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IIT Bombay's Prof. Neela Nataraj Elected Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS)

Professor of Mathematics joins one of the world's foremost scientific academies, in recognition of her work in numerical analysis and finite element methods

MUMBAI, 14th November 2026: Prof. Neela Nataraj, Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Dean (Strategy) at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, has been elected a Fellow of The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) for the advancement of science in developing countries. She is among 87 scientists elected as Fellows of the Academy on 5 November 2026, eight of them from India. Her Fellowship takes effect on 1 January 2027.

Election as a TWAS Fellow is among the highest international honours for scientists from the developing world. Fellows are elected by their peers for a sustained record of world-class research and for their contributions to the scientific community. The recognition honours Prof. Nataraj's outstanding contributions to numerical analysis, finite element methods and applied mathematics, as well as her work in promoting scientific research in developing countries.

About TWAS

The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) was founded in 1983 under the leadership of Nobel laureate Abdus Salam and is based in Trieste, Italy. It works to advance science and engineering for sustainable prosperity in the developing world. With this election, the Academy's membership rises to 1,510 Fellows, from more than 100 countries and including 13 Nobel laureates.

Research Contributions

Prof. Nataraj's research centres on the numerical analysis of partial differential equations (PDEs), with fundamental and computational work on linear and non-linear elliptic systems, including challenging fourth-order PDEs. She develops and analyses finite element and finite volume methods for non-linear systems of PDEs, with particular emphasis on a priori and a posteriori error

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estimation, convergence analysis and optimisation problems governed by PDEs. Her work has found applications across a wide range of problems, including laser surface hardening of steel, viscoelastic Kelvin–Voigt fluids, von Kármán plate problems describing large deflections of thin elastic plates, nematic liquid crystals, tumour growth modelling, and thin structures with reactive diffusion.

Career Journey

Prof. Nataraj's journey, from a student who first aspired to become a teacher to an internationally recognised mathematician, reflects decades of sustained contribution to research, teaching and academic leadership.

1998 — PhD, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

1999 — Joined the faculty of IIT Delhi

2003 — Joined IIT Bombay

2014 — Promoted to Professor; later served as Institute Chair Professor

2021–2025 — Dean (Faculty Affairs), IIT Bombay

Present — Dean (Strategy), IIT Bombay

Honours and Recognitions

Alongside her research, Prof. Nataraj has made significant contributions to teaching and academic administration, earning a distinguished list of honours and fellowships:

2019 — Fellow, National Academy of Sciences, India (NASI)

2019 — Indian National Science Academy (INSA) Teachers Award for Excellence in Teaching

2021 — Fellow, Indian Academy of Sciences, Bengaluru

2024 — Elected Fellow, Indian National Science Academy (INSA)

2024 — Elected to the NASI Council

2025 — Selected for the J.C. Bose Fellowship

2025 — Named Honorary DAAD Research Ambassador\

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Her standing in the international research community is also reflected in her editorial service. She has served on the editorial boards of leading journals including the IMA Journal of Numerical Analysis, SIAM Journal on Scientific Computing, ESAIM: Mathematical Modelling and Numerical Analysis and the Indian Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics.

A Role Model for Women in Mathematics

Prof. Nataraj has long been passionate about teaching, mentoring and collaborative research, and is a strong advocate for women in mathematics.

In 2018 she was one of three mathematicians, from three continents, featured in Journeys of Women in Mathematics, a 13-minute film produced by the International Mathematical Union's Committee for Women in Mathematics with support from the Simons Foundation. Alongside Aminatou Pecha Njiahouo of Cameroon and Carolina Araujo of Brazil, she shared the difficulties and triumphs of a life in mathematics. The film premiered on 31 July 2018 at the first World Meeting for Women in Mathematics, $(WM)^2$, held as a satellite event of the International Congress of Mathematicians in Rio de Janeiro.

She is also profiled in the international Women of Mathematics portrait project, which celebrates women mathematicians and their paths into the discipline.

Lessons from her career

- **Passion and perseverance:** obstacles arise at every stage; whether they become challenges to overcome depends on how passionate you are about the work you want to do
- **Sincere effort is never wasted:** a lesson from her own PhD supervisor, who taught her that "the time you invest in something sincerely is not wasted time."
- **Hard work and collaboration:** networking and working with others are valuable, but dedication and hard work matter just as much

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- **Learn by doing:** seek out varied experiences, because "you have to do it to experience it."
- **The joy of teaching:** training students remains, for her, among the most rewarding parts of an academic career.
- **Encouraging women in mathematics:** young women should pursue mathematics and not let traditional societal views hold them back.

Prof. Nataraj's career brings together scientific excellence, mathematical theory and computation, academic leadership and a deep commitment to mentoring the next generation, including a steadfast commitment to women's inclusion in research. Her work is a reminder that mathematics is not merely about equations and algorithms, but also about curiosity, perseverance, creativity and collaboration.

IIT Bombay congratulates Prof. Neela Nataraj on this well-deserved honour.

About IIT Bombay:

The Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, set up in 1958 as the second IIT, is recognised worldwide as a leader in the field of science and engineering education and research. The Institute was granted the status of 'Institution of Eminence' by the Ministry of Education (the then Ministry of Human Resources Development) on July 9, 2018. IIT Bombay is reputed for the quality of its faculty, cutting-edge research, industry relations, and the outstanding caliber of students graduating from its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Institute has 34 Academics Divisions (including Departments, Academic Centres, Schools, Academic Advisory); 29 Research Centres (including Externally Funded Centres and Labs) and 9 Section 8 Companies (includes Society). Over the last six decades, more than 78,000 engineers and scientists have graduated from the Institute. It is served by 770 faculty, including 121 women faculty (plus 241 parttime faculty), considered not only amongst the best within the country but also highly recognised in the world for achievements in the field of education and research. On June 18, 2026, IIT Bombay was ranked 2nd in India and 134th in the world in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for 2027. https://www.iitb.ac.in/

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