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Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

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Why is in news? The Union government is set to institute the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

Nearly a year after deciding to cut the number of prizes annually awarded by its Ministries, the Union government is set to institute the Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar — 56 prizes to **felicitate scientists, technologists and innovators**.

Akin to the prestigious Padma awards, these awards will **not include any cash component**; instead, they will likely bestow a **certificate and a medallion** on the awardee.

According to the proposal, which is yet to be made public, the RVP will comprise **three Vigyan Ratna, 25 Vigyan Shri, 25 Vigyan Yuva-Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and three Vigyan Team awards**.

Multidisciplinary prizes: These prizes will be awarded annually for physics, chemistry, biological sciences, mathematics and computer science, earth science, medicine, engineering science, agricultural science, environmental science, technology and innovation, atomic energy, space science and technology, and a 13th category, simply called “others”.

“It may be ensured that each domain may be represented. **Adequate representation of women** may also be ensured,” said the proposal forwarded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to the Union Home Ministry.

The 56 proposed awards are a stark reduction from the almost 300 science prizes that used to be given by Union Ministries.

The **Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) awards** given by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) since 1958, now includes ₹5 lakh per winner, as well as a salary perk.

In fact, the government announced the names of 12 winners of the SSB awards just last week, after a year’s delay. The National Technology Awards, given to teams by the Technology Development Board (a DST entity), also include cash prizes worth ₹25 lakh.

Eligibility: The new awards will also be **open to persons of Indian origin (PIOs)**, though a maximum of one such may be awarded the Vigyan Ratna, while three PIOs each can be selected for the Vigyan Shri and the VY-SSB.

However, **PIOs will not be eligible for the Vigyan Team awards**.

The Vigyan Ratna awards shall be for “lifetime contributions along with excellence made in any field of science”, the Vigyan Shri for “distinguished contribution to any field”, and the SSB for “exceptional contribution by young scientists”.

The team awards shall be for three or more researchers who have made an “exceptional contribution as a team”.

There are **no age limits for any prizes except the SSB**, for which recipients must be 45 years or younger.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthi Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040

Phone: **044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833**

The awards will be **announced annually** on May 11, which is **National Technology Day**, and will be **awarded on National Space Day**, August 23. These are the days on which India successfully conducted its second nuclear test in 1998, and then catapulted the Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander on the moon this year.

The RVP awards, which **will commence from 2024**, will be given by the President or the Vice President, according to the proposal.

A committee will be constituted every year, comprising the Secretaries of six Science Ministries, up to four presidents of science and engineering academies, and six distinguished scientists and technologists from various fields.

The **CSIR will coordinate the administration** of the awards process for two years, after which it will be taken over by the proposed National Research Foundation.