

## **Dr. S. Somanath**



Dr. Somanath Sreedhara Panicker is an eminent aerospace engineer and the former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Secretary, Department of Space, Government of India. Born in 1963 in Thuravoor, Alappuzha, he holds a B.Tech in Mechanical Engineering from TKM College of Engineering, M.Tech in Aerospace Engineering from IISc Bengaluru, and a Ph.D. from IIT Madras. Renowned for his expertise in launch vehicle systems engineering and project management, he has nearly four decades of distinguished service in India's space sector. As former Director of both Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), Dr. Somanath led key projects such as GSLV Mk III (LVM3), CE20 cryogenic engine, and the C25 stage, playing a pivotal role in missions like Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3, and Aditya-L1. Under his leadership, Chandrayaan-3 achieved a historic soft landing near the Moon's south pole, placing India among the top four lunar powers. He also introduced the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), Test Vehicle, and spearheaded the Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) demonstration. Dr. Somanath has significantly advanced India's human spaceflight ambitions through the Gaganyaan programme and contributed to sectoral reforms by institutionalizing IN-SPACe to support private space players and startups. His commitment to international collaboration has enhanced ISRO's global stature. Following his tenure at ISRO, he assumed the role of Chancellor at Chanakya University. For his visionary leadership and outstanding contributions to India's space programme, he is selected as the recipient of the Kerala Sasthra Puraskaram 2023.