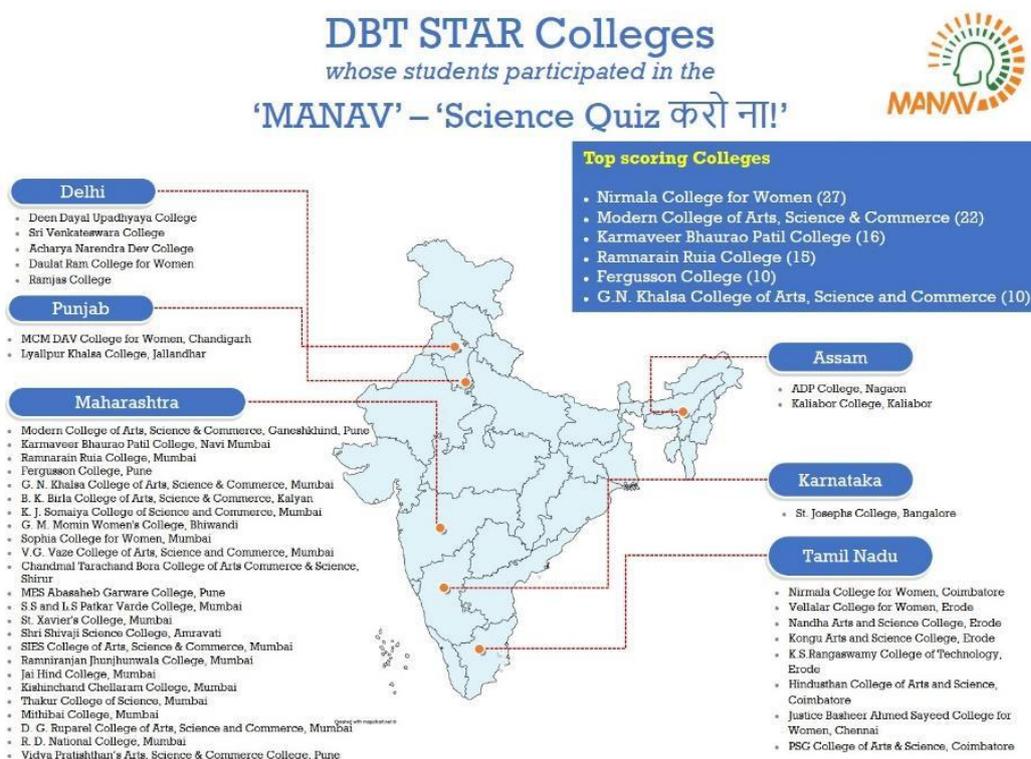


## Students from DBT Star colleges shine at ‘Science Quiz - करो ना!’



New Delhi, July 13: Living in the shadows of the COVID-19, confined to their homes, has been especially daunting for the younger generation. The plethora of misinformation that has been flooding the media, has further added to the problem.

To help address both these issues simultaneously, the ‘Manav - Human Atlas Initiative’ team launched an online science quiz series, “Science Quiz - करो ना!”, soon after the national lockdown was announced. ‘Manav’ is a project undertaken by the Department of Biotechnology’s National Centre for Cell Science (DBT-NCCS) in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER-Pune) and Persistent Systems.

The weekly quiz series provided science enthusiasts with an engaging and fun activity that concomitantly helped raise awareness about COVID-19. The quiz was aimed at nurturing scientific inquisitiveness especially among students, and to propagate correct scientific information from trusted sources like advisories released by the WHO, Ministry of Health and Family welfare, Government of India, the CDC, USA, and published scientific literature. Links were provided in the quiz to encourage the participants to use these credible resources to learn more about the disease, even as they answered the questions. This quiz thus served as

a common platform to assess as well as raise general awareness about COVID-19. It also gave students, especially graduates, post-graduates and PhD scholars, a glimpse into how science is used to address problems relevant to the society.

The quiz received an overwhelming response, with the first quiz itself having attracted participants from twenty-two Indian states soon after it was launched. Over a thousand students from academic institutions across India, including forty-two DBT-Star colleges, participated in this series. DBT-Star colleges are supported by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, under the Star College Scheme. This scheme was initiated by the DBT in 2008 to support colleges and universities offering undergraduate education, to improve science teaching across the country. Twenty rural colleges and ninety-six colleges from urban areas have been supported by the DBT under the scheme.

Colleges from various parts of India have also been benefiting from other initiatives of the 'Manav' project. These include workshops on "How to read scientific literature", which have been conducted at various educational institutions in the past. Webinars are currently being used to deliver this training, to cater to the requests being received from various colleges. Another webinar series in progress covers diverse aspects of data science and its applications in various disciplines, from astronomy to biology and public health.

The 'Manav' initiative, exemplary of a public-private partnership, is funded by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, and co-funded by Persistent Systems. It aims to annotate the extensive data available in the scientific literature related to the human body, to serve as a proof-of-concept for the eventual goal of creating a virtual human atlas.

The project involves upskilling students by training them to comprehend and extract relevant information from scientific literature using a digital annotation tool. Students and researchers interested in participating in the project and webinars can learn more from the project's website (<https://manav.gov.in/>) and social media: Twitter (Manav Human Atlas; @ManavAtlas) & Facebook (MANAV Human Atlas). The Rajya Sabha TV has also featured this initiative in Gyaan Vigyaan (<https://youtu.be/Ule08azR1ww>) & Science Monitor (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMgTw6rXTGQ>).

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