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Making Pakistan proud: Student duo shines at CERN

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By Web Desk on October 19, 2015

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ISLAMABAD: With Pakistan becoming the first associate member of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research among Asian countries this year, young scientists from the country have already started to make their mark.

A graduate of the National University of Science and Technology (Nust) stood first at the summer internship programme at the research facility popularly known as Cern, among 45 young graduates from across the globe.

Similarly, a graduate of the Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) has made his mark with his exceptional theoretical and experimental skills at Cern.

NUST

Nust graduate Azqa Nadeem was selected by a team for the CERN openlab summer student programme from a pool of about 1,600 applicants. In total, 40 students were selected.

Azqa was supposed to evaluate physical tokens for so-called multifactor authentication that is the process of logging into a computer system by using more than a password. “Azqa has done a great job and succeeded in selecting one out of two methods and providing good arguments [as to]why the second method is insecure and should be rejected,” said Dr Stefan Lüders, Cern computer security officer in an email to Hafeez Hoorani, director general of the National Centre for Physics.

Hoorani is Cern’s focal person for Pakistan.

Azqa got a proof-of-concept pilot system up and running and CERN is aiming at deploying the final version during the next months. Her presentation was voted as the best presentation out of all summer student projects. “I am more than proud of this,” Luders stated in his email.

Azqa told *The Express Tribune* that it was indeed a matter of pride for her to work with some of the world’s smartest people at Cern on problems that had yet to surface.

QAU

QAU graduate Muhammad Ansar Iqbal has an MSc in physics, and completed his Mphil under the supervision of Hoorani in experimental high energy physics.

He worked on compact muon solenoid (CMS) which is a general-purpose detector at the Large Hadron Collider.

Iqbal said he was surprised to hear that one of the detectors of the collider was assembled in Pakistan.

“I was with the team to check the efficiency studies of those detectors through cosmic muon,” he said.

This year, there were eight summer students in the resistive plate chambers (RPC) at the facility.

An email from his supervisor, Anton Dimitrov, to Hoorani stated that “Iqbal was one of the really exceptional students who showed technical, theoretical and experimental skills which were well above the average level.”

He also wrote that he would be glad if they could continue working with him remotely.

“He was very fast and efficient in problem solving. He performed brilliantly his task to compare RE4 Construction with Operation data,” Dimitrov wrote in the email.

Iqbal said there needs to be a multidisciplinary approach to learning especially when it came to sister subjects such as physics, computer science and engineering.

“This will help our prospects in the field of research,” he added.

Hoorani said that it was indeed a matter of pride for the whole country.

Research ties

Cooperation between Pakistan and Cern dates back to signing of an agreement in 1994. Later, Pakistan wished to be its associate member back in 2013, after which CERN sent its task force to gauge the country’s science and technology base and industrial capabilities in early 2014, and in December it was decided to approve the membership. A formal announcement was made in July this year.

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