



Hindustan Times

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{ S SOMANATH } ISRO CHAIRMAN

Man who fructified India's dream to reach the Moon

India is now on the Moon — these six words will forever mark a moment of history for not just the country, but the space scientist who said it: S Somanath, the chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro).

Before taking the reins, Somanath was the director of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in Thiruvananthapuram and held important positions at VSSC and the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC).

Specialising in system engineering of launch vehicles, Somanath joined the Indian space agency in 1985. He has since been involved in the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) project in the early part of his career and has played a key role in the design of the Launch Vehicle Mark-3, India's most trusted launch vehicle, which carried the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft. This year has been of particular highlight for Isro, under Somanath. The agency not only landed the Chandrayaan-3 but also sent the Aditya-L1 solar probe, and carried out the first of many trials to judge the safety of the Gaganyaan, which is scheduled to take the first Indian on an Indian spacecraft to outer space in 2025.

He has a B Tech in mechanical engineering from TKM College of Engineering, Kollam, and holds a master's in aerospace engineering from the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru with a gold medal.

