

'Breakthrough' science awards total \$22 mn

November 9 2015



Alibaba Group chairman Jack Ma (L), pictured with former US President Bill Clinton on September 29, 2015, is among backers of the Breakthrough Prize, which awarded \$22 million to stars of scientific research at a California gala November 8

Researchers in physics, mathematics and life sciences were awarded a total of \$22 million in the third Breakthrough Prize Awards funded by key Silicon Valley entrepreneurs.

The prizes aimed at giving glamour and star power to scientific research were awarded at a glitzy event Sunday in Mountain View, California, attended by film stars including Kate Beckinsale, Cameron Diaz and Benedict Cumberbatch.

"By challenging conventional thinking and expanding knowledge over the long term, scientists can solve the biggest problems of our time," said Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, one of the backers of the program along with Google co-founder Sergey Brin and Alibaba's Jack Ma.

"The Breakthrough Prize honors achievements in science and math so we can encourage more pioneering research and celebrate scientists as the heroes they truly are."

In life sciences, five prizes of \$3 million each were awarded in Sunday's ceremony to Edward Boyden of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Karl Deisseroth of Stanford University and Howard Hughes Medical Institute; John Hardy of University College London; Helen Hobbs of University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and Howard Hughes Medical Institute; and Svante Paabo of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.

The life sciences awards recognize advances toward understanding living systems and extending human life, with one prize dedicated to work helping the understanding of Parkinson's disease and neurodegenerative disorders.

In physics, the prizes recognizing advances beyond the standard model of particle physics went to five research teams: the Daya Bay Reactor Neutrino Experiment at University of California, Berkeley and Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory; the KamLAND Collaboration at Iwate Prefectural University, Japan; K2K and T2K at Japan's High Energy Accelerator Research Organization; the Sudbury Neutrino

Observatory at Queen's University, Canada; and the Super-Kamiokande Collaboration at several Japanese universities and research center.



British actor Benedict Cumberbatch (R), pictured with wife Sophie Hunter (L) in London on October 11, 2015, was among the entertainment-world celebrities who turned out to fete Breakthrough Prize winners November 8

The mathematics prize was awarded to Ian Agol of the University of California at Berkeley and Institute for Advanced Study.

Additional prizes went to junior researchers in physics and mathematics and a new "junior challenge" award was given to Ohio high school student Ryan Chester.

The program was founded by Brin and his former wife Anne Wojcicki;

Jack Ma and Cathy Zhang; Russian entrepreneur Yuri Milner and Julia Milner; and Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan.

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