

R. C. Srivastava (1952–2008)

R. C. Srivastava of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), who made significant and extensive contributions to activities promoting science and technology in India, passed away on 10 September 2008. He was 56.

Srivastava was widely known in the scientific community and was involved closely with the process of reviewing and supporting or sponsoring basic science projects.

The process of supporting individual scientist's research, after a peer review process, is a commonly accepted practice followed by public and private agencies across the developed world. A major step forward in promoting scientific research in India was taken when the DST was established in 1971. The concept of individual investigator driven projects ('small and dispersed science') was given a special place after the Baroda seminars of 1980, 1981 and 1983, which resulted in the identification of thrust areas for funding. The establishment of the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) and the formation of Program Advisory Committees (PACs), was an important step forward in promoting basic research institutions across the country and in involving working scientists in the decision making process. As the quantum of funding available has increased over the past 25 years, the tasks and responsibilities have grown, sometimes straining the administrative infrastructure. In a vast country like India, even the task of organizing peer review committee meetings, in which investigators present and defend their proposals, can be a demanding logistical exercise. The process of shepherding 'approved projects' through the maze of financial

procedures can be a task that requires administrative skill, patience and good humour. The growth of scientific research funding in India has thrown up a new breed of scientist-managers; men and women, armed with PhD degrees and possessing a knowledge of the problems faced by laboratory researchers, charged with the responsibility of administering the science promotion and funding process. The DST has spearheaded the drive to raise the level of scientific research in India, reaching out to a remarkably diverse set of institutions. Srivastava was one of the key figures in ensuring the smooth operation of this increasingly complex process of promoting scientific research.



Srivastava graduated in chemistry from Roorkee and subsequently obtained his MSc and PhD degrees from the University of Roorkee, working in the area of metal–ligand complexes. He began his career as a Lecturer in a college affiliated to Meerut University in 1976, before moving to Griffith University, Australia to a postdoctoral position (1979–81). Srivastava returned to India and joined DST as a Scientific Officer in 1982. Over the next 25 years Srivastava

became a well-known figure to the community of Indian scientists whose research was supported by DST, particularly in the areas of chemical and biological sciences. He contributed greatly to the success of the Science and Engineering Research Council. In recent years, he served the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (SAC-PM) and made many contributions to the programme of the DST in chemistry, nanoscience and technology and biophysics and biochemistry.

The two of us knew Srivastava in completely different contexts. One of us (VRA) was associated with him as a close colleague for nearly two decades, working on common programmes to promote science. The other (PB) knew him on the many peer review committees of DST and the advisory council of government as a wonderful facilitator of the administrative processes of peer review and policy formulation. Srivastava was a gentle, patient and unfailingly courteous administrator who helped many researchers across the country pursue their research projects by smoothing the sometimes difficult procedures for operation of research grants. We will miss him as a colleague and friend and the scientific community is poorer by his loss. He is survived by his wife Ratna and daughters, Ratika and Priyanka.

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