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During early eighties I came across a news item in *Physics Today* about the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) in which Pakistan wasn't participating. I learnt that IPhO is a prestigious annual event held since 1967 providing an opportunity to the very best high school science students from all over the world in solving challenging theoretical and experimental problems that only the most talented among them could solve. In August 1994 Mr. Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari, the then President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, invited some leading physicists of the country to discuss future prospects of physics education and research in the country. The then Chairman of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), Dr. Ishfaq Ahmad led this delegation of which I was fortunate to be a member. During this meeting the idea of Pakistan's participation in the International Physics Olympiad was also considered and the President very kindly gave his blessings for initiating such an activity.

The following year a proposal for launching the National Physics Talent Contest (NPTC) was approved by PAEC and NPTC was launched on a pilot scale the same year for colleges of Rawalpindi and Islamabad with generous funding from PAEC. The key objective of NPTC was to give recognition at the highest level to young talented science students who excel in the national competitions and would represent the country in the International Physics Olympiad. NPTC is being held regularly on national level since 1996. In the year 1999 Pakistan was represented by an observer in the 30th International Physics Olympiad, which was held in the historic university town of Padua, Italy, where Galileo Galilei taught for a number of years. Pakistan started participating in the 32nd International Physics Olympiad hosted by Turkey in 2001 and it has been regularly participating in it since then.

In 2003 NPTC was extended to similar contests in Biology, Chemistry and Mathematics under the umbrella of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or the STEM Careers Project of the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Except for 2005-2007, when it was briefly located in the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology, Topi, NWFP, the Pakistan Institute of Engineering and Applied Sciences (PIEAS), Nilore Islamabad is the Home Institute of NPTC. The National Institute of Biology and Genetic Engineering (NIBGE), Faisalabad, HEJ, University of Karachi and the School of Mathematical Sciences (SMS) of Government College University Lahore are respectively the home institutes of the National Biology Talent Contest (NBTC), the National Chemistry Talent Contest (NCTC) and the National Mathematics Talent Contest (NMTC).

Launching NPTC, extending it to NBTC, NCTC and NMTC and interacting with some of the brightest high school students from all over the country over the previous 12 years was a most challenging, rewarding and

exhilarating experience. From the very outset the outcome of NPTC and subsequently NBTC, NCTC and NMTC was highly encouraging in that many students identified through these competitions eventually topped their respective board examinations, got highest scores in their A-levels, won bronze medals and honorable mentions in the International Science Olympiads and got offers of fully funded studies in leading universities of Europe and North America such as Stanford, Harvard, MIT, Caltech, Princeton and Oxford. Some of them are pursuing successful careers in Silicon Valley and elsewhere and others will soon be completing their doctoral studies in some of these universities.

Another unique feature of these contests has been the attachment of these talented youth to the STEM Careers Project. They have organized themselves into a volunteer core in the form of an active Alumni Association of the National Science Talent Contest (NSTC). They visit schools and colleges to take the message of NSTC to younger students in their respective home towns and help in conducting screening tests and training camps of NSTC. I am very glad to learn that the NSTC Alumni Association has matured to a stage to consider launching its own magazine in the form of NAAM. I wish them success in this new venture and in all its future endeavors.

Abdullah Sadiq