

in outer reef slopes. *Condylactis* sp. infestation would lower the coral larval recruitment and eventually delay the recovery of associated communities⁶. In order to determine the risk of anemone infestation on the coral communities, conducting benthic surveys in the affected areas of Agatti Island is a prerequisite. Furthermore, a rapid survey needs to be undertaken in the other islands of Lakshadweep to better evaluate anemone infestation in the coral reef areas. Lastly, long-term ecological monitoring is warranted to ensure the recovery of coral and associated communities in the Lakshadweep archipelago.

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NEWS

Prof. A. K. Sood appointed Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India

Renowned physicist and Padma Shri awardee Ajay Kumar Sood has been appointed as the Principal Scientific Advisor (PSA) to the Government of India. He is currently a Distinguished Honorary Professor of Physics and Year of Science Professor at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, and is noted for his work on graphene and nanotechnology. He will take over as PSA from K. VijayRaghavan, the former director of the National Centre for Biological Sciences, who has been in the position since March 2018.

Since 2018, Sood has also been a member of the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC). In November 1999, the government established the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor. The office seeks to provide pragmatic and objective advice to the Prime Minister and his cabinet on matters related to science, technology, and innovation, with a focus on the application of science and technology in critical infrastructure, economic, and social sectors in collaboration with government departments, academia, and industry. The PM-STIAC is one of the catalysts for such activities and also oversees their implementation. The organization has nine key missions: Natural Language Translation, Quantum Fron-

tier, Artificial Intelligence, National Biodiversity Mission, Electric Vehicles, Bioscience for Human Health, Waste to Wealth, Deep Ocean Exploration, and Accelerating Growth of New India's Innovations (AGNIi).

Sood is a holder of two US and five Indian patents and was awarded the Padma Shri in 2013 for his outstanding contributions to science. He has made extensive research in hard and soft condensed matter physics, focusing on Raman scattering and nanotechnology. He is recognized for several ground-breaking inventions and innovations that are considered to be of daily and scientific value. In 2003, he produced electrical impulses by passing liquids over solids or through nanotubes. This phenomenon is known as the 'Sood Effect' among the scientific community.

Sood was born on 26 June 1951 in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Physics from Panjab University, Chandigarh in 1971, and a Master's degree from the same university. He later went on to earn his Ph.D. from IISc in 1982. Between 1973 and 1988, he served as a scientist at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, before undertaking post-doctoral research as a Max Planck Fellow at

the Max Planck Institute for FKF in Stuttgart, Germany. In 2015, Sood was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society (FRS). Since 2019, he has been on the Infosys Prize Physical Sciences jury. Sood has published over 450 peer-reviewed research articles and papers in national and international journals. He has earned over a dozen honours from various institutes for his numerous accomplishments. In 2000, the The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) recognized Sood's contributions by awarding him the TWAS Prize in Physics. Among many other honours, he received the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize in 1990, the National Award in Nanoscience and Nanotechnology from the Government of India, the Nano Award from the Government of Karnataka, and the Vigyan Ratan Award from Punjab University. He is also one of the Executive Editors of an international journal, *Solid State Communications*. He was the President, Indian National Science Academy (2017–2019), Secretary General, The World Academy of Sciences (2013–2018) and President, Indian Academy of Sciences (2010–2012).

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