

Brazilian to receive the first Ramanujan Prize

Marcelo Viana (43), Instituto de Matemática Pura e Aplicada (IMPA), Brazil, will receive the first ever Srinivasa Ramanujan Prize that carries a \$ 10,000 cash award donated by the Niels Henrik Abel Memorial Fund. The award ceremony will take place 15 December at the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy.

The prize, set up by ICTP and the International Mathematical Union, is designed to honour researchers under 45 years of age who have conducted outstanding research in developing countries.

Marcelo Viana is an internationally renowned mathematician in the field of dynamical systems. He has also played a key role in the development of mathematics at IMPA and, more generally, in Brazil.

The idea of the new prize, aimed at encouraging young researchers transform talent into excellence, was born in Italy, in the corridors of the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP). The centre receives around 6000 scientists visiting per year, half of them from developing countries (100.000 since 1964) and operates under a tripartite agreement between the Government of Italy and two UN agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Award has the financial support of the Norwegian Niels Henrik Abel Memorial Fund, whose Abel Prize for Mathematics currently matches the Nobel Prize in both prestige and monetary value, taking into consideration the fact that the Nobel prize is not awarded for mathematics. The Award has been established by ICTP in cooperation with IMU (International Mathematical Union) in the name of Srinivasa Ramanujan, India's greatest mathematical genius (1887-1920) of the 19th century. He made outstanding contributions to the analytical theory of numbers, elliptic functions, continued fractions, and infinite series.

Professor John Ball from IMU recalls with passion how the project of the new prize was born: "From the very beginning, IMU has been very happy to consider an arrangement similar to that for the Abel Prize, whereby IMU nominates some members of the Prize Committee. After a lively discussion concerning the age limit and conditions for the Prize, ICTP and IMU signed a Memorandum of Understanding in December 2004 which covered the first 5 awards of the Prize. The Norwegian Academy had in the meantime agreed to donate the prize money. Soon the first very high quality Prize Committee was agreed upon...."

The 2005 Award Ceremony

The 2005 Ramanujan Prize will be awarded during a special ceremony on December 15, in Trieste to the Brazilian mathematician Marcelo Viana, from the Instituto de Matematica Pura e Aplicada (IMPA), for his research that focuses on dynamical systems, ergodic theory, and bifurcation theory. ICTP and UNESCO officials, representatives of the Abel Foundation, of the Italian authorities and of Trieste's international scientific institutions will attend the celebration. The key-note speech will be presented by the winner.

On the occasion of the first Award Ceremony, ICTP's director, Katepalli R. Sreenivasan, will focus on the key role that mathematics plays for the social and economic development through a diverse range of applications. "We believe that the importance of mathematics rests not on its relevance to the needs of society and its economic development but also only on its intrinsic creative value. Ramanujan was special because he effortlessly made outstanding contributions in pure mathematics in circumstances of extraordinary isolation. And, like the great Norwegian mathematician Abel, he died very young. I am pleased that the prize brings together Italy, Norway, India, Brazil and so forth, and symbolizes the sort of unity that ICTP represents. We hope that, year after year, the Prize will help unearth gifted mathematicians from developing countries".

The Ramanujan Prize carries a \$10,000 cash award and will be awarded annually starting this year. It honours a researcher, younger than 45 years old, who has conducted outstanding mathematics research in a developing country. Researchers working in any branch of the mathematical sciences are eligible.