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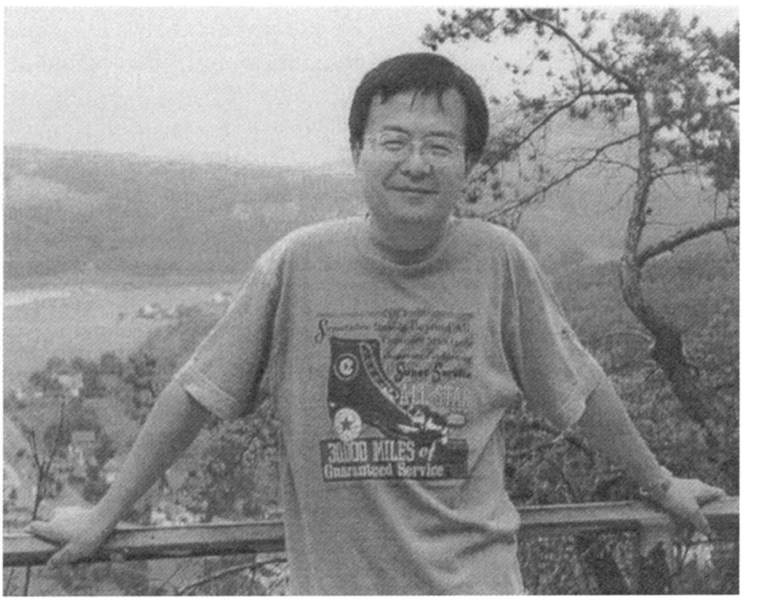
Editorial



Dr. Zhong Zhang, an AvH Sofja Kovalevskaja Award Winner.

In 2001, The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (AvH), Bonn, Germany, offered just this once, a special research award for young scientists. The award was named in honour of the great mathematician Sofja Kovalevskaja (1850–1891) and should enable young foreign scientists and researchers, who are amongst the best in the world, to set up their own working groups in Germany. The donor of the prize money is the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), and it is part of the German Government's "ZIP" program for investment in the future. The program was open to young researchers, no older than 35 years of age, from all countries and disciplines.

Dr. Zhong Zhang, an associate professor from the Technical Institute of Physics and Chemistry of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing, is one of the winners. He has been granted about 1 million Euro to establish a young research team and some new facilities at the Institute for Composite Materials (IVW) of the University of Kaiserslautern. His scientific host is Professor Dr.-Ing. Dr.h.c. Klaus Friedrich, with whom his group will cooperate between 2002 and 2004.

Understanding of structure-property relationships of polymer composites is Dr. Zhang's main research area. In the past several years, he worked at some world level institutions, e.g. The Research Center Karlsruhe, Germany, and The Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, England, concentrating on low-temperature properties of polymers and composites. The objective of his new project is to investigate the long-term behaviour of short fibre/particle reinforced thermoplastics and thermosets at different environmental temperatures, finally leading to an accelerative use of these materials in various industrial applications, especially in the blooming hydrogen technology. Based on a series of experimental investigations, artificial neural networks, a new mathematical approach inspired by biological nervous systems, will be employed to predict the performance of these materials as a function of their compositions and testing conditions. It is expected that in the near future people can drive their new generation cars powered by clean and renewable liquid hydrogen. The achievement of this project will definitely contribute to the safe utilization of this new energy source.

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