

Philanthropy can provide 'patient funding' to boost science

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BENGALURU: Industry leaders and philanthropists Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, [Kris Gopalakrishnan](#) and Rohini Nilekani have made individual and collective contributions towards furthering science and research in the city and outside. They told TOI's Chethan Kumar in an interview that philanthropy could help provide the 'patient funding' that is needed to boost science and also help liberate science from ivory towers and minds from textbooks. They had recently contributed Rs 51 crore to Science Gallery Bengaluru (SGB), a unique initiative that aims to open up science to the society. Excerpts:

Kiran: For a science capital of India and a science city like Bengaluru we want science to be a very important ecosystem for the city. From that point of view we feel we need to liberate science from the proverbial ivory towers and liberating minds beyond textbooks. A set up like this will enable ideas to be created and evolved. It can get society to think about science, create solutions and bust myths. Rohini & Kris: A city like Bengaluru requires open spaces like the SGB, which is also part of an international collaboration of galleries. We thank the state government for backing something like this, because along with all the science that happens in the city, we need to create more such public spaces where citizens can get involved in science.

Kris: Philanthropy needs to be a lot more active. There are three sources of funding: Industry, government and philanthropy. Industry typically funds applied research that has a horizon of 3-5 years, so it's government and philanthropy that looks at basic research that requires years of work. This kind of patient funding needs to be enhanced. Rohini: We need much more patient capital/funding for research and philanthropy can help provide that. Kiran: There's not enough research funding in India, and philanthropy can augment this.

Kris: Up to a stage of development in a country, causes like food, primary healthcare, and education deserve immediate attention. It is only when they grow to being a middle-income society or higher that you see attention shifting from the immediate causes. India is slowly getting there and you'll see more money from philanthropists going to science in the coming years. Kiran: We've always pursued interests that we think are important for the country. I've personally felt the need to ensure we reach out to scientific institutions. Rohini has done a lot of work in sustainability.

Rohini: There are many that are doing work in this regard. But for a country of our size and the challenges we face, there's a lot more to do in terms of funding research if we want to do science that can help provide solutions to all our problems.