

*****PRESS RELEASE*****

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The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, the highest Science and Technology Award of India, goes to two scientists from IISER Kolkata in Chemical Sciences



S S Bhatnagar Prize 2018, in Chemical Sciences

This year, two scientists in Chemical Sciences were announced as the winners of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, the highest award in science of India, at a function celebrating the foundation day of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Both the recipients of the award of 2018 Dr. Swadhin K Mandal and Dr. Rahul Banerjee are from the Department of Chemical Sciences of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata. IISERs established by the Ministry of Human Resources only twelve years ago are already among the premier institutes in this country in scientific research and education. The award to Dr. Mandal and Dr. Banerjee bears the mark of this research excellence. This is the first time since its inception that any IISER scientist has been awarded with the prestigious S. S. Bhatnagar Prize in the area of Chemical Sciences. Professor Sourav Pal the Director of IISER Kolkata said “This is a particularly significant moment in the history of our young institute. For two of our faculties to receive this coveted award in the same year and in same subject is particularly pleasing. IISER Kolkata has been doing well as evidenced by several parameters and the two SSB awards, the first in our history and also part of the first set of awards in the IISER system, only highlights the excellence that IISER Kolkata has reached. I am particularly happy and congratulate Prof Mandal and Prof Banerjee for their achievements and making us proud. I thank all concerned for creating excellent ecosystem of research at IISER Kolkata.”

About the Prize

Every year 8-10 young scientists from all branches of sciences, below the age of 45, are selected across the nation by the CSIR and awarded for their outstanding scientific work. The S.S. Bhatnagar prize is the most prestigious multidisciplinary science award in the country. It was instituted in 1958 in honour of the late Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, the founder of the CSIR laboratories, and carries a cash component of Rs 5 lakh along with a special monthly honorarium of Rs 15000 till 65 years of age. The SS Bhatnagar Prizes are usually awarded by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at a formal presentation ceremony arranged by CSIR at a later date. At the ceremony, a suitable citation on work of the recipient of the Prize is read out.

About the Awardees

Dr Swadhin K Mandal, a PhD graduate from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore serves currently as the Head of Department of Chemical Sciences, IISER Kolkata who joined IISER Kolkata in 2007 as one of the first few faculty members after finishing his postdoctoral work with the prestigious Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship at the University of Goettingen, Germany and a postdoctoral stint at the University of California, Riverside, USA. Dr Mandal's work addresses one of the major Global concerns on development of sustainable chemical processes protecting our resources and environment. In this regard, the development of environmentally benign and cost-effective catalysts are essential. Dr Mandal's work conceptualizes and establishes on the fundamental understanding how one can avoid toxic and expensive metals in successfully designing catalysts for various industrially important processes that could be used in pharmaceutical and chemical industries. Dr Mandal, who in his early childhood wanted to be a cricketer, deeply believes that his contribution to science research was inspired by his childhood friend and later his wife, Sudeshna, whom he lost last year when she was only 39 years old leaving a teen aged daughter Athena.

Dr. Rahul Banerjee, who is currently an Associate Professor is currently working in the field of porous framework structure generation. Dr. Rahul Banerjee's research interests include the study of structural chemistry with the flavor of chemical synthesis to design new porous materials. He has been working in the field of porous framework structure generation for hydrogen storage and carbon capture, as well as bottom up synthesis from inorganic, metal-organic and organic molecules. His work represents an important blend of fundamental as well as applied research, as these materials might selectively capture and store hydrogen and carbon dioxide as a reservoir. Dr. Rahul Banerjee has published over 130 publications and 24 patents applications from CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory and IISER Kolkata on various porous framework materials since 2010. His current h-index is 53.

Dr. Rahul Banerjee received his PhD degree from University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad in 2006. After a postdoctoral work in UCLA (2006-2008), he joined

CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory, Pune, India in 2008 as a Scientist. Dr. Banerjee is currently an Associate Professor at IISER Kolkata. Dr. Banerjee is the recipient of Thomson Reuters Research Excellence-India Citation Award 2015, NASI-SCOPUS Young Scientist Award for 2014, CSIR- Young Scientist Award 2011, NASI-Young Scientist Platinum Jubilee Award 2011, Young Associate of the Indian Academy of Sciences (2009- 2012). Dr. Banerjee is an editorial board member and associate editor of CrystEngComm. Dr. Banerjee has been invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry [FRSC] by the President of the Royal Society of Chemistry, in 2013 in recognition of his significant contribution to Chemical Science and, in particular, to his work on the board of CrystEngComm.