

Evolution made easy through cartoons for schoolkids

EXPRESS PHOTO

National Chemical Laboratory organises talk to simplify complex scientific theories

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THANKS to an education system that encourages little out-of-the-box thinking, complex scientific theories often elude school children. Anu Raghunathan, a scientist at the National Chemical Laboratory, seems to have found a way out. Raghunathan interacted with around 85 schoolchildren at the National Chemical Laboratory on Sunday to initiate an easy approach towards science.

Raghunathan used cartoons

of Mickey Mouse to explain the complex theories of evolution. "Just as Mickey Mouse has changed from the time Walt Disney created it in 1928 to the present Mickey that we know with bigger ears, eyes and head, we humans have changed from the time we started life on this planet," she said.

"The education system today does not promote learning by questioning. It takes out all the fun that one can have while learning new concepts of science. School and textbooks train kids to think in a particu-

lar way. There is no scope for out-of-the-box thinking."

She explained the processes of natural and artificial selection by referring to the process of selection of a sports team in a school, where those who perform well get to play and others are automatically dropped out. "This is artificial selection, while Darwin talks about natural selection, where species like the dinosaurs are eliminated if they are not able adapt themselves to the changing environment," said Raghunathan.

Raghunathan emphasized the

need of exploring the world and taking a closer look at things as well as questioning constantly.

Ashwini Gowdara, one of the participants who has been collecting leaves of various kinds from the age of 12, said, "It was interesting to know that Darwin also collected leaves, flowers, pebbles and even animal fossils." A regular at the talks at the NCL, she feels it simplifies science lessons in school.

Nitin Shinde, a student of Class X, who later wants to become a microbiologist, shared his enthusiasm about this innov-

ative process of learning. "This exercise urged us to go beyond the correct answer and ponder over why it is correct."

Raghunathan also tried to engage students in discussions by asking them why they fall ill due to certain bacterial infections, but not after eating curd, which has lactic acid bacteria. She then introduced students to the concept of DNA sequencing.

Arvind Paranjape, a parent who attended the talk with his son, said, "The use of video footage to talk about three dimensional structures like DNA,



Students attend a talk on Darwin's Theory of Evolution at NCL

RNA etc is meant to introduce children to such concepts. When we read about these topics in school, we were asked by our teachers to just mug up all this. At least this will not be the case with my son."