

CSIR celebrates women researchers in STEM at ASPIRE-SHAKTI

CSIR-ASPIRE Compendium Released, Next Phase of the Scheme to Focus on Inclusion, Innovation and Technology translation

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The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), through its Human Resource Development Group (CSIR-HRDG), today organised “ASPIRE-SHAKTI: Celebrating Women in STEM & Initiating Project Review Sessions” at the CSIR Headquarters, Anusandhan Bhawan, New Delhi. The function brought together Principal Investigators (PIs) of the CSIR-ASPIRE scheme, research fellows and members of the ASPIRE Subject Area Committees from across the country.

Dr. N. Kalaiselvi, Secretary, Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (DSIR) and Director General, CSIR, presided over the function and released the ASPIRE-SHAKTI Compendium, a documented record of the scheme's research accomplishments.



In her Presidential Address, Dr. Kalaiselvi recalled the inception of the CSIR-ASPIRE Research Scheme, acknowledging that the idea of launching a research programme exclusively for the women researchers of the country was envisioned by Dr Jitendra Singh, Hon'ble Union Minister of Science & Technology, and implemented by CSIR-HRDG with its launch on International Women's Day 2023.

The DG, CSIR expressed satisfaction with the overwhelming response from women researchers across the country. However, the DG expressed concern about the comparatively low participation from the North-East region and Ladakh, and emphasised the need for targeted outreach and awareness initiatives,

including broader participation by universities and colleges in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, to make future calls more inclusive of India's demographics.

Sharing her vision for the scheme's next phase, the DG, CSIR noted that around 20–30 outstanding ASPIRE projects might be identified and supported beyond research by facilitating the commercialisation of their innovations. Dr. Kalaiselvi further stated that CSIR would help connect promising ASPIRE researchers with relevant start-ups and innovation partners, enabling the translation of their research outcomes into market-ready technologies.



The DG, CSIR conveyed her appreciation to the ASPIRE Research Committee members for their dedicated efforts in the evaluation and selection process, and to CSIR-HRDG for conceptualising, implementing, and successfully conducting the CSIR-ASPIRE Scheme and the ASPIRE-SHAKTI event.

The CSIR-ASPIRE scheme has recorded an exceptional national footprint since its launch. Against 2,878 project proposals received from 969 institutions spanning almost every State, 301 meritorious women researchers have been competitively selected and funded as independent Principal Investigators — a selection ratio of about 10 per cent — across Life Sciences (152), Engineering Sciences (54), Inter/Transdisciplinary Sciences (37), Chemical Sciences (34) and Physical Sciences (25). The projects have so far yielded more than 253 publications in SCI-indexed journals, over 15 patent filings, and 20+ presentations at international conferences, as well as training over 300 research fellows — JRFs, SRFs, and Research Associates — thereby building a specialised pipeline of women scholars for advanced scientific careers.

Earlier, the DR R Parthasarathi, Head, CSIR-HRDG, in his welcome address, traced the Group's eight-decade legacy of building India's scientific human capital — from the research fellowships written into CSIR's founding resolution to the Capacity Building and Human Resource Development (CBHRD) umbrella approved by the Cabinet chaired by Honourable Prime Minister in September 2025 and situated ASPIRE as a named instrument of that continuum. Dr Shweta Pant, Nodal Officer of the ASPIRE scheme, presented the scheme's highlights and insights. Dr Annapurni Subramaniam, Director, Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru and Chairperson, ASPIRE Physical Sciences Committee, and Prof. Sharmila A. Bapat, Savitribai Phule Pune University and Chairperson, ASPIRE Life Sciences Committee, shared their remarks and acknowledged the rigour of the peer-evaluation process.



The celebration was followed by the initiation of the Project Review Sessions, in which the ASPIRE Subject Area Committees will assess the mid-term progress of the funded projects and guide their translational trajectories.

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