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## Initiative to popularise science

By Express News Service - THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | Published: 07th October 2013 11:00 AM  
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With the objective to make science education more alluring and effective, Vijnana Bharati, a nation-building science movement which has hundreds of science institutions and organisations in its network in India and abroad, has come up with 'Igniting Minds'. Stalwarts of India's scientific community, ranging from 'missile man' A P J Abdul Kalam to Green Revolution architect M S Swaminathan, would be digitally available through the initiative, promising to dramatically change the attitude towards science in Indian schools.

'Igniting Minds' aims to connect one lakh Indian students with renowned scientists, technocrats, Nobel laureates and social leaders who would share their wisdom and expertise with young brains.

The programme is named after the 2002 best-seller of former President Kalam. Anil Kakodkar, former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India is the chief mentor of the programme. G Madhavan Nair, former chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), is another chief mentor.

"In the first phase, around hundred students each from over thousand schools, both public and private, would join this programme. It would be officially launched this month from Delhi," Anil Kakodkar said.

By 2025, Vijnana Bharati envisages to create a dynamic scientific leadership.

The key resource persons of the programme include A P J Abdul Kalam, former president; Vijay Bhatkar, chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Delhi; M S Swaminathan, former Director General, Indian Council for Agriculture Research; T Ramasami, secretary, Department of Science and Technology; R A Mashelkar, former Director General, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR); and Prahlad Vadakkepat, expert in Robotics, National University of Singapore.

"The programme uses the latest video-conferencing facilities to connect the students with an array of renowned scientists and technocrats, who have created a deep imprint in their chosen domains. The unique feature of this programme is that the students can directly interact with the stalwarts," Kakodkar pointed out.

The video-conferencing tool, A-VIEW (Amrita Virtual Interactive e-Learning World), used for this programme, has been developed jointly by the Amrita University and IIT Mumbai.

Students can also create science-related blogs and share them with others through the knowledge portal developed by 'Igniting Minds'. Further, they would be encouraged to create new threads in the Innovation Board. The best innovative idea will be awarded and all participants will be given certificates.

The programme consists of 20 sessions (two sessions a month) in a year, where a set of 10 episodes each would be delivered to students from Classes VI to VIII and IX to XII, respectively. Each session would comprise a 30-minute documentary film, followed by a 'webinar' hosted by a resource person/subject expert and a live interactive session. In this interactive session, students can pose questions to the scientist in 'real time' and clear their doubts via video conferencing.

Academic institutions interested in this programme can contact through the website: [www.ignitingminds.org](http://www.ignitingminds.org).

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