



India Announces Several Capacity Building Scholarships For Neighbouring Countries

S&T Ministers Conclave at IISF 2017, Chennai

Science Diplomacy

India throws open its Science & Technology (S&T) Institutions to its friendly neighbouring countries and announces a slew of R&D programs for capacity building in these countries.

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The Scientific Ministries and Departments of the Government of India have active international collaboration in science and technology both at the bilateral and regional level. Today India is engaged in active R&D cooperation with more than 44 countries across the globe including advanced, emerging and developing nations.

As a part of India's foreign policy initiatives of the present government like "Neighbours First", "Act East", and "India-Africa Partnership", India has now embarked upon a visible path of developmental diplomacy using science, technology and innovation that will not only help towards capacity building in R&D but also address the needs of the people through the application of science technology and innovation. To this end, for the first time, a Science and Technology Ministers Conclave was organised as a part of the 2017- India International Science Festival (IISF) being held in Chennai from 13-16 Oct. Invites were extended to S&T Ministers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Inaugurating the Conclave, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, informed that the purpose of the S&T Ministers Conclave was to build and strengthen partnership between the countries by identifying the priorities, needs and mechanisms that will enable a fruitful cooperation through sharing and complementing each other's strength and resources. Afghanistan Minister of Higher Education, Abdul Latif Roshan, Bangladesh Minister of Science and Technology, Yeafesh Osman and Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Shri Y. S. Chowdary, outlined the priorities, challenges and opportunities in science and technology in their respective countries.

The common denominators for the scientific cooperation which emerged from the Conclave included the need to address societal challenges through application of science and technology in emerging areas such as Affordable Health care, Water security, Climate change adaptation, Agricultural science, Renewable energy, Information & Communication Technology and Natural disaster prediction and management. Dr. Harsh Vardhan informed that this would be achieved by sharing best practices access to scientific opportunities in India to individuals from across our neighbourhood nations who desire and deserve it, promote connectivity and capacity building by fostering research and education linkages with scientific and academic institutions of India and facilitate transfer of such knowledge and technologies from India which are affordable and accessible for larger public and societal good in our neighbourhood countries.

In order to enable active collaboration, the Minister also announced that the Ministry of Science and Technology would offer concrete programs supported by India for desiring and deserving neighbouring countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The bouquet of schemes announced by Dr. Harsh Vardhan includes:

(1) For human capacity building in S&T, the 2018-India Science and Research Fellowship (ISRF) scheme will provide a fully paid fellowship to researchers, scientists and academicians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka to undertake research and development work of their choice at any premier research and academic institution in India upto a period from 3 to 6 months.

(2) In order to address the need to support PhD students, a new element has been added in the 2018-India Science and Research Fellowship. The scheme for the first time will also include doctoral students in science, engineering and medical fields to undertake project related research work in any premier research and academic institution in India upto a period of 6 months. This will help to connect the next generation of the scientific community with India. The Department of Science and Technology will support this Fellowship scheme.

(3) Towards Training of Researchers the science agencies in India including CSIR, DBT, MOES, IMD, DST and SERB organizes tailor made hands-on training programs and advanced schools for Indian researchers. India would like to throw open these specialized training programs to participants from our desiring and deserving

neighbouring countries to participate in these. 200 travel slots every year was announced for the researchers from these countries to be supported by the Department of Science and Technology to enable them to make the best use of these advanced training programs offered by India. This would help in capacity building and will also foster research networks with Indian scientific institutions.

(4) For institutional capacity building and technical assistance in Science and Technology a twinning program between Indian institution and a R&D or Academic institution in the neighbouring country was also committed by India. It was informed that a successfully model between the Institute of Biotechnology in Bangladesh with ICGEB, Delhi where scientists from Bangladesh undertake regular research and training immersions and Indian scientists travel to Bangladesh to assist in setting up the technical infrastructure of the new laboratory in making is being implemented. On a similar fashion, this will be replicated in other desiring countries in atleast one such institution in each of the mentioned neighbouring countries.

(5) One of the key aspects agreed was a mechanism for knowledge transfer and adoption for societal development. India offered a Technology Transfer Program, the objectives of which will be to match the socio-economic needs of our neighbouring countries by linking the public and private enterprises with leading edge Indian technologies and innovations. India will share a basket of demonstrated and validated Indian technologies and innovations developed by our scientific institutions. A need based select list of such technologies can be transferred using a Business to Business or Business to Government model of joint venture through a process of adaption and adoption. It will replicate the model which we are already implementing in African countries like Ethiopia, Rwanda and South Africa. The joint ventures created will deliver sustainable social enterprises that will stimulate economic impact development including the components of skilling, training, mentoring along with capacity building and business planning in our neighbouring countries.

It is expected that these schemes will help to develop a close and robust partnership in science, technology and innovation with our friendly neighbouring countries based on the principles of mutual trust, friendship and goodwill. The visiting Ministers were also exposed to the Science Park in IIT-Madras where technology start-ups are being incubated, at CLRI where clean technologies for leather industry are being developed and were showcased the advanced marine technologies at NIOT, Chennai.

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