

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No.2706
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17/3/2020

GENDER IMBALANCE IN R&D SECTOR

2706. SHRI SANJAY SINGH:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that there are only 15 per cent women out of the total Indian Research and Development workforce due to lack of practical knowledge for students;
- (b) the reasons behind this huge gender imbalance in the field; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to provide better experiment facilities and financial support to emerging women scientists?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE; MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY; AND
MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES
(DR. HARSH VARDHAN)

(a) According to available official statistics, there are 39,389 women scientists directly engaged in R&D activities at various Research & Development (R&D) establishments. Their percentage is 13.91% among total number of scientists working in these organizations. However, lack of practical knowledge for students is not the actual reason for gender imbalance.

(b) There are several reasons behind huge gender imbalance in Science & Technology (S&T) field. These are mainly related to familial issues like marriage, family responsibility, relocation due to transferable job of spouse etc. Some of these reasons also lead to dropout from higher studies, career break, overage for scientific jobs and prolonged absence from place of work or even resignation from the job.

(c) The Government has several programmes to provide experiment facilities and financial support to emerging women scientists. To develop infrastructure and state-of-the art research facilities in women universities, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has a dedicated programme known as “Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence in Women Universities (CURIE)”. There are other programmes of DST viz. Fund for Improvement of S&T infrastructures in Universities and Higher Educational institutions (FIST), Promotion of University Research and Scientific Excellence (PURSE), Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facility (SAIF) which also provide support for development of research infrastructure to academic institutions. The realm of the FIST has benefitted about 56 Women’s PG Colleges across the country covering most states.

In addition to this, the DST has different programmes under “Knowledge Involvement in Research Advancement through Nurturing (KIRAN)” Scheme to provide financial support to emerging women scientists. ‘Women Scientists Scheme (WOS)’ under KIRAN provides career opportunities including fellowships to unemployed women scientists and technologists, especially those who had a break in career. Further, Indo-US Fellowship for Women in STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine) encourages women scientists and technologists to undertake international collaborative research in premier institutions in USA.

DST has also started a new scheme “Vigyan Jyoti” for girl students of Class 9-12 to encourage them to pursue education and career in science and technology particularly in the areas where women are underrepresented. During 2019-20, Phase-I of Vigyan Jyoti is started in 50 districts of the country.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) is also implementing ‘Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation Programme (BioCARE)’ to encourage women scientists in Biotechnology research. Similarly, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) also has ‘Biomedical Research Career Programme’ for women scientists. Further, University Grants Commission (UGC) also has ‘Post-Doctoral Fellowship for Women’ to provide financial support to emerging women scientists.
