

Hindustan Times

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{ K KASTURIRANGAN } 1940-2025

Space scientist who helmed Isro, shaped national policy, dies at 84



K Kasturirangan

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MUMBAI: Eminent space scientist and former chairman of Isro, Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan passed away on Friday morning at the age of 84.

At Isro, he spearheaded the successful launch and operationalisation of the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) and the first

successful flight tests of the GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle), and laid the groundwork for Chandrayaan, country's mission to the moon. He also chaired the drafting committee of the new National Education Policy.

 In a post on X, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called him a towering figure in India's scientific and educational journey. [→](#)
{ 1940-2025 } KRISHNASWAMY KASTURIRANGAN

Scientist instrumental for his role in Isro, drafting of NEP 2020 policy

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MUMBAI: Eminent space scientist and former chairman of Isro, Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan passed away on Friday morning at the age of 84.

"He left for heavenly abode this morning at his residence in Bengaluru. His body will be kept at the Raman Research Institute (RRI) for paying last respects on April 27," read a statement from Isro.

Kasturirangan had been unwell for some time. In 2023, he was admitted to a hospital in Bengaluru after being airlifted from Sri Lanka where he suffered a heart attack. Since then, he had reduced his public engagements.

Born in Ernakulam, Kerala, Kasturirangan graduated in BSc (Honours) from Ramnarain Ruia College, Mumbai, and completed MSc in physics from the University of Mumbai. He went on to complete his PhD in experimental high energy astronomy on 1971 from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad. Between 1994 and 2003, Kasturirangan headed Isro. Awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the country's second highest civilian award, he was the fourth chairman of the space agency. He was also awarded Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

As news of his death spread, tributes poured in on social media platforms.

In a post on X, Prime minister Narendra Modi said, "I am deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. K. Kasturirangan, a towering figure in India's scientific and educational journey... He served ISRO with great diligence, steering India's space programme to new heights, for which we also received global recognition. His leadership also witnessed ambitious satellite launches and focussed on innovation."

He further said, "India will always be grateful to Dr. Kasturirangan for his efforts during the drafting of the National Education Policy (NEP) and in ensuring that learning in India became more holistic and forward-looking. He was also an outstanding mentor to many young scientists and research-



ers..."

A post on X by the Rashtreeya Mahasabha read, "As head of ISRO, he played a stellar role in the evolution of India's space programme. With his passion for knowledge, he also contributed greatly in diverse fields..."

Describing Kasturirangan as a "guiding force behind Indian space programme on X, Jitendra Singh, minister of state for science and technology, said, "His contributions to ISRO and Indian science will be remembered for generations..."

At Isro, he spearheaded the successful launch and operationalisation of the PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) and the first successful flight tests of the GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle), and laid the groundwork for Chandrayaan, country's mission to the moon.

K Swam, former Isro chairman, recalled his interactions with Kasturirangan when he joined the space agency as an engineer in 1982. "When I was working on PSLV and GSLV projects, I closely interacted with him and got a lot of advice from him. I continued getting his advice even when I became chairman of Isro. He has shaped present-day Isro," said Swam.

Kasturirangan was also project director for BHASKARA-I and II, the country's first two experimental earth observation satellites, and was also responsible for the success of the first operational Indian remote-sensing satellite, IRS-1A. He also shaped India's most ambitious space-based High Energy Astronomy Observatory.

Stating that Isro took giant strides during his tenure, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said Kasturirangan was an advisor to various govern-

ments in different areas. "Our numerous conversations over the years on various aspects of Indian science and technology greatly enriched my understanding of it... The nation is in his debt," read his post on X.

Kasturirangan wore many hats. He was a nominated Rajya Sabha member and a Planning Commission member. He also chaired the drafting committee of the NEP (National Education Policy), served as chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University and as chairman of the Karnataka Knowledge Commission.

He was also the director of the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, from April 2004 to 2009. In 2012, he chaired the high-level working group on Western Ghats that was constituted by the Union environment ministry.

Ashish Dhawan, founding chairperson of Ashoka University, who interacted with Kasturirangan in the context of NEP, said the two big things in the NEP document that Kasturirangan was passionate about was the idea of foundational learning for students by the end of Class 2, and holistic and interdisciplinary education in higher education.

"The Nipun Bharat mission (to achieve universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools) emanated from his idea. Therefore, it's huge contribution," said Dhawan.

Former director general of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research RA Mashelkar described Dr Kasturirangan as a "very dear friend, an iconic space tech leader and one of the finest human beings". In his post on X, he said, "His legacy will be etched not just in the orbits of our satellites, but in the aspirations of our classrooms..."