CSIR scientists split on move to raise retirement age

Even as the proposal to increase the retirement age for CSIR scientists to 65 years from 60 is pending with the Central government, mixed views have been expressed with senior scientists welcoming the move and young researchers faulting it.

While those in senior positions and close to retirement cited various reasons to support the proposal, saying window of opportunity to do serious work was too short at present, the younger scientists said the move would block their growth. Instead of a blanket decision to enhance the retirement age to 65 years, it should be allowed in exceptional cases.

‘Seniors’ dominance will increase’

Opposing the proposal, a young woman scientist from CSIR-CCMB, who did not wish to be named, said the older scientists occupying important positions “have a sort of stranglehold and don’t allow others to move up.” The system, unlike in the past, has become extremely hierarchical with increased red tapism. “We have to do only projects which have been approved by a core committee of senior members. They put a lot of hurdles,” she said.

Another young scientist from the same institution expressed similar views, saying that a blanket increase in the retirement age would block the chances of juniors to grow. Many deserving scientists working abroad would like to come and work in India if vacancies were created. “Exceptional scientists can be retained on a case-by-case basis”, he added.

Dr. D. Sri Nagesh, Chief Scientist from CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, however, said it would be good if the retirement age was increased. Such a move would help in attracting youngsters to take up research in basic and applied sciences. He was dismissive of the claim that it would block the growth of younger researchers, saying promotions in CSIR institutions were based on performance and output and not on the basis of vacancies.

Terming it a welcome proposal, Dr. M. Raghunath, Director-grade scientist from National Institute of Nutrition, an ICMR institution, said the government should extend the same benefit to scientists working in ICMR institutions.

“A scientist should be given greater opportunity to continue meaningful research and guide students when he/she is more active and productive,” he said.