GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4160
ANSWERED ON 18/03/2026

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION SCHEME

4160. SHRI LAVU SRI KRISHNA DEVARAYALU:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the current status of implementation of the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme;

(b) the number of startups across the country that have received funding under the scheme, along with State/UT-wise details and the amount of funding disbursed;

(c) the major projects undertaken under the scheme in the energy sector, deep technology, artificial intelligence and the digital economy; and

(d) the steps undertaken by the Government to expand and strengthen the digital agriculture sector in the country?

ANSWER
MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES
(DR. JITENDRA SINGH)

(a) to (c): The Department of Science & Technology (DST), as the nodal Ministry for the RDI Scheme, has formulated and finalized the Implementation Guidelines for the Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund, in consultation with the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and the Department of Expenditure (DoE). These guidelines have been approved by the Executive Council of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF). DST has also notified Anusandhan National Research Foundation (Utilization of Research, Development and Innovation Fund) Financial Rules 2026.

The scheme being operationalized through a Special Purpose Fund (SPF) established within the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), uses a two-tiered funding structure. Under this mechanism, the SPF will be the first level custodian of RDI Fund and will channels funds to Second Level Fund Managers (SLFMs). As per the approved framework, the Technology Development Board (TDB) and the Biotechnology Industry Research

Assistance Council (BIRAC) have been designated as Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) and launched calls for project proposals on 4 February 2026 and 13 February 2026, respectively.

Further, a call inviting applications from additional eligible entities, including Fund of Funds, to act as SLFMs was issued, which closed on 31 January 2026. Applications have been received and the selection process is currently underway.

The SLFMs will provide funding to eligible technology entities, including startups, companies, and industry-led R&D projects, for development of technologies at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4 and above in sunrise sectors. These include energy security, energy transition and climate action; deep technologies such as quantum computing, robotics and space; artificial intelligence and its applications in agriculture, health and education; biotechnology, biomanufacturing, synthetic biology, pharmaceuticals and medical devices; and the digital economy, including digital agriculture.

(d) With regard to strengthening the digital agriculture sector, the Scheme supports relevant sub-sectors such as Digital Agriculture (AgriTech), precision agriculture and soil health, AI-enabled agriculture solutions, remote sensing, smart irrigation, climate-smart input optimization, digital soil health monitoring and advisory systems, agri-data and yield analytics platforms, drone-based solutions for crop monitoring, spraying and land mapping, digital farm-to-market value chains, blockchain-based produce traceability and contract farming platforms, and other technology-driven interventions aimed at improving productivity, sustainability and resilience in the agriculture sector. The Scheme also provides flexibility to include additional sub-sectors, based on the recommendations of the concerned Ministries/Departments and subject to necessary approvals.

A 'Krishi Sewa' mobile application has also been developed to support farmers in agricultural activities. advanced AI, sensor systems, and UAVs have been integrated for farm mechanization, processing, and value addition. Additionally, the 'Kisan-Sarathi' portal, a multimedia, multilingual digital agricultural advisory platform has been implemented through 731 KVKs under ICAR to provide localized extension services.

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