DPIIT Launches 6th Edition of National Startup Awards to Recognise Innovation and Entrepreneurship

National Startup Awards 6.0 to Recognise Startups Across 20 Sectoral and 3 Special Categories, Introduces 12 New Sectors

National Startup Awards 6.0 Introduces Student Innovator Award, Offers ₹25 Lakh Cash Prize Across Eligible Categories

Applications for National Startup Awards 6.0 Open from 27 October to 20 November 2026

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The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, has launched the 6th Edition of the National Startup Awards (NSA 6.0) under the Startup India initiative to recognise innovation and entrepreneurship and strengthen India's startup ecosystem.

The year 2026 marks the completion of ten years of the Startup India initiative, launched in January 2016 to build a strong, inclusive and innovation-driven entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country. Since its inception in 2019, the National Startup Awards have emerged as a flagship initiative under Startup India, providing a national platform to recognise entrepreneurial excellence and showcase innovative solutions addressing critical challenges across sectors.

The National Startup Awards recognise startups demonstrating outstanding performance in innovation, scalability, sustainability and socio-economic impact. Building upon the success of the previous five editions, NSA 6.0 seeks to strengthen India's startup ecosystem by encouraging innovation-led entrepreneurship, fostering inclusive participation and promoting globally competitive startups.

NSA 6.0 will recognise innovation, entrepreneurship and excellence across 20 sectoral categories and three special award categories, reflecting India's evolving startup ecosystem, emerging technologies and national development priorities. This edition introduces 12 new sectoral categories: Biomanufacturing; Consumer Industries; Defence & Security; Rural Economy, Traditional Industries & Livelihoods; Education & Skilling;

Electronics, Semiconductors & Advanced Manufacturing; Sports, Fitness & Sports-Tech; Future Mobility & Automotive; Ocean & Blue Economy; Space-Tech, Drones & Aerospace; Telecom, Connectivity & Digital Infrastructure; and Travel, Tourism & Hospitality.

The three special award categories are Women-Led Startup of the Year, North-East Startup Excellence and the newly introduced Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award. Introduced for the first time, the student award aims to foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among school and college students across all 36 States and Union Territories. It marks a step towards nurturing the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs and expanding the reach of the National Startup Awards.

Winning startups across the 20 sectoral categories and the two startup-focused special categories will be eligible for a cash prize of ₹25 lakh per category, subject to the applicable award guidelines. The Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur Award will carry a total prize pool of ₹25 lakh across four sub-categories.

In addition to monetary recognition, the National Startup Awards seek to facilitate mentorship, investor engagement, market access, industry partnerships and enhanced visibility within India's startup ecosystem.

NSA 6.0 aims to encourage participation from startups across States and Union Territories, including emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. DPIIT will engage Central Ministries and Departments, State and UT Governments, incubators, academic institutions, banks and financial institutions, Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), industry associations and other ecosystem stakeholders to support outreach, participation and evaluation under the awards.

Applications for NSA 6.0 open on 27 October 2026 and will remain open until 20 November 2026. Eligible startups and student innovators are encouraged to apply and showcase their innovations at the national level through the official Startup India portal at www.startupindia.gov.in.

Through the sixth edition of the National Startup Awards, DPIIT reaffirms the Government of India's commitment to fostering an inclusive, innovation-driven and globally competitive startup ecosystem, while recognising entrepreneurial excellence and nurturing the next generation of innovators.

The 20 sectoral award categories under NSA 6.0 are:

1. Agriculture, AgriTech & Food Systems
2. Biomanufacturing
3. DeepTech & Frontier Technologies
4. Climate-Tech, Clean Energy & Sustainability
5. Consumer Industries
6. Creative Industries, Media & Digital Content (Orange Economy)
7. Defence & Security
8. Rural Economy, Traditional Industries & Livelihoods
9. Education & Skilling
10. Electronics, Semiconductors & Advanced Manufacturing
11. FinTech, Financial Services & Inclusion
12. Food-Tech, Biotechnology & Nutrition

13. Healthcare, MedTech & Life Sciences
14. Supply Chain & Logistics
15. Sports, Fitness & Sports-Tech
16. Future Mobility & Automotive
17. Ocean & Blue Economy
18. Space-Tech, Drones & Aerospace
19. Telecom, Connectivity & Digital Infrastructure
20. Travel, Tourism & Hospitality

The three special award categories are:

1. Women-Led Startups
2. Startups from the North-Eastern Region
3. Student Innovator / Aspiring Entrepreneur

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Abhijith Narayanan/ Ishita Biswas

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