

cles. We shall however not go into it here.

Varadhan is a very versatile mathematician who has contributed a good deal to the promotion of mathematics. A passing note about his personality may not be out of place at this point. Great scientists are supposed, in popular perception, to be absent-minded, eccentric, etc. Varadhan manifests a large deviation to this rule. So much so that people from other walks of life who meet him are surprised when they subsequently learn that they just met a great mathematician.

I would end this article with a paragraph from a popular-science presentation on Varadhan's work given by Tom Louis Lindstrom in connection with the

announcement at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters on 22 March: 'He is a prolific scientist with deep insights and an impressive array of technical tools, and he is very highly regarded and esteemed in the probability community. This does not only have to do with his results, but also his style – listening to a lecture by Varadhan, one is not only exposed to the best and most recent results in the subject, but one is also introduced to a way of thinking. His talks always emphasize the basic ideas, the challenges, the obstacles, and the delicate balance between the desirable and the possible which one has to strike to produce top class mathematical results. S. R. S. Varadhan is certainly a worthy winner of the Abel

Prize!' (http://www.abelprisen.no/nedlasting/2007/varadhan_en.pdf)

1. The Nobel Prize is awarded for achievements in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and peace. There is no Nobel Prize in mathematics. Contrary to popular belief, there is also no Nobel Prize for economics. What is called the Nobel Prize for economics is actually the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel.

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Setting up a national agenda towards biosecurity

Biosecurity is a strategic and integrated approach that encompasses the policy and regulatory framework to efficiently handle risks in the sectors of human health and nutrition, animal and plant life and other environmental risks.

In view of the emerging concerns for biosecurity, the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore and M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai jointly organized a two-day discussion meeting at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, IISc Campus, Bangalore on the setting up of a national agenda towards biosecurity. The meeting sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India focused on various issues related to biosecurity, biosafety, biohazards and bioterrorism and its relevance to India in which biosecurity specialists, policy makers and other individuals participated.

Some of the conclusive recommendations of this meeting were: India needs a biosecurity policy to safeguard the income and livelihood of farm sector, en-

hance national capacity to monitor, warn, educate and build infrastructure for containment of any eventual pandemic. Convergence in the efforts of all Departments and Ministries to develop a coherent biosecurity strategy in which education, regulatory measures and social mobilization are vital in formulating a biosecurity strategy. Setting up of a National Agricultural Biosecurity Network that will serve as a coordinating and facilitating scientific partnership between various institutions and the establishment of a knowledge centre which will primarily act as a think tank for futuristic agricultural developments. Upgradation of biosafety level laboratories at the national level connected to the four regions of the country. Also, an operational programme to monitor the biosecurity in aquaculture. Control measures for exotic pathogens and disease management activities for already established ones. A national surveillance system and a Rapid Response Team to contain the

problem of diseases prevalent in our country. Molecular epidemiology of nutrition deficiency/genetic susceptibility to degenerative diseases should be undertaken for early detection in which a multidisciplinary approach involving biotechnology, pharmacogenomics, molecular medicine and nanotechnology is important.

Classification of bioweapons, use of radiation techniques for protection from biohazards, close collaborations in emergency scenarios as done in the case of NIV (ICMR) and High Risk Security Lab (ICAR) for Avian flu and modernized plant quarantine stations including measures to strengthen plant quarantine facilities through training of officers in pest risk analysis, surveillance and molecular diagnosis of pests, etc.

Literacy drives towards biosecurity, a focused threat/risk analysis followed by capacity building in diagnosis and preparedness, developing emergency action plan and establishing a single integrated National Biosecurity Centre.