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# Report on the

# 14th International Pure Mathematics Conference 2013

# (14 IPMC 2013) Islamabad, August 23–25, 2013

**This report can be downloaded at URL**
http://www.math.jussieu.fr/∼miw/articles/pdf/Rpt14IPMC2013.pdf

When I was invited by Professor Qaiser Mushtaq to participate to the 14th International Pure Mathematics Conference 2013 organized by Preston University, Qaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, Algebra Forum and the Pakistan Mathematical Society, I was glad to have such an opportunity to get a better view of the situation of mathematics in Pakistan. It was my second visit to Islamabad (the first one was in December 2009, there is a report on my web site

http://www.math.jussieu.fr/∼miw/articles/pdf/RptIndePakistanNepal2009-2010.pdf)
while I visited ASSMS Lahore more often, for CIMPA Research Schools, for giving courses, and also for the 6th World Conference on 21st Century Mathematics in March 2013. So it was for me an opportunity to make comparisons.

I have not been disappointed at all by the hospitality of the colleagues in Islamabad. As always in Pakistan we are welcomed in a very friendly way, to such an extend that I feel ashamed that the foreign people do not receive a similar hospitality when they visit France. A strong point of the 14 IPMC 2013 has been the social program, with sightseeing visits the first two evenings, with excellent meals, with a comfortable accommodation in Hotel Margala for the 9 foreign speakers, at the very place where the conference took place, which is quite comfortable. This conference gave us the opportunity to meet mathematicians from Pakistan and also to meet the other

foreign speakers, who were coming from Bangladesh (2), China (2), Algeria, France, Iran, Nepal, Nigeria.

The main weak point was the fact that a large percentage of the colleagues who were supposed to come (from Pakistan and from other countries) did not show up, apparently without previous notice for many of them. The program which was announced initially (and which is still on the web site

http://www.pmc.org.pk/

of the conference) was quite attracting, but the actual program was much lighter. For instance, the first day, 3 lectures were scheduled in the morning and 16 the afternoon (in two parallel sessions); in fact, only one lecture took place in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. The situation was similar the two other days, but it was not easy to keep track of the lectures which actually took place, since the program did not follow the list which was distributed. There were 385 registered participants, but during the last morning I counted only about 50 people in the room.

My own lecture was on the last morning, the title was *On the Brahmagupta-Fermat-Pell Equation.* The pdf file of my presentation is on my website

http://www.math.jussieu.fr/∼miw/articles/pdf/BrahmaguptaFermatPellEn2013VI.pdf

Before starting my talk, I made some advertisement for the program NANUM 2014

http://www.icm2014.org/en/participants/mathematicians

which will enable 1000 mathematicians to attend the ICM 2014 in Seoul. Most of the participants were not aware of this program, including some faculty members of Qaid-i-Azam University Islamabad, in spite of the fact that there is one ambassador of this program who belongs to that university, and his duty includes

> to promote ICM 2014 and to share the proposed theme, "Dreams and Hopes for Late Starters," among the mathematicians in your country and neighboring countries with strong sense of responsibility,

The deadline for applications is August 31, and I hope that after my talk several mathematicians will apply.

This anecdote is one example of the fact that connections between mathematicians in Pakistan are poor, even inside the same university. There were not so many Pakistani mathematicians who attended both the Lahore conference last March and this one in Islamabad in August.

At the same time as my visit to Islamabad, Francine and Marc Diener were visiting COMSATS. They came for the first morning with their host, Moiz ud Din Khan, Head of the Department of Mathematics, CIIT, Islamabad, and they kindly invited me to visit COMSATS the same day and meet the Rector S.M. Junaid Zaidi, but the organizer of 14 IPMC 2013 did not grant me the permission to leave the hotel.

I feel that the number of mathematicians in Pakistan is large enough to host regular conferences both in Lahore (every second year) and in Islamabad (every year). There should not be competition, it would be more efficient if the mathematicians in this country were cooperating. There are two main mathematical societies in Pakistan, each of them has a president who is the same year after year. A better scheme would have a single society with a rotating presidency.

Some of the lectures, both by Pakistani mathematicians and by foreign speakers, were of a very good scientific level. But many of them were devoted to a very particular technical topic, and it was doubtful whether the speaker had a broad view of the subject. I did not expect that the scientific level would match the level of the 6th World Conference on 21st Century Mathematics in March 2013 (where the president of the scientific committee was Pierre Cartier), but I was hoping to attend more interesting talks.

On a personal level I was somewhat disappointed by the fact that my participation to this conference was supported only partially. In the initial mail of invitation it was written

> *We will provide you return airfare and free accommodation for the conference days.*

The reimbursement was given to me in Pakistani Rupees at the very end of the conference, too late for me to convert it into another currency before leaving Pakistan, and so far I did not succeed to convert it, but in the best case it will cover at most 3/4 of the total cost of my visit.

In spite of some weak points, it was interesting for me to participate. To organize such an international conference every year requires a lot of work, it is not an easy task, and it is useful for the progress of mathematics in Pakistan. In particular the foreign visitors witness that the security questions should not be exaggerated. Our colleagues from Pakistan need international contacts, and such events are very useful for them.

I wish to conclude by congratulating Qaiser Mushtaq for organizing this conference every year since 2000, and for thanking all the organizers for their excellent job, especially Abid Ali who was so kind to organize the sightseeing visits for all foreign participants, and who joined me in the mornings for jogging.

*Michel Waldschmidt.*