

Press release: UK-India Partnership hailed as Science Minister announces winners of inaugural Newton Prize

- First 2 winners of the Newton Prize are an affordable portable device to monitor maternal health, and a pioneering solar energy project, with each being awarded £200k to address global challenges
- During the visit, Jo Johnson also announces further research agreements securing further collaboration between the two countries

Science Minister Jo Johnson has today (Wednesday 1 November) announced the first 2 winners of the Newton Prize 2017, during a two-day India visit where he outlined the strength of collaboration with Indian partners and the UK's ambitions to develop the relationship further.

The winning projects, which will each receive a £200,000 grant, include the development of a portable device to measure blood pressure and pulse of expectant mothers to try and prevent deaths from the biggest causes of maternal deaths worldwide, and a solar energy programme that will look at providing cheaper and more efficient solar power. Both projects are partnerships between UK and Indian researchers.

The Newton Prize has been developed to celebrate and further encourage the partnerships that UK researchers have forged with their colleagues in Newton Fund partner countries. Further prize awards will also be made in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam in the coming weeks.

The collaborations developed under the Newton Fund address some of the world's most pressing challenges, by utilising the skillsets of UK researchers and researchers globally to improve the quality of life for many around the world.

Jo Johnson said:

These Newton Prize winners not only embody international collaboration on crucial issues, but also illustrate our ambition to work with our global partners on a wide variety of mutually-beneficial research.

The Newton Prize demonstrates how the UK is working with partners to address important international issues. This complements the work we are undertaking as part of our upcoming Industrial Strategy to support our world-class research and innovation sector, helping them work collaboratively to address the great challenges of our time.

The UK-India Newton Fund, known as the Newton-Bhabha Fund, is an instrumental

part of the UK-India research and innovation relationship, with a joint commitment of more than £200 million joint investment up until 2021. This collaboration enables the UK to produce higher quality research and innovation and to maintain its scientific excellence.

In addition to announcing the winners of the Newton Prize, Jo Johnson announced India-specific Rutherford Fellowships that will be delivered by the British Museum, British Library and Natural History Museum, as well as global Rutherford fellowships through the British Academy.

Jo Johnson also made a number of further research announcements, funded by Newton-Bhabha Fund:

- The publication of a Research Councils UK and Department of Biotechnology commissioned report on AMR mapping that provides a deeper understanding of antimicrobial resistance and outlines recommendations to address this growing global challenge
- A joint pilot innovation project between the Science and Technology Facilities Council's Central Laser Facility at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratories and India's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research to upskill Indian engineers on cutting edge technology as they jointly develop control systems for high power lasers
- 4 new projects funded within the 'Energy Demand Reduction in the Built Environment' programme that will seek to monitor energy use and demand with the overall aim to achieve reductions in carbon emissions
- 8 new projects funded within the India-UK Water Quality Programme, supporting policymakers, water managers, business and local communities to improve India's water quality
- Extension in funding for the India-UK Water Centre for a further 2 years, which facilitates collaboration and cooperation between researchers, policy makers and water managers in the UK and India
- £7 million of joint investment on the Agricultural-Data Enhancement for Animal and Plant Health programme which will seek to enhance existing animal and plant health data growing on each country's expertise in this area

Notes for Editors

1. The first of the 2 successful projects seeks to overcome the challenge of obstetric haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia and sepsis which accounts for more than 50% of maternal deaths worldwide. The winning scientists from St Thomas' Hospital in London and the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College in Belgaum, India, tested the introduction of a device that measures blood pressure and pulse, and is affordable, easy-to-use, and portable with low power requirements. The device has already been introduced in 10 countries across Asia and Africa, and initial results show that the system strongly predicts the risks of complications and its introduction into maternity care will help save lives. The UK and Indian partners for this project are the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Department for Biotechnology, India.

2. The second Newton Prize winner is the APEX-II programme, which is developing a new product that uses solar cells to supply clean, sustainable and affordable energy, and is led by Brunel University of London and the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. Low-cost, high-efficiency energy is a key global development challenge, and by advancing the technology around perovskite solar cells, this project is addressing this challenge and aims to help improve the quality of life of people around the world by developing cheaper and more efficient solar cells. This delivers benefit to both the UK and India, by enabling UK researchers to draw on the expertise of the very best scientists to develop new technologies in solar energy. The UK and Indian partners for this project are the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Department for Science and Technology, India.