

GRASSROOTS FOCUS

President to host week-long festival celebrating innovation

'Festival of Innovations' to bring innovators, investors together, focus on leveraging science and technology

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NEW DELHI

President Pranab Mukherjee will host a week-long festival that will bring together new and established innovators from India and abroad along with those involved in financing new ideas, giving a boost to the Narendra Modi government's efforts to encourage innovation among young people.

Called the Festival of Innovations, the event will focus on all aspects of innovation, including ways to leverage science and technology to spur innovation, a statement from the president's office said.

The event will be held from 12 to 19 March at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and is being organized

in collaboration with the National Innovation Foundation, an autonomous body under the department of science and technology.

"There will be grassroots innovators, experts like scientists, professors and doctors, besides representatives of government—i.e., the policymakers—and those responsible for funding new ideas," said a government official who did not want to be named.

"The idea is to bring all these people together so that there is a free flow of ideas and suggestions, exploring of possibilities in funding as well as further refining existing ideas. There are representatives from developed and developing countries for an exchange of experiences," said the official.

The annual Visitor's Awards will be presented during the festival.

Rakesh Bhatnagar, a professor in the school of biotechnology at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) bagged the prize in the innovation category for developing a genetically engineered vaccine and a therapeutic antibody against anthrax.

Bhatnagar has been working in the area of anthrax, a fatal bacterial disease, for over two decades.

The award for the research category will be presented to the Molecular Parasitology Group of JNU for their work in the area of molecular parasitology, especially in vector-borne diseases malaria and leishmaniasis. Their work on amoebiasis was also recognized by the selectors.

Both the winners will receive a citation and cash award of ₹1 lakh each.

The award for "best university" has been given to Tezpur

University, Assam. The university will receive a citation and a trophy.

The organizers had invited online applications from all central universities for each category. A selection committee, headed by Omita Paul, secretary to the president, chose the winners.

The event will have exhibitions showcasing the transformation of ideas to commercially viable solutions in the areas of medical science, biotechnology and the government's Clean India Mission.

Experts from France, the US, the UK, Singapore, Australia, Finland, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, South Africa, Cuba, Canada and China will take part in the event, the organizers said.

The event will explore the themes such as "incubation and acceleration models for innovative start-ups, innovation and skill development, incentives for innovation in public policy and programmes and social innovations for large-scale change".

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