



SAASTA

South African Agency for Science
and Technology Advancement

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Media Release

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For immediate release:

Minister Pandor to deliver keynote address at the National Science Olympiad awards

The Minister of Science and Technology, Ms Naledi Pandor, will deliver the keynote address at the 53rd National Science Olympiad awards evening taking place on 6 July 2017 at Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand in Gauteng.

Speaking at the awards ceremony in 2014, Minister Pandor said the Olympiad was more than a science and biology exam competition. "It's the jewel in the crown of our Youth into Science strategy, which is all about identifying and nurturing talent.

"The Olympiad also identifies talent. It identifies talent that teachers have nurtured in schools across the length and breadth of the country," she added.

The National Science Olympiads awards are one of SAASTA's flagship projects. Since 2005, the 51-year-old project has offered learners in grades 10-12 an exciting opportunity to compete in science with fellow learners from Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

In 2017, about 37 000 learners from all nine provinces and three SADC countries participated, including learners from Harmony Gold Mining areas in Gauteng, North West and Free State provinces.

The Olympiad contributes toward excellence in science and has great potential to improve participation levels of previously excluded group and make science and maths a career choice for learners.

One of the shining examples in recent times is a whiz kid, Hamandishe Mathivha, a former learner at the previously disadvantaged school, Mbilwi Secondary School, Sibasa in Thohoyandou. He hails from the small rural town called Sibasa in Limpopo Province. He is a truly example of hope and determination to learners who are coming from the same background as him.

Mathivha was one of the top five national winners in Physical Science in 2015. He came second in the Physical Science category with a score of 73% amongst other learners in grade 12 from the top private schools in the country.

Despite coming from the school with a lack of access to resources, he managed to excel in the National Science Olympiad. He was awarded a special award for his achievement in the National Science Olympiad awards in 2015 for three consecutive years since grade 10. He was awarded a voucher worth R40, 000.00 towards registration and tuition fees at a university of his choice.

He wrote his matric in 2015 and achieved 100% in maths and physical science. He was named South Africa's top maths and physical science matric pupil of 2015.

He serves as an inspiration to all learners for his tenacity in rising above the numerous adversities he faced and clinging onto the dream of great accomplishments.

The awards ceremony will honour top young science learners in 2017 in various categories such as Top Winners for Life Sciences and Physical Sciences, Top Girl Learners and Top Learners from Previously Disadvantaged schools.

The annual competition comprises an examination, and top learners and schools stand a chance to win exciting prizes. The top national performers also stand a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to the London International Youth Science Forum and the Australian National Youth Science Forum. The Olympiad comprises two papers/streams: Physical Science (Physics and Chemistry) and Life Science. Learners can choose to write either the Physical Science or Life Science papers.

The main aim of the competition is to identify talent, to encourage excellence in science education and to stimulate interest in the sciences. It seeks to inspire young people to consider careers in science and technology.

It was started in 1964, initially for grade 12 learners with the objective of promoting Physical Science. Over the years, participation and performance in the National Science Olympiad has increased significantly from about 700 learners in 1967 to more than 30,000 in 2014.

Ends

Date: Thursday 06 July 2017

Time: 18:00 for 18:30

Venue: at Gallagher Convention Centre, 19 Richards Drive, Midrand in Gauteng

Dress: Traditional/Semi-Formal/Formal

RSVP: No later than Tuesday, 4 July 2017 (16:00) – email lindie@saasta.ac.za

Issued by:

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About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA)

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

SAASTA's contribution to the NRF's vision is to grow the pool of quality learners today who will become the scientists and innovators of tomorrow.

It aims to be the leading Science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of Science, Technology and Innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the NRF: The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za