

DNA Anchor Nobel laureates who are in Gujarat to attend the Vibrant Gujarat Summit visit educational institutes

Students get rare chance to interact with best and brightest minds

Prof Harold Varmus and prof Randy Schekman talk about their subjects at IITGn on Wednesday

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Ahmedabad: Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, hosted two Nobel laureates at its Palej campus on Wednesday. Professor Harold Varmus and professor Randy W Schekman, who received the Nobel prizes for Physiology or Medicine in 1989 and 2013 respectively, spoke about their areas of expertise.

While talking on 'How cells become cancers and what do we do about it', professor Varmus said after his mother was detected with breast cancer, he wanted to study about its origin and history.

He spoke about

targeted therapy in cancer and the importance of cure, especially in India. He said instead of focusing on controlling the cell division to treat cancer, researchers should work toward understanding the cause of cancer to the level of DNA to design specific therapies for different types of cancer.

"There are good vaccines for Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus which are non-toxic, but only a couple of states in India use it productively," he said.

Lauding former US president Barack Obama, Varmus showed a video clip to the audience where Obama talks about his precision medi-

cine initiative. He said, "President Obama was highly positive and supported medicine and research, prime minister Narendra Modi is also supporting scientists and research."

Rashmi Bhakuni, a research scholar in the area of biological engineering at IITGN said, "Even though what they spoke is already out there in books and other sources, it was very motivational. Such talks help develop more interest in science and research." Professor Schekman delivered the second talk on 'How cells export proteins' and narrated how his childhood curiosity for understanding the unknown led him to persistently pursue his parents to buy him a microscope, which he has now donated to the Nobel museum in Sweden.

He further narrated how he along with his many graduate students have over the past three decades virtually deciphered the fundamentals of eukaryotic membrane traffic using a genetic and biochemical approach.

Will talk to Modi about this, says Ada Yonath about the absence of Indians in nomination list

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Ahmedabad: A little before her lecture on 'Towards a New Generation of Antibiotics' on Wednesday, dna caught up with Ada Yonath, the first Israeli woman to have won a Nobel Prize in Chemistry at Gujarat University's convention hall. Excerpts from the interview and lecture:

Antibiotics affecting the environment

In a lot of speeches and lectures, Yonath has openly spoken against non-degradable antibiotics. Today was no different. "The antibiotics are non-degradable and their residue gets passed to the sewage water, which then mixes with the ground water and cattle later graze on this ground. The cattle are then milked. By default, humans are consuming antibiotics," she added. She said there will be dialogue with big pharmaceutical companies who can help in producing environment-friendly antibiotics.



SEX NO BAR

When asked her thoughts on women in the field of science, she claimed her gender had never posed a difficulty. "I have had a million problems while growing up and in science, but not one of them has been about my sex," Yonath said. Her team of 20 scientists in the UK has 11 women.

She also said the Nobel is just a prize and that the drive should be to discover something new. Only way to win was curiosity, passion and perseverance.

"Women can be great scientists and whatever they want to become," she said.

No Indian nominated for Chemistry

Being the only and the first Israeli woman to have won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, Yonath spoke about how there were no nominations from India as of now for Chemistry. She asked if there were enough students opting for chemistry. On hearing a resounding 'yes' from the audience, she immediately replied, "Then there are issues with government grants. If there is no support, students with degrees in Chemistry will give it up," she said. When asked what could be done about it, she said, "I will talk to Modi!"



Harold Varmus

Randy Schekman