

Society Matters

The 25th meeting of ASI was hosted by Department of Astronomy, Osmania University, Hyderabad. The meeting was well attended by over 140 participants. A very exciting scientific program was drawn up by the SOC chaired by Dr. K. Subramanian (IUCAA, Pune), consisting of 24 invited talks, 2 evening lectures, 8 thesis presentations and 117 poster papers. A special highlight of this meeting was the “Prize Talks” by the Vainu Bappu Gold Medal Awardees for the Year 2004, Dr. R. Srianand (IUCAA) and Dr. Ray Jayawardhana (Univ. Toronto, Canada). The scientific sessions were held in Mekaster Auditorium, on the topics: (i) Planets/Sun, (ii) ISM, (iii) Compact objects, (iv) Extragalactic astronomy, (v) Reports from Observatories, (vi) Rapporteur talks on posters, (vii) Thesis talks, (viii) Mini Symposium on Diffuse background and (ix) Mini symposium on Results from surveys. The General Body Meeting of the ASI was held on February 9, 2007, which was attended by 40 members. The delegates enjoyed their stay; thanks to the efforts of the LOC, very efficiently coordinated by Dr. S. N. Hasan (Osmania University). Details of the awards which were announced during ASI-2007 are given in the following:

Vainu Bappu Gold Medal-2004: Announcement for Vainu Bappu Gold Medal 2004 was made through BASI, SolarNews (Electronic Newsletter), AAS Bulletin, IAU, by post to more than 50 distinguished researchers both within the country and abroad, and to directors/heads of various institutes. In response, three nominations were received. A panel under the chairmanship of Dr. G. Srinivasan was constituted by the President for evaluating the nominations, with Drs. SM Chitre, A Pramesh Rao, TP Prabhu and SK Ghosh as members. The M.K. Vainu Bappu Gold Medal of the Astronomical Society of India for the year 2004 was jointly awarded to Dr. Raghunanathan Srianand of Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune, India, and Dr. Ray Jayawardhana of the University of Toronto, Canada. The gold medals, certificates and citations were presented to the awardees at the 25th Meeting of the ASI on February 7, 2007, where they also gave their talks.

The citation of Dr. Srianand reads: “The M.K. Vainu Bappu Gold Medal of the Astronomical Society of India for the year 2004 is awarded to Dr. R. Srianand of Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune, India for his outstanding contributions to cosmology. He shares this award with Dr. Ray Jayawardhana of the University of Toronto, Canada. Dr. Srianand’s major scientific contributions have been in understanding the physics of inter-galactic medium through spectroscopic observations of QSOs. He and his collaborators made the first measurement of the temperature of cosmic-microwave background radiation at a high redshift of greater than 2. Dr. Srianand and his collaborators have placed a strong constraint on the variation of fine structure constant over look-back time scales of ten billion years”.

The citation of Dr. Jayawardhana reads: “The M.K. Vainu Bappu Gold Medal of the Astronomical Society of India for the year 2004 is awarded to Dr. Ray Jayawardhana of the University of Toronto, Canada, for his outstanding contributions to the area of star formation and sub-stellar objects. He shares this award with Dr. R. Srianand of Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics, Pune, India. Dr. Jayawardhana’s major scientific contributions have been in understanding evolution of sub-stellar objects. He and his collaborators have shown that majority of brown dwarfs have disks similar to young stars, and young brown dwarfs go through an accretion phase. Dr. Jayawardhana and his collaborators have provided strong evidence suggesting that formation of brown dwarfs is merely an extension of star formation”.

Best Poster Paper Awards: A set of four awards is instituted for the Poster presentations at the meetings of the ASI, each consisting of a cash prize of Rs 500 and a certificate. A panel of judges comprising of Dipankar Bhattacharya (RRI), P. Venkatakrisnan (USO-PRL), J.S. Bagla (HRI) and A.A. Deshpande (RRI) was formed for the selection of best poster awards in 4 categories during ASI-2007. The results announced by K. Subramanian, Chair, SOC, are as follows:

Sun and Solar System (S) - Seeing Induced Cross-talk in Filter-based Velocity Measurements by P. Sreejith (ISRO, Bangalore), R. Sridharan (Space Telescope Science Institute, Baltimore, USA, and K. Sankarasubramanian (ISRO, Bangalore).

Stars and Galaxies (G) - New Results on Radio Emission from the Transient Bursting Source GCRTJ 1745-3009 by Subhashis Roy (ASTRON, the Netherlands), Scott Hyman (ASTRON, the Netherlands), Sabyasachi Pal (NCRA, Pune), T. Joseph (NCRA, Pune), W. Lazio Paul (ASTRON, the Netherlands), S. Ray (NCRA, Pune) , Namir E. Kassim (ASTRON, the Netherlands) and Sanjay Bhatnagar (NCRA, Pune).

Instrumentation (I) - Jointly to (i) Proposed Adaptive Optics System for Vainu Bappu Telescope by A. K. Saxena (IIA, Bangalore), V. Chinnappan (IIA, Bangalore) and J. P. Lancelot (IIA, Bangalore), and (ii) **Feasibility of using ANN-based Algorithms for Improving the Sensitivity of TACTIC Imaging Telescope** by V.K. Dhar (BARC, Mumbai), A.K. Tickoo (BARC, Mumbai), M.K. Koul (BARC, Mumbai), R. Koul (BARC, Mumbai) and B.P. Dubey (BARC, Mumbai).

Best Presentation of Thesis Award: This feature is instituted by the society to encourage the participation of young astronomers who have completed their theses during the last two years preceding the ASI meeting. A panel of judges was appointed by the Executive Council to select the best presentation. The result announced by K. Subramanian, Chair, SOC. This award was jointly given to the following:

Amrit Lal Ahuja (IUCAA, Pune) for his thesis talk entitled “Study of Pulsar DM using the GMRT”, and Anand Hota (NCRA-TIFR, Pune) for his thesis talk entitled “A Radio Study of Gas Loss Processes in Nearby Galaxies”.

Young Astronomer Award for 2007: The aim of this award, made once in every two years, is to motivate young Indian scientists to make outstanding research contributions in Astronomy/ Astrophysics and to publish the same in the Bull. Astron. Soc. India. The award consists of a cash prize of Rs 3000 and a scroll of honour. A panel of three referees comprising of GC Anupama, Harish Bhatt and DJ Saikia considered the candidates for the ASI-Young Astronomer Award 2007 based on regular papers published in Bull. Astron. Soc. India during the years 2005 and 2006. The panel recommended the following paper for the award:

Sabyasachi Pal, Sandip K. Chakrabarti, Alex Kraus and Samir Mandal: Broadband radio spectrum of SS433, Bull. Astron. Soc. India, Vol 34, 1-9 (2006)

This award is shared by Sabyasachi Pal (Centre for Space Physics, Kolkata) and Samir Mandal (Centre for Space Physics, Kolkata); first author and co-author of the paper who are below the age of 35 years. The result was announced during the ASI2007-GBM.

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Secretary
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