

PHCOG MAG.: Reports

A meeting inspiring the young minds: Yet another noble venture from the Nobel laureates

Arun Kumar H.S

Rudolf-Buchheim-Institute for Pharmacology, Frankfurter Strasse. 107, D-35392 Giessen, Germany.

E mail: arun.kumar@phcog.net

Every year in the end of June a remarkable informal gathering of Nobel laureates and few selected young researchers (I would say the lucky ones) is organised at Lindau (a remarkably beautiful place in Germany). The meeting has 55 years of glorious history and struggle in bringing together Nobel Laureates and young researchers in an informal but truly inspiring atmosphere to listen to the Laureate's lectures and to engage in discussions with them on science and society, a demand of increasing importance to society.

Since 1953, some 500 - 700 top students and young researchers from various institutions initially in Germany and now increasingly from all over the globe attend upon the invitation by the Council, often as a reward for the quality of their performance and research work. The young researchers come to Lindau through recommendation by their superiors, deans, and mentors on the basis of selection criteria put forth by the Council (<http://www.lindau-nobel.net/content/section/2/17/>). The fraction of young researchers from abroad has risen over the past years to about 45 %, and there are more than 20 countries by now, which send the chosen young in groups accompanied by a senior representative generally from academic or administrative environment. The largest contingent of about 70 researchers came from the USA followed by India (45) and china (30).

The Lindau meetings cover at intervals of three years the three natural science disciplines of the Nobel Prize: physics, chemistry, and physiology or medicine. In certain years, as in 2000 and 2005 (once every five years), all three disciplines come together. The Laureates give presentations on topics of their choice. In addition, panel discussions with participation of the audience address interdisciplinary questions and include challenges to science and society. Specially organized discussions have the young participants gather around one Laureate per group for several hours in the afternoons. There are also social events for bridging gaps and closer interaction between the Nobel Laureates and the young minds. The meetings end on Friday, when all participants take a cruise across Lake Constance to the island of Mainau with ample opportunities for

further informal personal contacts. The Farewell ceremony is in the courtyard of Main Castle, home of the Count Bernadotte family. A detailed history on the beginning of these meetings can be had at the following web page:

<http://www.lindau-nobel.net/content/section/2/17/>.

This year's event was remarkable as it was an interdisciplinary meeting with representation from Physics, chemistry and physiology or medicine and I consider myself lucky to be part of it. Over 730 young researchers joined from all over the globe to interact with 50 Noble Laureates. Every day was a blessing to hear to the morning lectures and round table discussions by the laureates, informal company of Nobel laureates during afternoon discussions and at dinner. The traditional final-day boat trip to Mainau as guests of the count was also fabulous and was like a trip to paradise. One ground fact I learnt from this meeting was Noble laureates are no different from the common scientists, its only at a particular time (probably being in the right place at the right time) their work made a difference, a difference which made a greater impact. As Ivar Giaever mentioned "Nobel laureates are like the rest of the world-some are smart, some are average and some are dumb" (Nature, Vol 436, 14 July 2005). Although most information about this meeting is available at the meetings webpage (<http://www.lindau-nobel.net/content/section/2/17/>) and as well covered in a recent article published in nature (Nature, Vol 436, 14 July 2005), some of my personal feelings about this meeting was the noble cause of these meeting. The very opportunity to meet researchers from different disciplines and from different countries to gain insight into the diversified thoughts was mind-boggling. Also there was a student from Japan, she was collecting questionnaires from all participants and as well from the laureates, which she intend to use to encourage students in her country to take up biology/science as a carrier option (a noble venture indeed). It is indeed a lifetime experience attending this meeting, I would very much encourage all students and young researchers to make avail the opportunity to attend this meeting and feel what inspiration means.



Round table discussion in progress



Presentation by Noble laureate



International contingent for the meeting



Interaction with Noble laureate



Ballet dance on day 1



Indian Contingent for the meeting