

# Exciting Science Group ignites minds for decade

[SwatiShindeGole@timesgroup.com](mailto:SwatiShindeGole@timesgroup.com)

**Pune:** Shekhar Jadhav might come from a humble background, but has successfully put his best foot forward in the field of science with a little bit of hand-holding by a group of scientists.

Coming from an economically backward family in Pashan, Jadhav recently cracked the entrance test for getting admitted to the famed Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune. He is one of the many success stories of Exciting Science Group (ESG) initiated by some scientists from National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) and IISER, Pune.

As a student of Hutatma Balvir Vidyalaya, a school run by the civic body, Jadhav would attend talks delivered on science by ESG representatives. Inspired by the sessions, he opted for science at Modern College and successfully attempted the Kishore Vaidyanik entrance test to be admitted to IISER, Pune.

Like Jadhav, hundreds of students, some of them from civic schools, are inspired to pursue science. K Guruswamy of NCL and his team had embarked on the journey with a talk at the labora-

tory's Venture Centre in September 2008. Ten years down the line, the group has reached out to over 15,000 students through its 150-plus scientist volunteers.

They have been arranging monthly talks for children of eight civic schools. Guruswamy said, "The initiative is aimed at conveying the excitement of science and technology to the school students. We create an interface between the practising scientists and school students to demystify the scientific method."

The events have always been free of cost for the participants and have been possible for support from various organizations such as Forbes Marshall Foundation, Praj Foundation and the British Council.

ESG volunteers conduct weekly science club sessions at three PMC Vidya Niketan schools.

Hutatma Balvir Vidyalaya principal Neeta Gulawani said, "Our students look forward to the science talks on Saturdays. The initiative was started in our school around 2011 and is going strong with over 50 scientists visiting us."