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CSIR plans research academy

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The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) proposes to set up an Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research. The proposed academy will primarily focus on research in areas that are not taught in regular academic universities.

The academy will aim to maximise the number of researchers in a cost-effective manner and without any significant gestation period. The CSIR envisages to utilise its existing physical infrastructure and mostly its academic resources available at its 37 laboratories across the country for the proposed academy.

The academy is expected to produce 1,000 PhDs in science and technology and about 120 PhDs in engineering annually from the fifth year onwards.

In a proposal submitted to the Union government, the CSIR pointed out the need to augment the emphasis on innovation in domestic higher education systems. It has been clearly felt that the present output of trained post-graduates and doctorates in science and engineering was far from adequate. Also, graduates are not adequately trained in experimental research. The existing infrastructure and state-of-the-art human resource available within the CSIR framework would provide the niche and platform on which such an academy could be launched, the proposal said.

The academy would be set up based on a "hub and the spokes" model where the hub will be responsible for centralised administrative functions and would be housed in the Human resource Development Centre (HRDC) of CSIR at Ghaziabad. The spokes will be located in the 37 laboratories of CSIR, which will act as actual campuses for different subjects or areas depending on their respective specialisations.

"Inter-meshing"

Also, there will be intensive "inter-meshing" among the institutes to enable sharing and cross flow of information, knowledge and facilities. As such, the proposed academy is conceived to operate in a virtual mode without any requirement of funds.

The CSIR has a pan-India presence. It spreads from North East Institute of Science and Technology (NEIST) in Jorhat to Central Salt and Marine Chemicals Research Institute (CSMCRRI) in Bhavnagar (Gujarat) to National Institute of Interdisciplinary Sciences and Technology (NIIST) in Thiruvananthapuram to Indian Institute of Integrated Medicine in Jammu. The activity of CSIR is clustered into six areas of biological sciences, chemical sciences, engineering sciences, physical sciences, information sciences and science and technology for social sector.

The CSIR has an availability of 4,500 scientists in diverse branches of science and engineering of which 2,500 could be effectively be utilised for activities of the proposed academy. More than 400 PhDs are produced annually based on research done in the CSIR laboratories, but who need to register with a university for award of degree as the Council is not empowered to do so.

The establishment of the academy would help in generation of super speciality human resources, comprising professionals with multi-disciplinary expertise and knowledge in emerging areas such as mechatronics, synthetic biology, waste-to-wealth technologies, next-generation energy solutions, and green chemistry, which are not readily available within the conventional higher education system in India.

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