

## **DRDO goes young with Modi**

New Delhi: In order to weed out the dead woods, country's premier defence research agency Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which is often faced criticism for its tardy performance, is looking for young scientist to head one of its laboratory. It was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's advise to DRDO to hire young scientists, not over the age of 35 years to head at least five laboratories of defence research agency.

Following PM's advise, Uttarakhand based Defence Institute of Bio-energy Research (DIBER), which is engaged in research in the first of bio energy and non conventional energy for defence use, has invited applications from candidates before the age of 35 years to head the lab. Officials claim this is the first step in the chain of events to give important role to young scientists, as Modi government has already banned giving extensions to scientists who have completed their tenure. It is notable that till two years back, DRDO's top 15 scientists were on extension of service.

PM Modi in his first interaction with DRDO scientists had sent a stern message to defence research agency for their 'chalta hai' attitude, as most of DRDO projects, ranging from Tejas light combat aircraft to long-range surface-to-air missile systems have been missing repeated deadlines with huge cost overruns.

But sources in the agency said, appointing youch scientists to head laboratories may not go down well with senior scientists working with defence research.

But, officials said that hiring of Director of lab below the age of 35 years will send message to everyone working in DRDO to deliver. Modi has last year short listed Satish Reddy, the youngest ever scientific advisor to the defence minsitry.

"Certainly it's an effort to get rid of non-performing scientists. Merely age seniority will not matter. If India wants to be a superpower, our defence research has to be cutting edge. India remains to be top buyer of military hardware globally with nearly 70 per cent defence requirements meet by imports," said an officer. It is the successful government's failure to build a strong domestic defence industrial base due to sluggish performance of 52 DRDO laboratories, five defence PSUs , four shipyards and 39 Ordnance factories.