

## Govt increases scholarship amount of research fellows

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Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, Dr. Jitendra Singh recently announced an over 50 per cent hike in the fellowship amount received by various categories of young research scientists.

This land mark decision, responding to a long standing demand by around one lakh science research scholars and associates working across the country, has been taken by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under science and technology ministry.

The fellowship amount for Research Associate-III had been hiked from Rs 24,000 to Rs 46,000, Research Associate-II from Rs 23,000 to Rs 42,000, Research Associate-I from Rs 22,000 to Rs 38,000, Senior Research Fellow from Rs 18,000 to Rs 30,000 and Junior Research Fellow from Rs 16,000 to Rs 25,000 per month respectively.

In addition, the house rent allowance (HRA) as well as the medical benefits will continue to be available to all the categories of research scholars as per the central government norms or the norms of host institutions which ever applicable. Entitlement for travel by AC-2 tier or AC-3 tier depending upon the category of research fellow / research associate will also be available. In addition, maternity leave for women will also be available to all categories of research fellows.

Dr Singh recalled that as soon as he took over as Minister for Science & Technology four months back, the Research scholars had approached him with this demand, in response to which he had assured them that it is genuine and, being himself from the scientific fraternity, he could very well understand that a hike was richly deserved by Research Scholars and the Research Associates who devoted their entire time and energy to the growth of science in the country. Soon after, he said, he held a series of meetings with the secretary (S&T) and other departments which was followed by inter-ministerial meetings with the ministry of finance for budgetary implications.

Dr Singh thanked the union finance minister, Mr Arun Jaitley for having accepted the demand put up by his ministry. Each ministry and agency can now use the guidelines to make requisite changes over their specific fellowship programmes, he added.

The minister further suggested that a hike in the fellowship amount should be undertaken periodically after due assessment and for this purpose he directed the concerned officials to put in place a proper mechanism.

In addition, Dr Singh also issued directions to the science and technology ministry to put in place a web-based fellowship assessment and disbursement mechanism so that delays in disbursement of fellowship amount could be avoided.