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**NIIST scientist bags award for physical sciences**

Special Correspondent

*His work leads to the development of superior light harvesting devices*

A. Ajayaghosh, CSIR-Outstanding Scientist at the National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST) here, who bagged the Infosys Prize 2012 in Physical Sciences, announced in Bangalore on Friday, has been recognised for his work that has led to the design and synthesis of organogels (pi-gels), a new class of nanomaterials with great potential for photonic and electronic applications.

According to the jury citation, Prof. Ajayaghosh has demonstrated that these self-assembled nanomaterials can be used to control the electronic energy transfer processes, paving the way for the development of superior light harvesting devices. Prof. Ajayaghosh was the first investigator to make functional phenylenevinylene organogels from designed building blocks. He is a leader in this exciting new area of materials chemistry.

The prize includes a gold medallion, a citation certificate, and prize money of Rs.50 lakh.

When contacted, Prof. Ajayaghosh said, "As a Keralite, and as someone whose entire education has been within the home State, I feel proud to have been selected for this award. I owe this honour to my group of students and collaborators. I feel happy that science in India is getting due recognition."

He hoped the award would encourage more youngsters in Kerala to take to science as a career.

His message to young scientists was, "If you are ready to work, there is nothing to stop you". The secret of being a successful scientist, according to him, is a passion for science, the commitment to work and the patience to wait.

Prof. Ajayaghosh obtained his Master's degree in Science (1984) from Kerala University and a Ph.D. (1988) from Calicut University. He joined the Regional Research Laboratory, CSIR (presently CSIR-NIIST), as a scientist in 1988. He was the Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at the Max Plank Institute for Strahlen Chemie, Germany (1994-96).

He has received several awards such as the Thomson Reuters Research Excellence Award (2009), the Outstanding Researcher Award of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) (2009), the Ramanna Fellowship of the Department of Science and Technology, India (DST) (2007) and the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Chemical Sciences (2007).

He has published several articles, book chapters and filed patents in the areas of molecular self-assembly, molecular probes and fluorescent materials. He is a Fellow of all the three Science Academies of India, and is on the international advisory board of the journal, *Chemistry-An Asian Journal*.