

# GOVT. SCRAPS SCIENTIFIC PANELS, FORMS COUNCIL

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Indigenization of technology and developing new technology

V.K. Saraswat

The government has scrapped two Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC) for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and replaced them with a nine member, Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).

According to a government note, the members of the panel are Dr V.K. Saraswat, former chief, Defence Research and Development Organisation; A.S. Kiran Kumar, former Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation; Prof Ajay Kumar Sood, Professor, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru; Maj Gen Madhuri Kanitkar, Dean, Armed Forces Medical College, Pune; Prof Sanghamitra Bandopadhyay, Director, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata; Subhash Kak, Professor, Oklahoma State University; Manjul Bhargava, Professor, Princeton University and the lone member from industry Baba Kalyani, MD, Bharat Forge.

Unlike in the earlier SACs, secretaries of various scientific ministries such as education, environment and health would be 'special invitees' to the council meetings. The PM-STIAC will be chaired by the government's Principal Scientific Advisor, Dr K. Vijay Raghavan.

"This is so that members are allowed free discussions outside the comfort zone of officials," Dr. Raghavan told *The Hindu* in a text message.

While industry representatives were present in greater numbers in the earlier SACs, a single, industry member, particularly given the government's call to industry to increase jobs via entrepreneurship, is not an anomaly, Dr Vijay Raghavan said. There was a separate, dedicated group—involving the Cabinet Secretary and the PSA to focus on driving innovation all the way to commercialisation, he said.

The newly constituted body is expected to act as a high level advisory body to several ministries and execute mission-oriented programmes. The office of the PSA was earlier led by R. Chidambaram, who played a key role in shaping India's nuclear programme.

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