

An Open Letter on Scientific Temper, Scholarship and Public Discourse

To dismiss a scholar through a label rather than engage with the substance of his views risks undermining the very scientific temper that our Constitution calls upon every citizen to develop

Our scientists, scholars and educators deserve to know that they can participate in public debate without fear of being reduced to dismissive labels

When complex scientific questions become objects of political ridicule, society loses an opportunity for informed debate

In a democracy, disagreement is essential. Mockery is not a substitute for reasoned engagement

Date: 30/07/2026

Dear Ms. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra,

India's Parliament has always been expected to be a forum where ideas are debated with rigour, disagreements are expressed with dignity, and individuals are judged by the strength of their arguments rather than by caricatures.

It is in this spirit that we write to express our disappointment over your reported remark describing IIT Madras Director Professor V. Kamakoti as a "gaumutra expert." Whether intended as sarcasm or political rhetoric, such a characterization raises concerns that go far beyond one individual.

Professor Kamakoti is the head of one of India's foremost scientific and technological institutions. He has M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Computer Science and Engineering from IIT Madras. He has published over 150 research papers and has been involved in over 50 R&D projects. He has several honours and accolades to his name, including the DRDO Academic Excellence Award and the Indian Electronics and Semiconductor Association Techno Visionary Award. He has been the guiding force behind India's first industry grade microprocessor. Needless to say, he is one of the top tech brains of the country.

Like every academic, he is entitled to present hypotheses, discuss traditional knowledge and participate in scientific conversations. To dismiss a scholar through a label rather than engage with the substance of his views risks undermining the very scientific temper that our Constitution calls upon every citizen to develop. Scientific temper is not merely scepticism towards unconventional ideas, it is equally the willingness to examine claims objectively before accepting or rejecting them.

History reminds us that many ideas once considered implausible eventually found scientific validation, while many widely accepted beliefs were later discarded.

Equally troubling is the message such remarks send to India's academic and research community. Our scientists, scholars and educators deserve to know that they can participate in public debate without fear of being reduced to dismissive labels. Criticise their arguments, challenge their evidence, demand higher standards of proof, but do not diminish scholarship itself.

In a democracy, disagreement is essential. Mockery is not a substitute for reasoned engagement. Public representatives wield enormous influence over the quality of national discourse. When complex scientific questions become objects of political ridicule, society loses an opportunity for informed debate.

We hope future debates, especially within Parliament, will reflect these values. Our democracy deserves nothing less.

Coordinators

Prof. GD Yadav
Former Vice Chancellor, ICT Mumbai
9833090510

Prof. Mrs. Pankaj Mittal
Secretary General, Association of Indian Universities
9910813481

-----**List of Signatories attached**-----