

DST constitutes joint Science Communication Forum to promote common policy & best practices

The Department of Science & Technology has constituted a joint Science Communication Forum with a view to facilitate interaction, cooperation, and coordination amongst various public sector science communication institutions and agencies.

The Forum brings together science communication efforts spread across various institutions and can help adoption of a common policy and best practices at a wider scale, ultimately aiming towards a national science communication framework. It is represented by senior officials from various central ministries and departments, including Agriculture, Health, Culture, Defense, Space, Atomic Energy, and Information & Broadcasting, in addition to Science & Technology.

Prof. Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Dept. of Science & Technology said that the Forum would work upon strategies for effective planning and implementation of science communication programmes at macro and micro level in the country to spread scientific awareness and inculcate scientific temper amongst the masses leading to an innovation-driven society that contributes towards an ecosystem for Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The Forum would be served by a Secretariat at the National Council for Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science & Technology, which is mandated for coordination with different organizations, programmes and activities focused on science communication in the country and orchestrating them for enhanced public understanding of science with a scientific bent of mind. It is also mandated to formulate countrywide programmes, policies, and activities in the domain of science communication and popularization in the country.

India has a very robust organizational structure on science communication. At least five national organizations are working on the growth and development of science communication. These are the National Institute of Science Communication and Information Resources (1951), Homi Bhabha Center for Science Education (1974), National Council of Science Museums (1978), National Council for Science & Technology Communication (1982), and Vigyan Prasar (1989). In addition, different scientific organizations have their own science communication wings. They include Unit for Science Dissemination (CSIR), Directorate of Knowledge Management in Agriculture (ICAR), Publication & Information Division (ICMR), Directorate of Public Interface (DRDO), Public Awareness Division (DAE), Office of Media & Public Relations (ISRO), Science Cells, AIR, etc. Almost all national laboratories and scientific institutions have some institutional mechanisms for science communication and public outreach.

These organizations are contributing to science communication using various ways and means and reaching out to the masses. However, there seems to be ample scope for interaction and integration for evolving and adopting common policies and following best practices at a much wider scale. Concerted and collective countrywide programmes are needed to be worked out and implemented jointly by integrating them, and eventually, a national science communication framework may emerge. The public communication of science and technology and inculcation of scientific temper among masses necessitates interaction, cooperation, and coordination amongst various stakeholders for better planning,

policy, and implementation of large-scale science communication programmes in the country.

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