Sustainable Progress through Application of Research and Knowledge

Why in news?

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- Earlier in 2017, top administrators in Indian science submitted a detailed project report to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
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- It has reviewed portions of the 48-page report, titled **Vigyan 2030: Science and Technology as the Pivot for Jobs, Opportunities and National Transformation**.
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What did the report say?

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- The report said that the stature of Indian science is a shadow of what it used to be because of decades of **misguided interventions**.
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- We have lost self-confidence and ambition and the ability to recognise excellence amongst our own and we often chose the mediocre at every level.
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- One of its key recommendations is to have **an independent science and technology authority** that will have two parallel arms.
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- **SPARK** (Sustainable Progress through Application of Research and Knowledge), as the body is tentatively named, will be overarching yet have “light touch” governance.
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- **A discovery arm:** that can organise the expertise of various organisations across states and regions to solve a basic research problem.
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- **A delivery arm:** that will closely work with industry and evolve public private partnerships.
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- Such an authority will directly report to the Prime Minister.
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What are the concerns/challenges?

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- All very good, except that India **already has bodies that were conceived as umbrella organisations** that can pool the intellectual and technological resources of organisations and direct them towards specific missions.
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- **The Principal Scientific Adviser** to the Government of India is one such office.
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- Though they have no dearth of eminent, experienced scientists, they haven't substantially vaulted S&T in the country either.
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- The CSIR faces its own challenges of effectively translating its know-how. Scientific departments in India, have bureaucracies of their own.
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- They battle the dilemma of having to take bold, expensive risks that science by its very nature requires and on the other hand, **be accountable to the Finance Ministry.**
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- Not only does a new overarching body run the risk of upsetting someone but it will also be a challenge to exert solemn authority without being a cantankerous accountant.
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- It has to ensure that good ideas beyond the Indian Institutes of Technology and Science don't die out for **lack of funds or recommendations** from influential scientists.
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- Any new idea, to rejuvenate the administration of science, must also ensure continuity.
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- A change of government and new leaders has frequently meant 'new priorities' and the **infant-death syndrome for the bold experiment.**
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Source: The Hindu

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