

PARLIAMENT QUESTION: SCHEME FOR INDIAN ORIGIN RESEARCHERS AND SCIENTISTS

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Ministry of Science and Technology has formulated several schemes to encourage Indian-origin researchers and scientists working in foreign countries to return and contribute to research and innovation in India. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) implements a VAIBHAV (Vaishvik Bharatiya Vaigyanik) Fellowship Programme exclusively for Indian Diaspora [Non-Resident Indian (NRI)/ Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)] to undertake collaborative research in Indian Institutions. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) through Ramalingaswami Re-entry Fellowship (RRF) and Early Career and Intermediate Fellowships (ECIF) provide attractive avenues and opportunities to Indian researchers of high calibre, who are residing in foreign, to work in Indian Institutes/Universities of their respective interest and domain. Ramanujan Fellowship of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) is another scheme for brilliant Indian scientists and engineers aiming to return to India from abroad for undertaking competitive R&D. The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) has created 50 positions of Scientists/Technologists to be filled laterally from eminent Scientists/Technologists of Indian Origin (STIO) working abroad. The position has been designated as Outstanding Scientist (STIO).

The VAIBHAV Fellowship envisages collaboration between scientists of Indian Diaspora and Indian Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), Universities and/ or public funded scientific institutions. The VAIBHAV Fellow would identify an Indian Institution for collaboration and may spend up to two months in a year for maximum 3 years. Since 2023, 3 calls have been announced and 35 fellows from 11 countries such as USA (18), UK (5), Australia (3), Canada (2) and one each from Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Japan and Singapore have been awarded. Presently the DBT RRF scheme is supporting 166 ongoing fellows who were working across 27 countries such as Australia (2), Belgium (4), Canada (3), Chile (1), China (1), Columbia (1), Czech Republic (1), France (2), Germany (10), Ireland (1), Israel (12), Italy (2), Japan (4), Netherlands (1), Philippines (1), Qatar (1), Russia (1), Scotland (1), Singapore (4), Slovenia (1), South Korea (2), Spain (4), Sweden (8), Switzerland (5), Taiwan (2), UK (11) and USA (80).

The schemes like VAIBHAV provide attractive fellowship (₹4 lakh per month, 1–2 months/year, for 3 years), travel support, accommodation support (upto ₹7500 per day), consumables and accessories, contingency, and institutional overhead expenses (₹5 lakh per year) to support the VAIBHAV Fellow. The DBT RRF Program has the provision to support up to 75 outstanding Indian scientists from overseas each year. The selected fellows are entitled to a fellowship of ₹1.35 lakh per month, Research and Contingency support of ₹13,00,000 per annum, and institutional overheads of ₹50,000 per annum, for a period of three years. Necessary and adequate budgetary provisions have been made under the plan programs of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

All the schemes are being implemented to encourage Indian-origin researchers and scientists working in foreign countries to return contributes to the Government's objective of strengthening national scientific and technological capabilities by enabling the repatriation of trained manpower, augmenting research output in cutting-edge domains, and fostering global-standard expertise within the country. The schemes also help reduce brain drain by providing a structured pathway for overseas scientists to re-establish their careers in India, thereby promoting a self- reliant and innovation-driven research landscape. The areas of research involved are all aligned with the different National Missions.

NKR/AK

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