

## Abdus Salam School boosts maths studies

By Our Reporter

LAHORE, Jan 25: The study of mathematics has received a great boost in Pakistan during the past five years with the establishment of a centre of excellence by the GCU, Lahore, Abdus Salam School of Mathematical Sciences (ASSMS) where as many as 106 PhD scholars are at present engaged in research work.

Eighteen scholars have already received their PhD degrees including Asia's youngest female, 25 years old Miss Shaheen Nazir.

This was stated by ASSMS Director General Dr AD Raza Chaudhry in an interview on completion of five years of the school established in 2004 for research and advanced studies in mathematical sciences.

He said the school had become one of the fastest growing doctoral schools in the world with "the largest and strongest PhD programme in South Asia in mathematical sciences." The scholar's aim was to train professional scientists to pursue the study of scientific and technical problems of mathematical methods and to undertake research in various branches of the subject, he said.

He said the services of as many as 43 mathematicians regular as well as visiting, from over a dozen countries of the world have been hired by the school to supervise the work of the PhD students and post-doctoral fellows in addition to taking care of general mathematical education at all levels in Pakistan. They are from England, Germany, France, America, China, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and the Netherlands.

He said another unique feature was the starting of the post-doctoral fellowship at the school. Previously, Pakistani mathematicians used to go abroad for post-doctoral fellowship and "now things are happening other way round. Now a number of young PhD holders from prestigious of institutions of the world are choosing the ASSMS for their post-doctoral fellowship"

In the current academic year, they have come from china, Germany, Georgia, Italy, Indonesia, Romania, United States and Uzbekistan, "which is a sign of quality faculty," he added.

The faculty and about 130 PhD students have already published over 200 research papers during the current year in famous journals of mathematical Sciences of the world, a performance comparable to the top academic

institutions of the world, he said. Dr Chaudhry said not only in the doctoral and postdoctoral studies the school has also made great efforts in popularizing the mathematics among the secondary and higher secondary school students by launching international event called Kangaroos of mathematics for the students from third grade to 13<sup>th</sup> grade. It held an nual contests in the subject for them. Starting in 2005 with about 6000 students participating from all parts of Pakistan the number of students increased six times to about 37000 last years which shows the great interest and enthusiasm of Pakistani students in mathematics. "This is very healthy sign for Pakistani education," he remarked.

The international one-day event is held on March 17 every year. He hoped the number would increase this year. Last year, over three million students had participated in the contest from countries enrolled as members of the Union of Productive Learning Institutes and Pakistan was made the first south Asian member in 2005 ahead of India, which has not been given membership so far.

Another initiative taken to promote mathematics in Pakistan, he said, was Pakistan's participation for the first time in the international Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) held in Mexico in 2005. In this connection, two Romanian Mathematicians of international repute pofessors Mircea Bcheanu and Babu Berceanu helped Pakistan participate in the IMO two years ahead of normal procedure. He said that some of the math problems presented by Pakistani participants at IMO were ranked number 1 among more than 90 participating countris and in 2007 Pakistan won bronze medal at IMO.

Pakistan was also ranked as a "Rising Star" by the international scientific monitering agency last year for high quality research at the ASSMS, which has an exchange programme with about two dozen foreign universities. He said the school had organised three world conferences on the 21<sup>st</sup> century mathematics in 2004, 2005 and 2007 attended by world's top mathematical scientists.