

After a year's delay, CSIR's Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards for 2022 announced

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

After nearly a year's delay, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has publicised the list of winners of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) awards for 2022, considered among the prestigious prizes for science in India.

The prizes were not announced last year, without any official reason being ascribed.

Ministry panel

Last year, the Union Home Ministry constituted a committee to review all the national awards administered by various Ministries related to science and medicine and whittled down some of them.

The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards were, however, retained.



Ashwani Kumar

This year's awardees constitute 12 scientists below the age of 45. They are Ashwani Kumar, CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology; Maddika Subba Reddy, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad (Biological Sciences); Akkattu Biju, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; Debabrata Maiti, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (Chemical Sciences); Vimal Mishra, Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (Earth and Atmospheric Sciences); Dipti Ranjan Sahoo, In-

dian Institute of Technology, Delhi; Rajnish Kumar, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (Engineering Sciences); Apoorva Khare, Indian Institute of Science; Neeraj Kayal, Microsoft Research Lab India (Mathematical Science); Dipyaman Ganguly, Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata (Medical Sciences); Anindya Das, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; and Basudeb Dasgupta, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (Physical Sciences).

Foundation day

The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prize, instituted in the memory of the first Director-General (D-G) of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), is usually announced on the foundation day of the institution on September 26.

West Asia corridor a historic step: PM

Kallol Bhattacharjee

NEW DELHI

Two days after the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday described Saudi Arabia as "one of the most important strategic partners of India".

The exchange between the two sides took place during the state visit of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman of Saudi Arabia when they agreed to set up a joint task force to fast-



Major push: India and Saudi Arabia have agreed to set up a joint task force to fast-track the West Coast Refinery project. PTI

track the West Coast refinery project.

"As two of the world's fastest growing countries, our partnership is impor-

tant for the stability of the entire region. Yesterday, we took the historic step to connect India, West Asia and Europe through an

economic corridor. Apart from connecting the two countries, the corridor will help in the increase of economic growth, energy sector and digitisation," said Mr. Modi, conveying India's gratitude for the Kingdom's initiatives to ensure welfare of the resident Indian expats.

Mr. Modi and Prince Bin Salman also co-chaired the first meeting of the India Saudi Strategic Partnership Council (SPC).

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West Asia corridor a historic step, says PM

The State visit of the Crown Prince is significant as it comes months after Saudi Arabia ended hostility with Iran through a deal that was negotiated by China. It has also come weeks after Saudi Arabia became a member of the BRICS during the Johannesburg summit. The discussion focused on defence, energy, security, education, technology, transportation, healthcare, tourism and culture, space and semiconductors as areas of possible cooperation.

Trilateral project

“Both sides extended full support to the West Coast refinery project – which is a trilateral project between ARAMCO, ADNOC and an Indian company – for which \$50 billion are already earmarked. The new thing that has come up is that the two sides agreed to set up a joint task force to help in identifying and channelising the \$100 billion investment which was actually promised by the Saudi side half of which was for the refinery,” said MEA Secretary Ausaf Sayeed announcing that Delhi and Riyadh would upgrade energy ties to “comprehensive energy partnership”. Both sides agreed to work on the India-GCC Free Trade Agreement, said Mr. Sayeed. Crown Prince Bin Salman had visited India in February 2019 when Saudi Arabia had pledged to invest \$100 billion and the investment into the energy project was first mooted during that initiative.

Among the eight agreements that were sealed included one between the Central Vigilance Commission of India and the Saudi Oversight and Anti Corruption Authority and another between the Saudi and Indian Exim Banks. National Institute of Technology of India and the Saline Water Conversion Corporation of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement during the visit. After the meeting in Hyderabad House with Mr. Modi, Prince Bin Salman called on President Droupadi Murmu and attended a banquet dinner hosted in his honour.

A joint statement issued at the end of the visit mentioned that the Saudi side had assured India that it would remain a “reliable partner and exporter of crude oil supplies”.

The document mentioned that the two delegations “welcomed the expansion of the private sector in the two countries to enter into investment partnerships in the agricultural and food industries”. The joint statement stressed on strengthening cooperation in the field of defence and anti-terror cooperation and made a special mention of preventing access to “missiles and drones” to carry out terror attacks. Indicating the ongoing reforms in Saudi Arabia, the joint statement mentioned that two sides discussed plans to strengthen the tourism segment of bilateral relation.

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CBI does not require permission to probe pre-2014 cases too: SC

Court says its 2014 verdict invalidating the provision, which mandated prior permission to probe corruption cases, has retrospective effect

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

A Constitution Bench on Monday held that a Supreme Court judgment of 2014 which declared invalid a legal provision mandating the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to take prior permission before investigating corruption cases against senior government officials has a retrospective effect.

A five-judge Bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul said the provision in question, Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, the statute that governs the CBI, was void from the very day of its insertion on September 11, 2003.

'Violated rights'

The 106-page judgment held that Section 6A violated fundamental rights, and "once a law is declared to be unconstitutional, being violative of Part-III (fundamental rights) of the Constitution, then it would be held to be void *ab initio*, still born, unenforceable

Declaration made by the Constitution Bench judgment in Dr. Subramanian Swamy case [of 2014] will have retrospective operation
CONSTITUTION BENCH OF THE SUPREME COURT



and *non est*".

This means that senior government officials involved in corruption cases even before the date of the Supreme Court judgment invalidating the need for prior sanction would no longer be able to avail the protection of prior approval.

"Declaration made by the Constitution Bench judgment in Dr. Subramanian Swamy case [of 2014] will have retrospective operation. Section 6A of the DSPE Act is not in force from the day of its insertion, ie, September 11, 2003," Justice Vikram Nath, who authored the judgment for the five-judge Bench, held.

Justice Nath also held that Article 20(1), which

mandated that a person should only be convicted under a law which was in force at the time of the crime, had "no applicability or relevance to the validity or invalidity of Section 6A of the DSPE Act".

Immunity from inquiry
Section 6A of the DSPE Act, while it had existed, gave officers of the rank of joint secretary and above immunity from even facing a preliminary inquiry by the CBI.

In 2014, a Constitution Bench had declared the legal provision a violation of the right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

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‘CBI does not need nod to probe pre-2014 cases’

“Corruption is an enemy of [the] nation and tracking down a corrupt public servant, however high he may be, and punishing such person is a necessary mandate under the PC [Prevention of Corruption] Act, 1988. The status or position of a public servant does not qualify the person from exemption from equal treatment. The decision-making power does not segregate corrupt officers into two classes as they are common crime-doers and have to be tracked down by the same process of inquiry and investigation,” the 2014 judgment said.

It had found the dichotomy within Section 6A, of protecting one class of officers, directly destructive and contrary to the objectives and reason of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

“The provision in Section 6A impedes tracking down the corrupt senior bureaucrats... The protection under Section 6A has propensity of shielding the corrupt,” the Bench had concluded.

Basic income scheme to benefit 1.06 crore women

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has identified 1.06 crore women who will benefit from the Kalaingar Magalir Urimai Thogai (women's basic income) Thittam.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is set to launch the scheme in Kancheepuram on September 15, the birth anniversary of former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai. During his speech at a meeting he chaired at the

Secretariat to review the arrangements being made towards the launch, Mr. Stalin said a total of 1.63 crore applications were received, of which 1,06,50,000 had been short-listed. “We have made arrangements so that eligible women would have the sum credited into their bank accounts from September 15,” Mr. Stalin said. The sum would be subsequently credited into their bank accounts every month.

Initially, ATM cards



M.K. Stalin

would be issued in certain numbers. Later, they would be issued to all. But even those without the

cards would be given the amount [immediately], he said. “There should be no problem for the beneficiaries in withdrawing the cash,” he added.

Though the Tamil Nadu government in its Budget for 2023-24 stated that a sum of ₹7,000 crore had been allocated for this scheme, it is believed that the scheme would cost more. On Monday, the Chief Minister said that a total sum of ₹12,000 crore would be allocated for this scheme annually.

A senior official told *The Hindu* that the allocation of ₹12,000 crore would not be for the ongoing year, as a few months have already passed before the formal launching of the scheme on September 15.

An SMS would be sent on behalf of the Chief Minister to the beneficiaries on September 15, which would also have details on how to handle any issues that may arise.

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Basic income scheme to benefit 1.06 crore women

Those who have applied for the scheme but have not been shortlisted would be given the reason for the decision. "We should inform them as to why their applications have not been accepted. Majority of them would be satisfied if such a message is sent," Mr. Stalin told officials. Some women may have doubts and may apply again, he said and added, "If we provide such an opportunity, people will have confidence in this government."

Should those, whose applications were rejected, turn up at the launch of the scheme, Mr. Stalin said, "Arrangements should be made to answer them." Officers would have to camp at these places to receive such complaints from those women and to assure them that their applications would be scrutinised.

Chief Secretary Shiv Das Meena and senior officials were present during the meeting.

India's moment

The G-20 summit was reimagined as a forum for changing the wider world

The Leaders' Summit of India's presidency of the G-20 grouping, held over the weekend, resulted in major success with the unanimous adoption of the New Delhi Declaration – especially significant as there was little hope of one. Experts, diplomats and officials had downplayed expectations of India's negotiators being able to pull off what few have achieved thus far: a détente between the "western" G-7-EU axis and the Russia-China combine over the issue of the Ukraine war. At the UN Security Council, not a single statement has been passed so far as a result of vetoes by both sides. While Indonesian G-20 negotiators in 2022 were able to pull off a joint statement with references critical of Russia (the G-7 pushed for these), the consensus did not last, and Russia and China refused to have them repeated this year. As every Indian ministerial meeting ended without success in a joint statement, India's negotiating team took the more considered approach – to achieve consensus on other issues, before tackling the paragraphs on Ukraine. There was a breakthrough after the G-7 compromised on its insistence of language critical of Russia by having more neutral paragraphs. The Declaration statement achieved what is truly impossible in today's global polarisation. In that, India's "middle path" policy has been its biggest strength, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal outreach to many G-20 leaders over the year. Another key initiative was enlisting the "Global South", including many G-20 members, who were reluctant to take sides in the tussle, and wanted instead to shift priorities to global development issues. As a result, the 83-paragraph Declaration made progress on cryptocurrency regulation, and crystallised a figure of nearly \$10 trillion needed for climate change adaptation and mitigation projects for the Global South, although it failed to agree on any fossil fuel "phase-out" deadlines.

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'Brazil will focus on inequality during G-20 presidency'

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

Brazil President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that addressing inequality in the world will be at the centre of Brazil's G-20 presidency. He was "symbolically" handed the ceremonial gavel by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday. Brazil will formally take over the Presidency in November, after Mr. Modi holds a virtual summit of G-20 leaders to follow up on decisions taken at the Delhi Summit.

Speaking to presspersons on Monday, Mr. Lula said that among the priorities for his government are the energy transition, especially the development of ethanol-based fuel that Brazil has championed, the reform of multilateral banks and the expansion of the UN Security Council. As during the Indian Presidency, Mr. Lula said, Brazil will take G-20 meetings to "many Brazilian cities", "democratise" the G-20 and make it popular among civil society.

"It is a lot of responsibility for Brazil to host the G-20 Summit next year. We will put the inequality issue as the core issue for the next G-20 process... inequalities of gender, race, education. We have to build an understanding that the world needs more balance in terms of the wealth distribution that is being produced," he said.

Asked by *The Hindu* about how much Brazil had budgeted for the G-20



Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva

summit and how it compared to India, Mr. Lula said that it did not matter how much money was "spent", but whether it was "invested" for the betterment of the country. He praised India's initiative at the G-20 for the International Biofuel Alliance, as an investment for the future that he would take forward.

"Brazil has extraordinary potential in the production of clean energy. It has a lot to teach to the other countries and that's why we want to share what we have capacity for so that they can produce it in their own respective countries," he said, speaking about Brazil's pioneering of ethanol-based bio-fuel, which is mandatorily blended with gasoline for all automobile use in the country.

Mr. Lula added that he hopes that the Ukraine war would be over by the time Brazil hosts its G-20 Summit in November 2024, and that both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, who skipped coming to Delhi, would attend the next summit.

There were several other initiatives too: the admission of the 55-member African Union has corrected an imbalance that so far only allowed the EU in as a regional grouping in the G-20. The Global Biofuel Alliance was an important step towards more research and delivery of alternative energy sources for a world still dependent on fossil fuels. Finally, an India-Middle East-Europe Corridor with the promise of U.S. investment has dazzling possibilities, but details of its funding and execution still need to be drawn out. India's attempt to take the G-20 outside of the ordinary, single-venue template, to hold 200 meetings in over 60 cities, drawing more than 1,00,000 official visitors from 125 countries, has been noted as a unique initiative, albeit at considerable extra cost; it remains to be seen whether future G-20s will find it a viable example to follow. Above all, India's G-20 leaves an indelible mark in its attempt to "popularise" an organisation seen till now as a staid and boring event bringing world leaders to a high table where arcane subjects are discussed, decisions made are not scrutinised, and without bringing real change to the lives of the wider global population. To that end, Mr. Modi's decision to hold a virtual "review" meeting in November, before India gives up its presidency, is a chance to ensure implementation and scrutiny of the decisions made over the weekend, that has been dubbed "India's G-20 moment".