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Written by **Ravina Warkad**

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The theme of this year's fest is, 'Towards infinity: Minds, machines and the endless frontier'. Through the stalls and talks students can explore climate change solutions, AI & robotics, space research among other things. ([indiainsciencefest.org](http://indiainsciencefest.org))

The fifth edition of **India Science Fest** kicked off at IISER Pune on January 20. At the two-day fest, 150 scientists from across the world from universities such as MIT, Harvard, IISc, IIT, AIIMS and IISERs, will explain their work to students. At more than 30 interactive stalls, students can learn about science concepts, including some set up by the industry. The fest also has fun competitions in science photography, science fiction writing, explaining one's thesis to younger children, with prizes worth Rs 5 lakh.

Talking about the idea behind this initiative, Subramanian KR, Operating Partner, Convergence Foundation, said, "For any country to develop, science and technological advancement has been a key driver, from the industrial revolution in the West to the recent advancement in Japan, [Taiwan](#), Korea, China. All of their GDP development has been supported significantly by advancements in science technology. India has 10,000 science colleges and about 300 top institutes like IISER, but the science and technology output is not commensurate with this availability of talent. We have Chandrayan and the COVID vaccine. But for a country of our size, there should be hundreds of those if India aspires to be a Rs 10 trillion economy."

Elaborating on the need to make young learners interested in imagining a future in science, he said, "In 2023, the Parliament passed the Anusundan NRF bill allocating Rs 50,000 crore over the next five years on research funding.

So the government is certainly taking it seriously. But do we have enough children and students and youth interested in pursuing a career in science and technology? There is a big shortfall here. If you ask a class 12 science student to name a few top scientists in India, they will struggle to give you names."

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One booths at the fest hosted by Dr Pialy Ghanekar, founder of cell savvy group, is called sustainability unwrap.

“We are trying to build awareness about sustainability and eco-friendly products. Even if we choose an aberrantly sustainable option for example, the cotton bag leads to 272 kgs of CO2 emitted and consumes 2,000 litres, as against a plastic bag, which is villified, despite only 1.6 kg of CO2 emitted and uses only 6 litres of water. So its is not the material which is a problem. So the idea we are promoting is of using one bag for a lifetime”.

Anushka Banerjee, science communicator at the Centre for Brain and Mind, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences in [Bangalore](#) said, “In a workshop, we dismantled the some common myths and misconceptions around mental illness. We are trying to teach kids about neuroscience, genetics, and dementia.”

Subramanian K R said that they have chosen [Pune](#) to be the permanent home of this festival, “The city has top industries and global industries and also top science institutes and a very vibrant student community. So we believe Pune is the right place where all three of them can get together.”

India Science Fest is organised by the Foundation for Advancing Science and Technology (FAST). It was co-founded by Ashish Dhawan and Varun Agarwal. Professor K Vijay Raghavan, former principal scientific advisor to the Prime Minister, is helping in the project.

MBA student Swapnali Shirke, 23, came to the fest with classmates, and found the [Chandrayaan](#) lecture most interesting. While computer engineering students from Rajgad college played a game to understand how the mind works. Anisha Inamdar, a teacher at Air Force School, Chandan nagar, said, “We are thrilled that our children are getting this exposure, with different sessions and competitions. They are enjoying and learning.”