, PLACES & EVENTS

## MURENZI CHAIRS HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

Five TWAS fellows have been named to a high-level 10-member United Nations panel that will study how a technology bank could help the world's poorest countries achieve development. TWAS Executive Director **Romain Murenzi** will chair the panel. The nominations came from United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The panel will draft recommendations on the "Technology Bank and Science, Technology and Innovation Supporting Mechanism". The bank would be a repository for scientific information and a tool to link developing world innovators with resources such as funding, legal support and patent licensing.



Among its members are TWAS Fellows **Fang Xin** of China (2010), who also serves as president of the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD); TWAS Treasurer **Mohamed H.A. Hassan** of Sudan (1985), co-chair of IAP, the global network of science academies; **Tebello Nyokong** (2009), distinguished professor of chemistry and nanotechnology at Rhodes University, South Africa; and biochemist **Firdausi Qadri** (2011), director of the Centre for Vaccine Sciences at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh. The bank could include a system to help Least Developed Countries negotiate access to intellectual property rights and provide their researchers with better access to scientific literature.

## ELITE EDUCATION FOR ALL

TWAS Fellows **Atta-ur-Rahman** [top photo] and **Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary** have established a new website that features classes from some of world's top universities. The LEJ [Latif Ebrahim Jamal] Knowledge Hub website offers video-recorded classes from Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT, the Virtual University of Pakistan and online lessons from the popular website Khan Academy. The aim of the Pakistani scholars is to offer students in the developing world instructive programmes that cross geographic boundaries. At the LEJ Hub, they can access basic courses as well as university lessons; students with poor Internet connections or no web access may request DVDs of course videos. In addition, for a small fee they can contact a mentor for help and suggestions.



Rahman is president of the Network of Academies of Science in Countries of the Organization of Islamic Conference and past president of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. Choudhary is director of the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences in Karachi, Pakistan.

To learn more: [www.lej4learning.com.pk](http://www.lej4learning.com.pk)

## EGYPT APPOINTS EL-BELTAGY AS AGRICULTURE MINISTER

**Adel E.T. El-Beltagy**, a TWAS Fellow (2005) and TWAS Council member, is the new Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation in Egypt.

El-Beltagy is a distinguished agricultural biologist with expertise in dry land agriculture, plant stress and research for development. He is the former director general of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and the former president of Egypt's Agricultural Research Center. In addition, he has been an under-secretary of the ministry he now leads. In his new role, El-Beltagy is expected to develop new policies on agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and land reclamation. Among his duties are the study of food development, fish production and industrialization.



El-Beltagy also serves as a scientist and professor in Ain Shans University, where he helped establish the Genetic Engineering Research Institute. He is a board member of *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, a major cultural center in Alexandria, Egypt, that hosts the TWAS Arab Regional Office.

## YUTHAVONG NAMED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

**Yongyuth Yuthavong**, TWAS's vice president for East and Southeast Asia, has been named deputy prime minister of Thailand. Yuthavong will address social affairs including science and technology, social development, education and health.



Yuthavong is an accomplished scientist whose major interests are cell and molecular biology. He is also

**EARLIER DEADLINE FOR TWAS RESEARCH GRANTS**

Beginning in 2015, TWAS’s globally respected research grants programme has a new, earlier application deadline: 1 June. The advanced deadline was set to speed up the selection process and ease administration of the programme. Every year, TWAS awards about USD1.9 million in grants for specialized equipment and consumable supplies and for scientific literature. Grants are available both for individual researchers and for research groups. The grants are funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and COMSTech, based in Pakistan. For more information, visit [www.twas.org/opportunities/research-grants](http://www.twas.org/opportunities/research-grants).

involved in the application of science and technology for development and in human development. After graduating from the University of London in 1966, he obtained a PhD in organic chemistry from Oxford University in 1969. He was appointed professor of biochemistry at Mahidol University, Thailand, in 1983. From 1985 to 1991, he served as the director of the National Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (BIOTEC), Thailand.

**MAJOR SRI LANKA AWARD TO MOHAN MUNASINGHE**

TWAS Fellow **Mohan Munasinghe**, the founder and chairman of the Munasinghe Institute for Development (MIND) in Sri Lanka, has been awarded the “Eminence in Engineering”, the highest prize bestowed by the nation’s Institute of Engineers. He was honoured for exceptional contributions to the profession and to sustainable development in Sri Lanka and worldwide. Tissa Vitarana, the senior minister for scientific affairs, awarded the prize during the 2014 Excellence in Engineering Awards ceremony held by the Institute, which is the highest



engineering body in Sri Lanka. Munasinghe, who shared the 2007 Nobel Prize for Peace, is Colombo and KIVA Guest Professor of Sustainable Development at Darmstadt University, Germany, and the author of some 100 scientific books and more than 350 scientific papers.

**GUO LEI HONOURED IN STOCKHOLM**

**Guo Lei**, director of the National Centre for Mathematics and Interdisciplinary Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, received an honorary doctorate degree from Sweden’s KTH Royal Institute of Technology in a November 2014 ceremony at Stockholm Concert Hall. Guo is a TWAS Fellow [2002], a fellow of the International Federation of Automatic Control, and a foreign member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences. He also serves as vice-secretary general of the Committee of the National People’s Congress. Guo is an expert on systems analysis and control engineering. His work has addressed a variety of related topics such as adaptive control, system identification, adaptive signal processing, and stochastic systems. His current research interests include



the capability of feedback, multi-agent systems, complex adaptive systems, and quantum control systems, among others.

**IN MEMORIAM: PATRICIA BERJAK**

**Patricia Berjak**, a TWAS Fellow [2004] and the vice-president of the Academy of Science of South Africa, passed away on 21 January 2015. Berjak was professor emeritus and head of the Centre for Plant Germplasm Conservation Research, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal [Durban, South Africa], where she served in many capacities for over 48 years.



She served the International Society for Seed Science as president-elect from 2005 to 2008 and as president from 2008 until 2011. In addition, she was a Fellow of the Royal Society of South Africa.

During her career, Berjak specialized in seed biology with a focus on recalcitrant seeds, or seeds that do not survive drying and freezing when stored outside their natural habitat. In 2004, she received the Department of Science and Technology’s Distinguished Woman Scientist Award for her contributions to science, and the Order of Mapungubwe [Silver], the highest honour granted by the president of South Africa [2006].

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