

Celebrating National Science Day at St Philomena's College

On 28 February 2018 the undergraduate and postgraduate science departments of St Philomena's College held a brief celebration on the occasion of India's National Science Day. This day is said to mark the discovery of what is now known as combinatory scattering or Raman scattering by Sir C.V. Raman. The theme for this year was 'Science and technology for a sustainable future' and our celebration was centred around the same.

Dr Syed Akheel Ahmed the former vice-chancellor of Yenepoya University and a professor at the chemistry department of the University of Mysore was the guest of honour. The event was graced by the rector, Rev. Fr. Bernard Prakash Barnis, the principal, Dr T. Ruth Shanthakumari, the director of postgraduate studies and the vice principal of the undergraduate block, Rev. Fr. Sanjay Kumar.

Following an invocation song by Ms Aurel Venissa (II MSc, Physics) the compère Ms Sushma Castelino (II MSc, Physics) guided the programme through a welcome address by Prof. Ravi Saldanha of the undergraduate chemistry department and an address by Dr Ahmed. Staff and students from various departments, both science and arts, attended the event at the undergraduate auditorium with lots of enthusiasm.

Keeping in line with the theme of this year's National Science Day, Dr Ahmed spoke about the need for scientific temperament today. He talked of the origin of the idea of sustainability and how it must drive science and technology in the coming years. 'Necessity is the mother of invention' he remarked while explaining how, in the past too, science had advanced by leaps and bounds during wartime when there was a great need for scientific progress. Today is no different, with progress in science being ushered in by the need to build a sustainable future for coming generations.

Dr Ahmed also talked of how science need not be a costly venture, and explained, using his own past experiences as an example, how he was able to show several new results in his field without spending more than a hundred rupees. He also cited Sir C.V. Raman himself as an example and said that the scattering phenomenon the late Indian physicist demonstrated was achieved with equipment that costed a paltry sum of twelve rupees. All this, said Dr Ahmed, goes to show that real science is rooted not in equipment or budget but in one's drive and curiosity.

The brief event ended with a presidential address by the principal where she summed up, in agreement, Dr Ahmed's address and encouraged everyone to look at science from a universal perspective. Science does not affect scientists alone, Dr Shanthakumari said, asking if the adverse effects of nature, prompted by global warming, affect scientists alone. Science affects everyone and is something everyone should partake in, appreciate and learn about, she said, bringing the successful and memorable programme to a close.