

Indian Science Congress to be Replaced by the ESTIC

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Indian Science Congress Latest News

- The Indian Science Congress has been replaced by the **Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC)**, with its first edition scheduled for November 2025 in New Delhi.

Introduction

- For over a century, the **Indian Science Congress (ISC)** has been the premier platform for Indian scientists, researchers, and policymakers to deliberate on national scientific priorities.
- Established in 1914, the ISC grew into a prestigious event inaugurated annually by the Prime Minister, bringing together global and Indian experts.
- However, over recent years, concerns over its effectiveness, controversies in its sessions, and institutional disputes have diminished its relevance.
- In 2025, the government announced a **new approach with the Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC)**, scheduled to be held in November.

- This marks a historic transition in India's science policy ecosystem, signalling a move toward a more structured, innovation-driven forum aligned with national priorities like *Viksit Bharat 2047*.

Achievements and Issues with the Indian Science Congress

• Achievements

- **Platform for Scientific Exchange:** The ISC played a crucial role in creating a scientific community in pre- and post-Independence India.
- **Global Participation:** It hosted Nobel Laureates, international scholars, and top Indian scientists.
- **Policy Influence:** Many national science policies were shaped through discussions at ISC sessions.
- **Public Engagement:** It popularised science among school and college students through exhibitions and public lectures.

• Issues

- **Erosion of Academic Quality:** Over time, the ISC faced criticism for allowing unscientific and controversial statements by some participants.
- **Reduced Relevance:** Its role as a serious forum for science policy and research exchange declined.
- **Institutional Conflict:** Disputes between the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** and the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), which organised the event, led to funding cuts.
- **COVID-19 Disruptions:** After the pandemic, only the 2023 edition was held, with no physical conferences thereafter.
- The growing disconnect between ISC and India's contemporary science needs created the ground for ESTIC.

The Emerging Science, Technology and Innovation Conclave (ESTIC)

• Overview

- The **first ESTIC** will be held at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from November 3-4, 2025**, and is expected to be inaugurated by **Prime Minister Narendra Modi**.
- Organised by the **DST in collaboration with all science-related ministries**, ESTIC aims to become India's leading forum for advancing innovation-driven research.

• Key Features

- **Thematic Sessions:** 11 technical sessions will focus on frontier areas such as space, biotechnology, deep-tech, and renewable energy.
- **Innovation Showcase:** 75 exhibition stalls will be set up by deep-tech startups.
- **Global Participation:** Nobel Laureate **Andre Geim (Physics, 2010)**, French space expert **Jean-Yves Le Gall**, and Japanese biologist **Professor Masaru Tomita** are among the confirmed international guests.
- **Government Involvement:** Unlike the ISC, ESTIC will involve **direct participation from all science-related ministries**, including atomic energy, IT, and space.
- **Prime Minister's Presence:** PM's attendance at the inaugural underlines the strategic importance given to ESTIC.

• Objectives

- To showcase **cutting-edge research and technology breakthroughs**.

- To align India's science innovation ecosystem with the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.
- To provide a **serious global platform for scientists and innovators**, different from **IISF** (India International Science Festival), which is designed more as a science popularisation event.

Significance of the Transition

- Replacing ISC with ESTIC represents:
 - **Policy Modernisation:** Moving from a general science gathering to a high-level innovation conclave.
 - **Focus on Innovation:** Prioritising applied research and startup-driven technology ecosystems.
 - **Global Leadership:** Positioning India as a key player in international science and technology networks.
 - **Institutional Clarity:** Shifting control directly to DST reduces friction with external associations like ISCA.

Source: TH

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