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Indian teacher makes learning fun

* Over 150 teachers from 60 schools attend training workshop in Lahore

By Ali Waqar

LAHORE: An educational expert from India has been holding workshops across Pakistan for the last fortnight on the use of simple toys to teach children about science.

Arvind Gupta from Pune has held training sessions for hundreds of teachers and students in several cities of the country. For the last 20 years, Gupta has developed a technique to contrive from junk simple toys presenting fundamental scientific laws. "This is a cheaper way of learning with no cost of laboratories, by using junk like matchboxes, thread etc," he told Daily Times. "You don't need sophisticated equipment to learn many of the fundamentals of science."

On this tour, Gupta said that he had held workshops in Karachi, Hyderabad, Islamabad and Lahore so far.

Basically an electrical engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Kanpur, Gupta said that he "stumbled" onto children's education on account of his interest in the field. He later started developing toys to train teachers and teach students. He has also worked as an adviser to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). He is currently associated with Pune University's Children Science Theatre, generally known as the IUCAA. He has authored 12 books in the field of educational techniques and made 250 experiments.

Gupta's teaching techniques have become very popular in India, especially in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Today, there are more than 600 different types of toys being used to educate students in more than 1,000 different schools across India, he said. The module to train teachers had now been translated into several languages, he said.

He said that he started developing his method in 1972 in Khusnag Abad.

In Lahore, Gupta was welcomed by a number of teachers and training institutes. The Ali Institute of Education (AIE) arranged Gupta's workshop in Lahore on April 6-7, in which 150 teachers from more than 50 schools of the city participated. Gupta said that the participants took keen interest in the training sessions.



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Gupta has travelled all over the world to impart his training technique. He said that he enjoyed his first visit to Pakistan, and had been looking forward to it for several years.

Gupta said that his technique was about making learning fun. "This process goes beyond words," he said. "It helps students learn in an innovative manner." He said that there was a "need to have fun and learn some exciting science".

He described the feedback of the teachers in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad as "fabulous". A number of schools in Sindh had asked him to start an exchange programme with them, he said.

He urged the introduction of exchange programmes of teachers between the two sides and wished for maximum people-to-people contact in all sectors. He was impressed with what he had seen of Pakistan, and said that he had enjoyed this visit more compared to other countries.

"Such links and the people-to-people contact needs to go further, and it's time for both countries to share and learn together," he said. He urged stronger ties between Pakistan and India and praised initiatives taken by both countries' governments to promote peace.

Gupta was hosted in Lahore by the Babar Ali Foundation. AIE representative Muhammad Abdul Baqi Siddiquee, who was the coordinator of the workshops in Lahore, told Daily Times that activities on learning in science were not very common in Pakistan. Modern techniques to teach the sciences are only used in training institutes and a few private schools, he said.

He said that the AIE had offered participation in Gupta's workshop to over 150 schools in the city free of cost, and only around 60 had attended.

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