

Govt to phase out 100 awards, several fellowships in science

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Mumbai:

September 26 is marked on every scientist's calendar. It is when the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar awards, India's highest recognition for scientific achievement, are declared. This year, the day went by without any announcement. Instead, the government issued a notification which said that about 100 awards and several fellowships in the field of science, were being discontinued. All private endowment awards too have been cancelled. Instead, most departments will now have only one award of a "high stature" instituted, said the order.

Currently, government departments like earth sciences, biotechnology, space, atomic energy, etc, have separate prizes to recognise talent. In all, there are 207 such awards, of which 4 are national awards, 97 private endowments awards, 54 are lecture/scholarship/fellowship-based awards and 56 are internal awards. As per the notification, "All private endowments awards may be discontinued. All lecture/scholarship/fellowship based awards may be discontinued. The inter-nal awards may be discontinued and wherever required, these awards may be merged in the proposed schemes for scholarship/fellowship mentioned above."

Despite the shake-up, the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar award that celebrates excellence in scientific research will be continued, but some say it too is being watered down. The notification says, "As regards the monthly remuneration given under Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar award, a proposal for giving a lump sum amount in place of monthly remuneration was considered but no final decision was taken. It was also agreed that the duration of the monthly remuneration may be capped at 15 years." The award, given since 1958, includes a sum of Rs 5 lakh and a monthly allowance of Rs 15,000 till the researcher is working.

LIST OF AWARDS TO BE PHASED OUT AS PER GOVT NOTIFICATION

► **Department of Atomic Energy:** 25

performance-based awards, which are conferred by the PSUs under the department and 13 non-core domain awards given by the department have been discontinued by a recent govt order



► **Department of Space:** Three internal awards discontinued

► **Department of Biotechnology:** Six fellowships categorised as awards will be converted to fellowships

► **Department of Scientific and Industrial Research:** Six awards, except the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards, cancelled

► **Ministry of Earth Sciences:** Dr Anna Mani Award for Women Scientist may be merged with awards given to women by other departments like Ministry of Women & Child Development. Three other awards discontinued

► **Department of Health and Family Welfare:** Kayakalp award may be discontinued as it is “basically an incentivizing scheme.” 3 awards being



conferred by FSSAI may be discontinued. Three national awards given by the National Medical Council are suspended for now. All 9 private endowments awards may be discontinued.

► **Department of Health Research:** There are 37 awards given by Indian Council for Medical Research. Among them, 32 endowment awards have been discontinued