



# Toys to learn with fun

The Science and Technology Museum is all set to open a scientific toy making centre



HEY kids, learning science is going to be much more fun now. For, the Science and Technology Museum in the city is all set to open a scientific toy making centre. You can go visit the place and try making toys that work on scientific principles, or can even buy the materials and try them out at home.

"The idea is to spark that interest in science among kids," says Museum director Arul Jerald Prakash. And as the first step in setting up this fun science centre, the employees at the Museum are being given a three-day training in scientific toy making.

The centre of activity bursts with energy. The young-at-heart enjoy playing with matchsticks, glue, wires, magnets, pencils, straws, balloons, broken CD pieces and rubber tubes to create some of the most exciting models of fans, propellers, motors, atoms and even windmills. Some of them are even learning how to make music out of propellers with a few notches on the straws and blowing through the open ends.

And some of the levitation experiments tried out by the class makes you realise that you really don't need the Harry Potter spell of Wingardium Leviosa to keep things up against gravity. The trainers explain that it is all about attractions and repulsions of magnets and getting the distances between magnets just right.

The trainers, Ashok Ropper and Samir Dhurde, from the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) at Pune, themselves seem to enjoy the classes. "No one can really react negative to this and the trainees are also enjoying this," says Samir.



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Ashok and Samir have several public outreach programmes at their centre in Pune and they are used to making trips to the rural areas in and around Pune explaining science to kids. "It's all small ideas, but they sometimes trigger bigger ideas in children," says Ashok, who even demonstrates a rotating fan which a Class-6 student taught him. Using just a bicycle spoke, a head, a piece of paper for the blade of the fan and a magnet, the idea behind it is conversion of vibrational energy to rotational energy.

Apart from all the junk bits for science, the duo are also armed with stacks of books on science such as 'Joy of Making Indian Toys', 'Hands-On' and 'Aha! Activities'. They are not selling the books, but anyone can buy them from the publishers or else can also download some parts from the website [www.arvindguptatoys.com](http://www.arvindguptatoys.com). The website also has a lot of ideas which might just tickle your brain and drive you to bigger ideas.

So, the next time, if any city kid is running out of ideas for school projects, all you have to do is visit the scientific toy centre.

What's most interesting is the genesis of the idea for the centre. When Education Minister M.A. Baby visited Pune for the funeral of Kamala Suraiyya, he visited the Science Centre at the IUCAA. He was so excited that he immediately instructed Arul Jerald Prakash to visit Pune and start one such centre for the students in the State too.