

We have to develop a liking for science in every child: Narlikar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AUGUST 6

"ON one hand as we are advancing in the field of science and technology while today's generation, unfortunately, is becoming more superstitious. It seems that this generation is psychologically ill-equipped to handle growing complexities of life and take multiple decisions at a given time," said astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar. He was speaking to the editorial staff of *Loksatta* and *The Indian Express* during an Idea Exchange programme on Saturday.

Narlikar, 73, who was accompanied by his mathematician wife Mangala Narlikar, said that as the generation is turning more superstitious, there are very few who speak against it. "We will not find a solution to this problem overnight. We will have to encourage science education and develop liking for science in every child," Narlikar said.

He advocated a moderate approach to deal with the issue. "Offensive stance against superstition has always resulted into people embracing it even more firmly," he added.

Narlikar, who graduated from Banaras Hindu University and further studied in Cambridge University and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, also spoke about the progress on his ongoing work that challenges the Big Bang theory.

Pointing towards decreasing number of students taking up research in fundamental sciences, he said organisations like Indian Institute of Science Education and Research will change the scenario.

Known for the Hoyle-Narlikar Theory and his work

in Quasi-steady state cosmology, Narlikar also talked about his love for Sanskrit language and how he had to choose Science over Sanskrit when it came to choice of subjects. "Even though I took up Science, I continued learning the language. I have even written some stories in Sanskrit which have been published."

Expressing her strong objection to the rule of promoting children to the next grade even if they do not obtain enough marks, Mangala Narlikar said, "This is like cheating both students and

parents. If they have subsidies for malls and distilleries why don't they have money for education. The quality of education, specially in civic body-run schools, has really gone down. When a class is expected to have maximum 40 students, schools are forced to admit 75-80 students. Many students from fifth grade can not even read a complex consonant."

Replying to a question on female foeticide she said, "Apart from spreading awareness we will have to strive for creating a social environment where a boy and a girl are no different."