

Indian students impress US astronaut

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INDIAN students have a sound understanding of basic concepts of physics and mathematics, said US astronaut Marsha Ivins who was in the city for a public lecture at the Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA).

Those with academic training in other subjects like biosciences and chemistry too can pursue a career in astronautics and aerospace industry as it is a multi-disciplinary area, the astronaut who has spent over 55 days in space on various missions, including shuttle missions, said.

Ivins was impressed by students who interacted with her at the IUCAA auditorium on Thursday evening.

"I find Indian students are a lot more curious and informed than students elsewhere. The kind of questions they asked at the end of the session clearly shows they have a very good understanding of basic concepts of physics and mathematics," she said.

She has had a career span-

ning about 36 years at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In 1980, she became a flight engineer and a co-pilot on NASA administrative aircraft. Her five space missions were STS-32 (1990), STS-46 (1992), STS-62 (1994), STS-81 (1997), and STS-98 (2001). Talking about the Indian space programme, she said, "Personally I feel space programme in India is quite ahead of a lot of other nations in terms of quality of space research programmes. For a nation, students as curious and enthusiastic can be a very rich source of workforce for the next few decades for Indian space programmes as the number of students taking up science in India appears to be far more than most other nations."

When asked about her view on science fiction and the way space research is depicted in popular science fiction, she said it opens up a very wide range of imagination and propels a curious mind to explore beyond the orbit of the earth to places unexplored.