

Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India organises the International Science & Technology (S&T) Clusters Conference

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The Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (OPSA) to the Government of India (GoI) organised the first *International Science & Technology (S&T) Clusters Conference (ISTCC)* – ‘Making Lives Easier Through S&T’ from 4–5 December 2025 at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC), New Delhi. The conference was inaugurated by the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the Government of India, Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood. He was joined by Scientific Secretary, Dr. Parvinder Maini; United Kingdom (UK) Chief Scientific Adviser, Prof. Sir John Edmunds; and Dr. Vishal Choudhary, Scientist ‘F’, OPSA.



The inaugural session began with welcome remarks by Dr. Parvinder Maini, Scientific Secretary, OPSA, who emphasised the importance of the Quadruple Helix model that guides the functioning of the cluster. She noted that eight Clusters across India are currently driving innovation, sustainability, and impactful translation of research by bringing together academia, industry, startups, and government stakeholders to address regional challenges.

This was followed by a keynote address given by Prof. Ajay Kumar Sood, PSA to the Government of India, who commended the Cluster model for breaking silos and fostering collaboration among diverse participants. He emphasised the conference as a global platform to exchange ideas, showcase scalable solutions, and strengthen international partnerships.



Talking about the long-standing ties of scientific collaboration between the two nations, Prof. Edmunds, highlighted India's strengths in vaccine manufacturing, biotech, software and more, making it a valuable partner. Dr. Vishal set the context for the conference by presenting an overview of key achievements from each Cluster.



The flagship event brought together Secretaries to GoI, ambassadors, senior government officials, diplomats, embassy officials from participating countries, policymakers, academicians, industry leaders, and innovators from India and abroad to strengthen collaboration in science and technology. The conference witnessed participation from more than 30 countries, with CEOs from all eight S&T Clusters in attendance. His Excellency Juan Antonio March, Ambassador of Spain to India, and Her Excellency May-Elin Stener, Ambassador of Norway to India, addressed participants during the proceedings.



During the inaugural session, four compendiums were released that document the work undertaken in the areas of water technologies, agri-tech, solid waste management, and *Kalanubhaav*, capturing innovations developed within the Clusters and their measurable societal impact. The latest edition of OPISA's

magazine, *Vigyan Dhara* based on the theme “Advancing India’s Technology Sovereignty in UAVs”, was also released.



Additionally, PSA Prof. Sood inaugurated the exhibition at ISTCC, accompanied by Dr. Maini and Secretary (DARE) & DG (ICAR), Dr. Mangi Lal Jat. The 42-stall exhibition showcased scalable, technology-led solutions developed by the S&T Clusters across six thematic areas - Smart Agriculture, Healthcare, Environmental Sustainability, Industry Automation & Startups, Plastic & E-Waste Management, and Technologies Empowering Livelihoods. The exhibition also featured innovations from international stakeholders and RuTAG, highlighting India’s growing innovation ecosystem.



Across two days, the conference hosted sessions centered around the six thematic areas. Panel discussions featuring global experts, policymakers, cluster leaders, industry representatives, and innovation strategists, along with closed-door roundtable meetings with global S&T leaders, facilitated discussions on collaboration and partnership models.



The valedictory session of the conference witnessed the signing of 12 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) by the 8 S&T Clusters partnering with various national and international stakeholders, and unveiling of CHEM AMAZE, a gamified learning platform in presence of PSA Prof. Sood and Dr. Maini. The MoUs focussed on the domains of clean and renewable energy, environmental sustainability and circular economy solutions, advanced technologies and Industry 4.0, agriculture and bio-innovation, and healthcare and life sciences.

During the valedictory, Dr. Maini underscored that the discussions over the two days highlighted the need to scale Cluster-led innovations across ministries, state departments, and international partnerships.

Concluding the conference, PSA Prof. Sood reiterated that the conference demonstrated that the S&T Clusters have moved beyond concept and are now instruments of delivery.



The deliberations reaffirmed a shared commitment to translating research into deployment and advancing the national mission of *Making Lives Easier Through S&T*. The conference concluded with a forward-looking roadmap for India's S&T Clusters, outlining priorities for the next phase, where Clusters will evolve into national technology accelerators enabling deployment of solutions in critical areas such as water, agriculture, climate resilience, and sustainability. The next phase will also focus on strengthening international collaboration through mechanisms such as joint challenge calls, shared platforms, and researcher exchanges, while integrating innovation into governance systems and public programmes to ensure widescale adoption.

The S&T Clusters initiative is a flagship programme of the OPSA, conceptualised on the recommendation of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). At present, eight Clusters operate across the country in Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Hyderabad, Jodhpur, the Northern Region (J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh), Pune, and Visakhapatnam.

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