

CNR Rao suggests campaign to promote science as a career

By Bhavya Khullar

New Delhi, March 17 (India Science Wire): Motivating children to pursue and excel in science will add intellectual workforce to mitigate the challenges of the future, and bring recognition and respect for the country, according to eminent scientist Prof C N R Rao.

Science is the answer to all challenges that we face today such as exploding population, pollution, global warming, and need for alternative sources of energy, to name a few. Science is a powerful tool to improve the society and our lives. But, how do we motivate young children to pursue science? Professor Rao observed while addressing children from all over the country linked via Edusat, at Vigyan Prasar here.

Our rural population comprises of 50million children, and statistically speaking, there is a high probability that there is a Faraday, Maxwell, or Einstein there, said Professor Rao. He motivated children from different schools to excel in science. He also urged the need to motivate children in rural India.

Science too, like other professions today, is highly competitive and interdisciplinary. Professor Rao suggests that we should inculcate the following values in kids to motivate them to pursue science.

- Passion to find unknown and new things. This requires us to encourage children to ask questions. Teachers have the responsibility of teaching what isn't in the textbooks.
- Children must be taught to pay attention to the problems around them. Then work on ideas and solutions. Students in Delhi for example, must ask how to mitigate the Delhi smog, make cars that run on clean energy, or find materials that suck up carbon dioxide from vehicle emissions.
- Children must have a science role model very early in life. It boosts their interest and confidence to pursue science.
- We must tell our children to maintain high ethical standards. Fools can also make money, a lot of it rather, but only smart people can do science, he said. Smart people are not only intelligent; they also abide by ethics.
- We must teach children to be generous. You cannot do science if you are selfish, he said. Science requires sharing of ideas and resources, collaboration with peers, honest mentoring, and justified use of public money. All of this is possible if Indians practice generosity from an early age.
- Our children must value hard work. Average Indians are lazy, including many professors and teachers. They need long coffee breaks, and need them frequently, he said. India will become great, only when all its citizens become hardworking.

Young kids are often fed with dreams of owning a mansion or a Ferrari, a billion dollar company, and having lots and lots of money. People often think that scientists taste success much later in life, as a result of which, they have a low bank balance. Succeeding in science, however, requires a different mindset. Scientists worry about creating knowledge, not about creating wealth. (India Science Wire)