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Medicine Nobel 2023 goes to duo who paved the way for mRNA COVID vaccines

The Hindu Bureau

The 2023 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine has been awarded to Hungarian biochemist Katalin Karikó and American physician-scientist Weissman. Announcing the names on Monday, the Royal Swedish Academy of Science said they had been feted for "discoveries concerning nucleoside base modification that enabled the development of effective mRNA vaccines against COVID-19".

Dr. Karikó is only the 13th woman to win the prize.

That the citation mentions the pandemic shows the effect mRNA vaccines had on its evolution as well as how the global disaster became an opportunity for the vaccine technology to showcase its potential.

mRNA stands for messenger RNA, a type of molecule that carries instructions from the DNA to a cell's cytoplasm, where those messages are 'read' to produce various proteins. In the late 1980s, scientists realised that mRNA could become the basis for a new kind of vaccines if some hurdles could be overcome.

The idea was to inject the body with a modified

Nobel for Medicine

Hungarian biochemist Katalin Karikó and American physician-scientist Drew Weissman won the 2023 Nobel for Physiology or Medicine



■ The duo was awarded for their work that enabled the development of effective mRNA vaccines against COVID-19. Dr. Karikó is only the 13th woman to win the prize

mRNA stands for messenger RNA, which carries instructions from DNA to make proteins in cells. Scientists had realised in the late 1980s that mRNA could become the basis for a new kind of vaccine if some hurdles could be overcome



Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman published two more studies that set the stage for the use of an mRNA platform for a new kind of vaccine. In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, mRNA vaccines were crucial in reducing the death toll

mRNA that would instruct cells to build a certain protein, which could then provoke the body's immune system to 'attack' it as well as prepare itself to encounters with the same protein in future. This protein could be something produced by a virus – such as the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2. But the mRNA would have to survive its journey inside the body and be able to enter a cell.

Dr. Karikó and Dr. Weissman began to collaborate in the late 1990s. They and other scientists published many studies elucidating the steps from delivering mRNA into a body to the immune system responding. But one problem remained. The immune system sensed the synthetic mRNA to be a foreign substance that needed to be eliminated but not the cells' mRNA. Why?

A study they published in 2005, with Michael Buckstein and Houping Ni, had the answer: the cells' mRNA underwent chemical reactions that modified it in certain ways, whereas the synthetic mRNA remained unchanged.

CONTINUED ON

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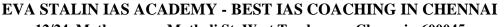
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Nobel for duo who paved way for COVID vaccine

RNA is made up of smaller molecules called bases. The duo reported that when they modified some of these bases in the synthetic mRNA and delivered it to cells, the cells produced more provocative proteins than they did without the modifications. They had found out how foreign mRNA could enter a body and its cells without setting off alarm bells.

They published two more studies that set the stage for the use of an mRNA platform for a new kind of vaccine. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dawned on the world, and mRNA vaccines played a pivotal role – if also one overtaken by the dubious virtues of vaccine nationalism – in lowering its death toll.

Currently, scientists are exploring their use against influenza, dengue, and some cancers and auto-immune diseases.



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At 36%, EBCs largest group in Bihar, shows caste study

Yadavs make up 14.26% of State population, says survey released by Bihar government; Nitish says parties with Assembly representation will be called for a meeting to apprise them of the figures

Amarnath Tewary PATNA

onths away from the Lok Sabha election in 2024, the Bihar government on Monday released the report of a caste survey conducted in the State, saying "it's only compiled data and no analysis of it has been done yet".

"Today, on the auspicious occasion of Gandhi Jayanti, the data of castebased census conducted in Bihar have been published. The proposal for the survey was passed unanimously in the legislature," Chief Minister Nitish Kumar posted on the microblogging site X. "All nine political parties in the Assembly will now be called for a meeting to apprise them of the report."

Caste breakdown

The report said the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) make up 27.1286% of the population of the State; the Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs) 36.0148%; the Scheduled Castes 19.6518%; and the Scheduled Tribes 1.6824%. The 17.7088%. The total populaupper castes make up 15.5224%. Hindus form 81.9986% of the popula-

Caste count

The tables show the caste and religion-based composition in Bihar according to the caste survey report released by the State government

Category	Share in	Population	Religion	Share		
100	population	(in crore)	Hindu	81.99%		
Other Back- ward Class	27.13%	3.55	Muslim	17,70%		
Extremely		<u> </u>	Christians	0.05%		
Backward	36.01%	4.71	Buddhists	0.09%		
Class		4	Sikhs	0.01%		
Scheduled Caste	19.65%	2.57	THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NOT THE PERSON NAMED IN COLUMN TWO IS NAMED IN COLUMN TW	■ The two-phase caste survey was launched on January 7. The survey recorded the economic status alongside caste		
Scheduled Tribe	1.68%	0.22	taunched			
Unreserved	15.52%	2.03				
Total		13.07				

Need nationwide caste census: INDIA

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

Citing the findings of the Bihar caste survey, leaders of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on

Monday reiterated their demand for a countrywide caste census to ensure "social justice" to the deprived classes.

FULL REPORT

» PAGE 11

and Muslims tion is over 13 crore.

The survey report - Bihar Jaati Adharit Ganana, 2022 (Bihar caste-based survey, 2022) - says the Yadays make up 14.26% of the State population; Kushwahas 4.27%; and and Kurmis

2.87%. The Musahar caste makes up 3% of the State population and Brahmins 3.66%. The upper-caste Kasha community comes to 0.68% population of the

The Congress called upon the Centre to hold a similar exercise at the national level immediately. Former party president Rahul Gandhi said the census had proved that 84% of the people in the State belonged to the OBCs, SCs and STs and their share should be according to their population.

CONTINUED ON

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HC rules against quota in minority institutions

They held the status, once granted, would continue until the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions cancels it on valid grounds. However, the first Division Bench upheld the right of the State government to insist that the minority institutions could admit students from the religious and linguistic minorities concerned only up to 50% of the sanctioned intake and that the rest must be filled on the basis of merit.

The minorities who gain admission on merit should be excluded while calculating the first 50% of students, the Bench clarified.

The petitioner college had approached the court assailing a Government Order (GO) issued on November 20, 2021 rejecting the plea for extension of religious minority status to it since it had admitted 52% minority students in the academic years 2018-19 and 2019-20. Advocate-General R. Shunmugasundaram contended such admission had been made in violation of a 1998 GO which restricts admission of minorities to 50%.

On the other hand, senior counsel Vijay Narayan, representing the college, claimed minority educational institutions should be granted a permanent status without being forced to get it extended from time to time. He also argued the Tamil Nadu Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Private Educational Institutions) Act, 2006 would not be applicable to minority institutions.

Finding force in his submissions, the judges said Article 15(5) of the Constitution, introduced through the 93rd amendment in 2005, specifically excludes minority institutions while enabling the State government to make special provisions by law for the advancement of any socially or educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes relating to their admission to educational institutions.

Further, the definition of 'private educational institution' under Section 2(d) of the 2006 Act also excludes minority institutions established under Article 30(1) of the Constitution. "Therefore, it is manifest that the State would not have any authority to make any special provision providing for reservation to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or the backward classes of citizens for admission in a minority educational institution," the Bench said.

WHO approves use of malaria vaccine with adjuvant tech

The Hindu Bureau NEW DELHI

The R2I/Matrix-M malaria vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and the Serum Institute of India, leveraging Novavax's adjuvant technology, was recommended for use by the World Health Organiza-

recommended for use by the World Health Organization (WHO), after meeting required safety, quality and effectiveness standards, on Monday.

Following a detailed scientific review by the WHO's independent advisory body, the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE), and the Malaria Policy Advisory Group (MPAG), the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine has been recommended for use, noted a release issued by the Serum Institute of India. With the approval and recommendations by the WHO, additional regulatory approvals are expected to follow shortly and vaccine doses could be ready to begin wider roll-out as early as next year.

The Serum Institute has already established production capacity for 100 Developed by Oxford and Serum institute, R21/Matrix-M vaccine could be widely available next year

million doses a year, which will be doubled over the next two years. This scale of production is critical because vaccinating those at high risk of malaria will be important in stemming the spread of disease, as well as protecting the vaccinated.

The Matrix-M component is a proprietary saponin-based adjuvant from Novavax, which is licensed to the Serum Institute for use in endemic countries, while Novavax retains commercial rights in nonendemic countries.

The vaccine was developed by the Jenner Institute at Oxford University and the Serum Institute of India with support from the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), the Wellcome Trust, and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

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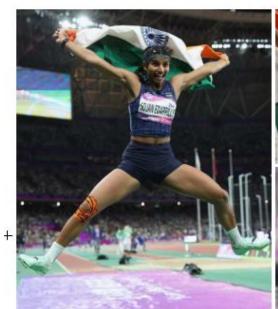
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Parul steals the spotlight, lands a silver in 3,000m steeplechase

Priti's third-place finish brings more joy to the Indian contingent; Ancy impresses, takes the second spot in women's long jump; the 4x400m mixed relay team adds another silver; decarhlete Tejaswin on top after five events; Vithya equals Usha's 39-year record in 400m hurdles







Joy unbound: Ancy is ecstatic after her saver in long jump while Priti and Parul celebrate the podium finish in 3,000m steeplechase. The mixed relay quartet was promoted to saver certificate.

ASIAN GAMES

Uthra Ganesan

hile the Indian focus in the 3000m steeplechase has been firmly on Avinash Sable for a while now, Parul Chaudhary has been grafting away in the background, repeatedly breaking personal and national records among the women. On Monday, she finally stepped into the limelight with an emphatic silver behind world champion Winfred Mutile Yavi of Bah-

rain for India's 12th athletics medal at the Asian Games here.

Friit Lamba's third place finish in the event added cheer to the Indian contingent and Ancy Sojan's brilliance on the long jump pit earned another silver, as did the 4x400m mixed relay team. But while the others were applauded, the relay team's performancethe reigning champion was a let down both in terms of the medal and the timing.

Parul kept pace with Yavi for most part of the race even as the Bahrainian led from start to finish. With two laps to go, the duo broke away from the rest of the pack while Priti and Tigest Getent Mekonen stuck together for 3-4 positions. And while Yavi finished almost 80m ahead on the final stretch, it took a final burst of acceleration for Priti to go past the post for bronze in a personal best timing of 9-43-32. On the long jump pit, the spotlight has been shin-

On the long jump pit, the spotlight has been shining brightly on Shaaii Singh for a while now. But teammate Ancy saved her big leap for the big stage to snatch the limelight—and silver—ahead of her more fancied rival. While Ancy managed a personal best of 6.63m, Shaali finished a disappointing fifth with a best

jump of 6.48m eyen as China's Shiqi Xiong took gold with 6.73m.

The mixed relay team, meanwhile, saw Mohd. Aj-mal give a good lead-off to stay close to the Bahrain's Musa Ali Isah but a disappointing second-leg by Vithya Ramraj saw India slip and they never came back, finishing 3rd in 214.34 behind Bahrain and Sri Lanka before the latter was disqualified for lane infringement to hand India the silver.

Tejaswin Shankar kept raising the bar, going on top after five events in the Decathlon with 4260 points. Tejaswin, who was fifth after three events in the morning session, took full advantage of his favourite event, the high jump, to go back to the first position.

While the rest of the field cleaned out at 1.97m, he started at that mark and went up to 2.21m before retiring, only to return and win the 400m to increase the lead.

Amidst the medal hype, however, what went unnoticed was Vithya's incredible run in the 400m hurdles heats in the morning that saw her equal one of Indian athletics' oldeststanding records – P.T. Usha's 55.42s, set 39 years ago at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

Medals Table

Country	6	83	В	T
China	147	81	42	270
Japan.	33	44	45	122
5. Korea	31	39	63	133
India	13	24	23	60
Chinese Taipei	12	10	17	39
Uzbeki- stan	11	14	18	43
Thailand	10	7	16	33
N. Korea	7	10	5	22
Hong Kong	6	15	23	44
Bahran	6	1	4	11

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What are the Lagrange points and why is Aditya-L1 headed to one?

Lagrange points offer ideal 'parking spots' for satellites and are home to several astronomical observatories. Named for French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange, whose research elucidated the existence of these points, they are also being explored as sites of future space colonies

other of the most amorting photocenesia in nature, from electromagnetic radiation and infrared vision to substance; particles and cosmic rays, are invisible, and we get to lone them only through first various applications. This is true of Lagrange potents as well—points in space between colestal bodies where a proceedil stays more or loss statisticary, as if held in place by some cornic magic. The 'range', of currae, cows touch to the streen keros of gravity owned by the plane of two objects in orbit account their common centre of gravity, where their gravitational forces cancel each other, so that a third body of negligible mass will sensate at rest between them.

For example, the combined gravitational gravitational december of the gravitation of the gravitation of the gravitation of the plane of two objects in orbit acts of the gravitation of the state of the gravity where their gravitational december and the sum and gravitational december the sum and

For example, the comment gravitational force between the sun and the earth squale the centraligal force required by a satellite or an asteroid to orbit the sun-earth centre of gravity. At serve me sun-earth centre of gravity. At this Lagrange point, a satellite will keep its position constant relative to both the sun and the earth.

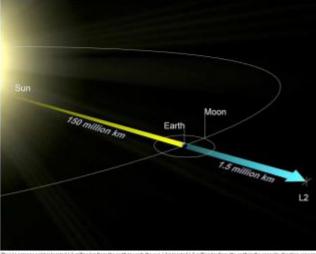
Maths instead of law
Planetary scientists are fascinated by
Lagrange points because they offer the
best 'parking sport' in space for eatellise.
That is, seen from the earth, Lagrange
points appear to sky metodese, and this
makes them ideal for controllers on the ground to communicate with spacecraft stationed there. No wonder these locations are home to several autonomical observatories that utilise their variage position to have ringelde views of the earth and the backpard of the Solar System, which would not be

Soar System, which would not be possible nearer to the planet. Lagrange points exist throughout the Solar System due to this gravitational interaction between the sun and in retrase of planets and their moons.
The points were named after the Italian-Ferrich
mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange,

mathematician Joseph-Loute Lagrange, who was been pranary 25, 1756, in Yurke, Ruly, His parents warried thin to study has and enrolled thin at the University of Turin. But at hisponed, a Fryun-did Lagrange chanced upon an alighen paper by the English astronomer Edinased Halley and was to intrigued that he decided to become a mathematician mental.

mechanics, and became one of the youngest and brightest mathematics professors of his time. He subsequen moved to Berlin, where his work on actionomy, mechanics and calculus resulted in several groundbreaking papers, including one on the moon's orbital dynamics and another or perturbations of the orbits of comets.

But Lagrange's most important contributions were related to the so-called 'three body problem', which investigated the most on of three bodies averages of the troots of time bother in space (with muse) relative to each other in space — such as the sum, the earth, and the moon. The problem question into the time the starting positions of the



predict their exact locations at a later date as they move under the influence of each other's gravity?

other's gravity?

Lagrange Stand that the problems could be solved if he assumed the third body was much smaller than the other two larger trasses. This eventually tolk into describe the farmess free Lagrange points that we looke today as I.I., U.Z., U.J., L.A, and I.S.
In any gloss-body.

In any three-body system, three of these Lagrange points -L, L2, and L3 -are unstable positions that he along as imaginary straight here correcting the two larger hoddes. The other two-L4 and L5 -are stable locations that form the apone of two imaginary equidateral triangles with the two large colonial bodies at the vertices of each triangle.

Points of accumulation Objects stay undaturbed at L4 or 15

because of a 'restoring force' - a force acting against any displacement - that provents them from being madged away from the stable point. Because of their from the stable point. Securose of their stability, however, LA and LS also send to accumulate a lot of anterestellar duet and asteroids called Tropare that sip around the points. Scientists have detected frought 10,000 Trojans in the 1A and 15 points of the sea-liquidar system alones, where gravitational and contribugal forces gravitational and overrilagal forces prompt the appear code to follow the giana planet's revolution around the ear. Astronouseus have also found four Togies at Lagrange points amound Mara and oight Tropian in the L4 and the L5 points around Neptune. One of Saturat's larger moons, britisy, even has tree moordets at the Lagrange points.

Lagrange points are found along the plane of two objects in orbit around their common centre of gravity, where their gravitational forces cancel each other, so that a third body of negligible mass will remain at rest between them

On the other hand, an object positioned at one of the three unstable Lagranae potent Li, L2, and L3 - can be easily de-orbited by even weak forces, and they will then drift off into space. That is no our, a squeezeral at, say, L3 needs only the slightest disreption to slip needs only the slightest disruption to slip and full from its orbit towards the sun or the earth, unless it frequently barrs find via its thrusters, as the various moments of displacement, to adjust its orbital movement frequently.

Without Lagrange points, space exploration would have been so rostricted, with actuation straighing to find the best orbits and velocities for statistics, and reckning with the challenges of orbital perturbations. To think that space offers like the Addry-Li solar mission of the inclaim Space. sour nuccion or the inclain space. Research Organisation (ISBD) would never hore materialised had an Italian boy pursued a career in law, instead of being distracted by mathematics, in the

reaches LI - at a distance of L5 million km away from the earth - the probe will settle into a 'halo' orbit around LI to acquire an

into a 'halo' orbit around II to acquire an standarterated view of the San.

Li is already home to four other robotic replorers. NASAV-Solar and Heliophartic Observatory, Sandalis, Deep Space Climate Observatory, Advanced Companie Explorer, and the Global Geospace Science West desirable. The point will get some more crowded when three U.S. own nose crowded when three U.S. probes - Internellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe, Near Earth Object Surveyor, Space Weather Folkor Or-Lagrange I - and the Europeon Vigil mission begin their Lagrangian journeys in the next few years.

in the next new years.

Space a calculate are also exploring the potential of the L4 and the L5 points to host space a closure in the feature because those points are relatively close to the earth. At these locations, where years trained linear location, where years trained linear location and the particular linear location and the particular linear location and particular linear location and particular linear location are location and linear location and locatio

or an astronic.

A hig space station built this way could be upon on its axis using rocket threaters so that the artificial gravity that created would help a here manner of people to the and work on board the orbiting post permanently.

(Frakush Chandra is a freelence science series:

A (very) brief history of the Nobel Prizes

Fall has arrived in Scandinavia, which means Nobel Prize season is here. The start of October is when the Nobel committees get together in Stockholm and Oslo to announce the winners of the yearly awards.

after the re-yearly awards.
First up, as usual, is the Nobel Prize in medicine or physiology, which is announced by a panel of judges at the Karolineka Institute in the Swedish capital. The prizes in physics, chemistry, literature, peace and economics follow,

One reason the prizes are so famous is they come with a generous amount of cash. The Nobel Foundation has raised the prize money 10% this year to about St million. In addition

made the explosive more stable.

Dynamite soon became popular in construction and mining and in the weapons industry. It made Nobel a very rich man. Perhaps it also made him thirk about his legocy, because toward the end of his life he decided to use his vast.

about his legacy, because toward the end of his like he decided to use his wast fortune to fund annual prime. Yo chose who, during the preceding year, have conformed the greatest browth to break to the historiest of the present of the preceding year, have conformed the greatest browth to the historiest of the prime were presented in 1001, five years after his death. In 1956, a stah price was created, for economics, by Swederin's central bank. Though Nobel puries stress that the economics prize is technically not a Nobel Prim, it's always presented supporter with the others. One reason the prizes are so famous in they come with a generous amount of cash. The Nobel Foundation, which administers the awards, has raised the prise money by 10% this year to about \$1\$ million. In addition to the money, the winners receive an 18-carst gold media and digitions a when they collect their

Nobel Prizes at the award ceremondes in December.

Historically, the vast majority of Nobel Prize witners have been white men.

Though that's started to charge, there is at still little deverty among Nobel witners, particularly in the science categories.

To date, 60 yearned have sen Sholl categories. To date, 60 yearned have were Nobel categories. Only four women have won Nobel categories. Only four women have won the Nobel Prize in physics and past two have won the economics prize.

In the scale year of the Nobel Prizes, the lack of diversity among scientists in general. But today, critics say, the lack of deversity among scientists in general. But today, critics say, the lagies need to do a better job at highlighting discoveries made by women and scientists outside Europe and North America.

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86 bird species found in Tamil Nadu in rapid decline, says nationwide report

Geetha Srimathi CHENNAI

An analysis of the State of India's Birds (SOIB) 2023 report shows that nearly 110 species of birds recorded in Tamil Nadu are in a state of decline across the country.

A total of 86 species found in Tamil Nadu, including garganey, northern shoveler, common sandpiper and common teal, are in "rapid decline". This has been highlighted by the Salem Ornithological Foundation (SOF) in a Tamil Nadu-specific report, using data from the SOIB 2023 report.

What surprised researchers, according to S.V. Ganeshwar, founder-director of SOF, is that species "taken for granted" by the birding community have been categorised as declin-

"Indian rollers are very casually seen everywhere in the open fields. But their population is declining nationwide," he says.

Aravind A.M., an avid birder, says Indian rollers,



Indian rollers have become hard to spot nowadays, according to birders.

which are not common in Chennai but are spotted widely in outer areas and towns, have become hard to spot nowadays. He had spotted the birds in Vellore quite regularly since 2012. In 2017, he once saw a congregation of 60 rollers, with males engaging in mating displays and rolls for females perched on coconut trees, in Vellore. "In the last three to four years, seeing even one pair has become difficult," he says.

"Within Chennai, one species that is not being sighted as commonly as earlier is the rufous treepie," Mr. Aravind adds.

With urbanisation and rapidly changing landscapes, a detailed regional report is important to understand bird patterns, says Mr. Ganeshwar. The trends assessed in the SOIB report were primarily carried out using data uploaded to eBird, a citizen portal for birders and researchers. Mr. Ganeshwar points out that out of 451 species in Tamil Nadu, long-term trends are available only for 39 species. "This is extremely low," he adds.

The SOF report says that going by trends in Tamil Nadu, conclusive longterm and current annual trends are available for only a very small number of species.

"This is why the excerpt document was based on the India trends, where a larger number of species was analysed. Maybe in the future, as more birders continue to contribute information to eBird, data deficiencies would be lessened and more of the State's bird species would be analysed," the report

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Stalin announces ₹25 lakh each as reward for nine ISRO scientists from T.N.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin felicitating space scientists from Tamil Nadu at an event in Chennai. R. RAGU

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday announced a cash reward of ₹25 lakh each for nine space scientists from Tamil Nadu, including former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chairperson K. Sivan, who have made the State and the country proud with their contributions.

Mr. Stalin also announced a scholarship programme for nine engineering students pursuing graduation with financial assistance from the government under the 7.5% reservation for government school students. The nine scholarships would be named after the nine noted ISRO scientists from Tamil Nadu, and would cover tuition and hostel fees.

An expert panel would select candidates for the scholarship programme, and a corpus fund of ₹10 crore would be set up, Mr. Stalin said.

Apart from Mr. Sivan, former Director of ISRO's Satellite Centre Mylswamy Annadurai; Director of IS-RO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre V. Narayanan; ISRO's Launch Authorisation Board chief A. Rajarajan; Director of U.R.

Rao Satellite Centre M. Sankaran; ISRO's Propulsion Complex Director J. Asir Packiaraj; Project Director of the Chandrayaan-2 lunar mission V. Vanitha; Project Director of the Aditya-LI mission Nigar Shaji; and Chandrayaan-3 Project Director P. Veeramuthuvel would receive the cash reward.

During a function at Anna Centenary Library, Mr. Stalin felicitated the scientists and said he was proud not only as the Chief Minister but also as a Tamil. He pointed out that six of the nine scientists studied in government schools in Tamil Nadu.

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