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CSIR gold for NIIST scientist Vijay Nair wins gold medal

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | ARCHANA RAVI (/byline/archana-ravi)

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😊 100%*Another difference he notes is in the kind of students who take up science.*

📷 Vijay Nair

Thiruvananthapuram: Vijay Nair has journeyed 27 long years between becoming the first scientist to head the School of Organic Chemistry at CSIR-Regional Research Laboratory and being chosen for the Chemical Research Society of India's gold medal for lifetime contributions. A lot has changed during the time. The CSIR-RRL was renamed CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology. Many new science institutions like IISERS have come up. (Though Vijay Nair says, "now, there are many first-rate science institutions. Still, for a country of our size, these are not enough").


Another difference he notes is in the kind of students who take up science.

"Back then, the best students would take up basic sciences. Now the best students join engineering or medicine courses. The ones in my generation who chose basic sciences did so because they liked science. Now most who study science subjects are not in because of their interest in it. That is sad," he says. He was fascinated by chemistry in school. "In Malayalam, chemistry is called Rasatantram and it promises to be interesting. Moreover, I had an excellent chemistry teacher in P.K. Gopinathan Nair," he says.


It was when he was in college that organic chemistry became his favourite subject. "Everything in nature is a manifestation of organic chemistry. Whatever you see, all the living things, the smell of flowers, colours, everything. I was very fond of it," he says. He started focussing on organic synthesis. "What nature creates in a few seconds, we might take months or years. Our aim is to make chemistry more efficient," he says. He is happy about the recognition from the country's chemistry community. However, he spends more time talking about his students, many of whom work at leading laboratories across the world.

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