

National Science Day brings gender equality in science: President announces key initiatives

President of India Ram Nath Kovind announced three key initiatives for gender advancement and equality in academic and research institutions on the occasion of National Science Day in a function held at Vigyan Bhavan today. This year the theme for National Science Day is “Women in Science.”

Vigyan Jyoti is an initiative that will create a level-playing field for the meritorious girls in high school to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in their higher education. The Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) will develop a comprehensive Charter and a framework for assessing the Gender Equality in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). An online portal for science and technology resources for women will provide E-resources related to all women-specific government schemes, scholarships, fellowships, career counseling with details of subject area experts from various disciplines in science and technology, President Kovind highlighted.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Science & Technology, Health and Family Welfare and Earth Sciences, applauded the theme ‘Women in Science’ and marked it a conscious paradigm shift from earlier days. Innovation and gender parity underpin the entire development process.

Dr. Harshvardhan said that we must move from tokenism to totalism, especially when it comes to creating a gender parity culture in Indian science. The recent special focus on women empowerment by the government has resulted into various special schemes to attract women in science and to provide employment opportunities as well, he added.

Dr. Harshvardhan mentioned that India has risen considerably internationally in research in recent times. We are now number 3 in terms of number of publications in SCI journals. World welcomes our rise even more than they do of others. Our value systems, Governance models, and civilisational legacies are respected. The new India would bring newer challenges. “I call upon scientists to join the national endeavor to find S&T led solutions to the problems to meet the challenges of 21st Century,” he added.

President Ram Nath Kovind conferred national awards for science communication and popularization, including women excellence awards for meritorious women scientists. The awards included National Science and Technology Communication Awards, Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research (AWSAR) Awards, SERB Women Excellence Awards, and National Award for Young Woman Showing Excellence through Application of Technology for Societal Benefits.

Professor Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST), highlighted the importance of National Science Day and said that NSD should bring greater awareness, focus, and action across the nation on the challenges and opportunities for the women in STEM. He thanked the Honourable President for launching the three initiatives for women, which he said could create a level playing field for women in the field of science and technology and hoped that they would shape further the vision and direction for the future. “On the day, let us acknowledge our scientists’ efforts in the progress of the Nation with a deep foundation in

science and technology, leading to inclusive growth. Let us also resolve to widen and deepen India's footprint in S&T," he added.

Prof. Gagandeep Kang, Executive Director of the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad delivered a Special Talk on the occasion; Prof. Kang is the first women FRS from India.

The theme has been chosen for increasing public appreciation of science in general and focusing on issues and aspects of women in the area of science and technology. Celebration of important scientific days with associated events brings scientific awareness in the community. Many institutions organize an open day by involving students and common masses, enabling them to understand the research being carried in the laboratories and apprise students about career opportunities available in a particular research field.

National Science Day is celebrated every year on 28th February to commemorate the announcement of the discovery of the 'Raman Effect' by Sir C.V. Raman for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930. Government of India designated 28 February as National Science Day (NSD) in 1986. Since then, theme-based science communication activities are carried out all over the country on this occasion.

National Council for Science & Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology (DST) acts as a nodal agency to support, catalyze and coordinate the celebration of the National Science Day throughout the country in scientific institutions, research laboratories and autonomous scientific institutions associated with the Ministry of Science and Technology. NCSTC has supported various programmes countrywide through State S&T Councils & Departments for organization of a range of activities, such as lectures, quizzes, open houses, etc.

DST also instituted National Awards for Science Popularization in 1987 to stimulate, encourage and recognize outstanding efforts in the area of science and technology communication and popularization as well as inculcating scientific temper among masses. These awards are presented every year on National Science Day.

It is also an occasion to reinforce the significance of the spirit of scientific temper and scientific awareness in our daily lives and progress of the nation.

Prof K.Vijay Raghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to Govt., Dr. Renu Swarup, Secretary, DBT, Dr. Shekhar Mande, DG, CSIR, and award winners were among those present on occasion.