

Brain-storming interaction by office of PSA brings recommendations on science communication

The science communicator's brain-storming interaction organized by the Office of Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India saw several recommendations by the different stakeholders for taking science communication forward.

These included recognizing science communication as an academic discipline for promoting research, debates and discussions on science communication in different universities and institutions across India, and institutionalization of science communication in scientific organizations.

The interaction outlined ways to share the findings and excitement of science, increasing appreciation for science and knowledge of a specific issue, influencing opinions or behaviors considering public perspectives and finding common ground. It also discussed global and Indian trends, and the need of science communication initiatives, training and capacity-building in India.

Communicators highlighted the need for incentivizing science communication and devising methods to encourage it so that more people with the passion for it are attracted towards it. Journalists called for improving access to scientific research as resources for stories. It was pointed out that Vigyan Samachar which is an initiative set up by Vigyan Prasar to provide regular access to stories from all scientific institutions could be a good resource for journalists.

Stakeholders like the government science communication agencies, independent and quasi independent agencies, print and electronic media houses participated in the brainstorming session which was organized to draw up a strategy or policy paper for Indian science communication.

Science communication is a loosely used term bordering on colloquialism, its power and ability to influence people and policy makers vastly overlooked and under-utilized. Science Communication aims to popularize scientific temper, scientific method of enquiry and scientific culture among the masses. This can be achieved by developing efficient mechanisms and interventions for active public engagement and the two-way dialogue between scientists and society by increasing the public understanding of science and scientists' understanding of the different audiences.

Effective science communication is complex and must be learned, for it to become the tool which can place science at the national center stage, bringing visibility and support from both public and policy makers. Indian science communication system is in its infancy and confined to independent groups, who have been partially successful in raising support from government and

philanthropy. All these efforts and the support for the efforts are sub-optimal, and it is important for increased and sustained support for science communication from the government, media houses and other private organisations.

The interaction helped create a space for better understanding of science communication, awareness, staffing, coordination between scientists, communicators practitioners and to work out incentives needed, which could help defining the next steps forward.