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“Anusandhan National Research Foundation: An Agency to foster Research”

Dr Akhilesh Patel

Associate Professor,
Deptt. of Teacher Education (B.Ed.)
Ramnagar Post-Graduate College,
Ramnagar, Barabanki, UP
Email: professorakhilesh@gmail.com

Abstract:

The National Education Policy 2020 emphasised importance of research and development in the growth and development of country and making the country global leader in knowledge sector. Research activities require high inputs of finance, skills and knowledge. The funds available for research and innovation activities in India are very meagre as compared to developed nations. Erstwhile, Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) was funding research activities in science related areas. The National Education Policy 2020 envisions the establishment of National Research Foundation. The overall goal of NRF is to encourage a culture of research in higher education institutions. The NRF is vested with responsibility to finance research in all disciplines. The Government of India enacted the ANRF Act, 2023 to establish Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF). This research paper deals with various aspects of ANRF and the programmes of ANRF.

Key Words: ANRF, NEP 2020, SERB, Research

I. Introduction

In pursuance to Provisions of NEP 2020, Government of India introduced the Anusandhan National Research Foundation Bill 223 in the Parliament and it became an Act after the assent of the President of India. The ANRF Act, 2023 came into effect

on February 5, 2024. The ANRF is established as a 'Body Corporate' having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to contract and shall by said name sue or sued. The ANRF Act, 2023 also repealed the Science and Engineering Research Board Act, 2023 and the Science and Engineering Research Board duly constituted under SERB Act, 2023 is subsumed into ANRF. All the assets, liabilities and facilities of the Science and Engineering research Board shall pass to the ANRF. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation is under the administrative control of the Department of Science and Technology.

II. Anusandhan National Research Foundation

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) is established through an Act of Parliament, ANRF Act 2023. The function of the ANRF as stated in the Act is *“to provide high level strategic directions for research, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences, including mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture and scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences.”* The function of the ANRF is to promote research and development and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's Universities, Colleges, Research Institutions and R&D Laboratories. As per recommendations of NEP, Anusandhan National Research Foundation is an apex level body to provide high level strategic direction of scientific research in the country. To achieve its aims, ANRF will act in close consultations among industry, academia, research institutions and government departments.

III. Objectives of ANRF

According to ANRF Act 2023, the objectives of the ANRF are as follows:

1. To prepare roadmap for short, medium and large term research and development;
2. To seeding, grow and facilitate research at academic and research institutes through programmes such as R&D projects, fellowships, creation of academic chairs and centres of excellence.
3. To fund competitive peer-reviewed grant proposals to eligible proposals.
4. To assist in setting up research infrastructure and environment conducive for scientific pursuit with focus on national priorities, emerging frontiers and strategic research.
5. To increase India's role and participation in key areas of national and global areas.
6. To support translation of research undertaken into capital intensive technologies.

7. To evolve nationally coordinated programmes to identify scientific and practical solutions for societal, developmental, financial and techno-economic challenges.
8. To coordinate across Central Government, State Governments, public authorities, industries and research institutions to document and analyse the expenditure on scientific research and their outcomes and report the same to the Central Government.
9. To evolve participation in international collaborative projects and fostering exchange of scientific information.
10. To encourage collaboration with scientists from within and outside India with a view to encourage Indian scientific ecosystem.
11. To encourage the Public Sector Enterprises and private sector entities to invest in the activities of the Foundation.

IV. The Governing Board of ANRF

The Governing Board of Anusandhan National Research Foundation is its highest decision-making body. Its function is to provide strategic direction, perform and monitor the implementation of objectives of the Foundation. The composition of the ANRF is as follows:

1. The Prime Minister of India, *ex-officio*- President;
2. The Union Minister of Science and Technology, *ex-officio*- Vice President;
3. The Union Minister of Education, *ex-officio*- Vice President;
4. A member from NITI Aayog dealing with Science and Technology, *ex-officio*- Member
5. Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Science and Technology), *ex-officio*- Member
6. Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Scientific and Industrial Research), *ex-officio*- Member
7. Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Higher Education), *ex-officio*- Member
8. Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Biotechnology), *ex-officio*- Member
9. The Principal Scientific Advisor to Govt. of India, *ex-officio*- Member-Secretary.
10. The President of the Governing Body can appoint/ nominate following members to the Governing Board-
 - (a) Not exceeding two members from PM Science, Technology and Innovation Council,
 - (b) Not exceeding five members from business organisation or industry,

- (c) One member from field of humanities and social sciences,
- (d) Not exceeding two members from institutions engaged in scientific and technological research and development,
- (e) Not exceeding six experts who have specialised knowledge in the area of health, mathematical and physical sciences, biological sciences, engineering and technology, innovation and partnership, computer and information sciences and engineering.

V. Executive Council of the ANRF

The responsibility to implement the provisions of the ANRF Act, 2023 lies with the Executive Council duly constituted under the provisions of the Act. President of the Governing Body will nominate the members of the Executive Council. The composition of the Executive Council is as follows: -

- (a) The Principal Scientific Advisor to the Govt. of India, *ex-officio*-Chairperson
- (b) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt of Science and Technology), *ex-officio*-Member,
- (c) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Bio-technology), *ex-officio*-Member,
- (d) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Scientific and Industrial Research), *ex-officio*-Member,
- (e) Secretary to Govt. of India (Ministry of Earth Sciences), *ex-officio*, Member
- (f) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Higher Education), *ex-officio*, Member
- (g) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Health Research), *ex-officio*, Member
- (h) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Defence Research and Development), *ex-officio*, Member
- (i) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Atomic Research), *ex-officio*, Member
- (j) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Space), *ex-officio*, Member
- (k) Secretary to Govt. of India (Deptt. of Agriculture Research Education), *ex-officio*, Member
- (l) Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation, *ex-officio*-Member-Secretary
- (m) President of the Governing Body may appoint/ nominate following members to the Executive Council
 - (i) Not exceeding two *ex-officio* Members amongst Secretaries of such other Departments and Ministries of Government of India, not referred above.
 - (ii) Not exceeding three Members amongst distinguished experts who have specialised knowledge in the areas of science and technology in academia, philanthropic sector, research laboratories and industries.

VI. Functions of the Executive Council

The ANRF Act, 2023 mandates the Executive Council to implement the objectives of the Foundation based on the policy, direction and guidance provided by the Governing Body. The Executive Council shall prepare a budget and maintain proper accounts and prepare its annual report giving full accounts of its activities and submit the same to the Central Government. The Executive Council shall submit the audit report of Comptroller and Auditor General of India after audit of its accounts. The Executive Council shall perform following functions:

- (a) To consider applications for the grant of financial assistance in accordance with the eligibility criteria as determined necessary for such grants.
- (b) To determine through regulation, the form and manner for making of applications for financial assistance,
- (c) To facilitate and provide any assistance as may be required to ensure filling of applications for intellectual property rights pursuant to the research undertaken through financial assistance provided by ANRF.

VII. Chief Executive Officer

For efficient administration of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, Chief Executive Officer is appointed by the President of the Foundation. The Government of India appointed the Secretary to Government of India in the Department of Science and Technology as the interim Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation.

VIII. Funds of ANRF

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation shall receive monies from the following sources:

- (a) Grants and loans provided by Govt. of India, after due appropriation made by the Parliament;
- (b) Donations for research and development from public sector enterprises, the private sector, philanthropist organisations, foundations or international bodies;
- (c) Recoveries made of the amounts granted to the Foundation;
- (d) Any income from the investment of amounts received by the Foundation.

The Foundation shall constitute following Funds:

- (i) Anusandhan National Research Foundation Fund
- (ii) The Innovation Fund
- (iii) Science and Engineering Research Fund
- (iv) One or more Special Purpose Funds

IX. ANRF Programmes

The ANRF has launched various programmes and schemes for encouraging research. It is also managing the schemes of erstwhile SERB. The various programmes of ANRF are as follows:

IX(a). Inclusivity Research Grant (IRG)

The ANRF has launched Inclusivity Research Grant (IRG) Scheme to facilitate equal participation of researchers from all sectors of society. IRG Scheme provide funding support to researchers belonging to the SC/ST to undertake research in frontier areas of science and engineering. IRG scheme subsumed the Empowerment and Equity Opportunities for Excellence in Science (EMEQ) Scheme of erstwhile Science and Engineering Research Board.

IX(b). International Travel Support (ITS)

The ANRF launched ITS Scheme to provide travel assistance for presenting original research paper or chairing a session or delivering a keynote address in an international scientific event (conference/ seminar/ workshop) held abroad. In addition, in this scheme, support is provided to young scientists (age below 35 years) for attending training programmes/ short term schools/ workshops. The assistance includes economy class air-fare, airport tax, visa fee and registration fee.

IX (c). Mission for Advancement in High-impact Areas (MAHA)- EV-Mission

Mission addresses priority driven solution-focused research in mission mode that would catalyse multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary and multi-collaboration to address scientific challenges and advance the frontiers of technology in key scientific areas. Anusandhan National Research Foundation has identified Electric Vehicle (EV) mobility as the first priority area of focus under MAHA. The objective of the EV Mission is to foster research on Electric Vehicle and achieve self-reliance and global competitiveness in this field. This mission will help in achieving the goals of 'Aatmnirbhar Bharat' and 'Viksit Bharat'.

IX (d). Partnership for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR)

ANRF launched the Partnership for Accelerated Innovation and Research (PAIR) programme as the first step towards fostering research across a broader range of institutions. This programme is designed to boost the research capability of the institutions where the research capability is at nascent stage but have potential to perform well. The focus of the programme is to develop research culture in the institutions. The high research performing institutions shall coordinate and help to

develop research potential in the institutions having potential for research. The mentor institutions are designated as 'Hub Institutions' and the mentee institutions are referred as 'Spoke Institutions.' In the first phase of the programme include Hub Institutions- institutions within 25 NIRF overall rankings in the preceding two years and institutions of National Importance within 26 to 50 NIRF overall ranking in the preceding two years. The spoke institutions include- Central Universities and State Public Universities within 200 NIRF overall ranking, 200 NIRF University ranking, 100 NIRF State Public Universities. Each PAIR network shall consist of a hub and 3-7 spoke institutions.

IX (e). Prime Minister Early Career Research Grant (PM ECRG)

This programme focuses on providing financial assistance to young researchers engaged in science and technology. Their work will establish India as a global leader in research and innovation. The upper age limit is 42 years with a relaxation of three years for SC/ST/OBC/Physically Challenged and women candidates. Maximum of 700 grants will be awarded every year across all subject areas. Financial assistance of Rs. 60 lakh plus overhead for three years will be provided. This programme will replace the Startup Research Grant of SERB. PM ECRG is one time career grant.

IX(f). Financial Assistance to Professional Bodies and Seminar/ Symposia (SSY)

Under this scheme of ANRF, Science and Technology Professional bodies and Academes of Science and Engineering, academic institutions and professional organisations of science and engineering field are given partial financial assistance for various activities- seminar, conferences, symposia, technical meetings. The primary focus of the scheme is to support events having strong orientation towards scientific research in the areas of basic sciences, engineering, technology, agriculture, and medicines. Events dealing with social science, management and those purely concerned with policy matters are generally not covered.

X. Conclusion

The ANRF started its functioning since its inception on February 5, 2024. The programmes and schemes launched by ANRF are in their nascent stage. The results of the initiatives of these programmes and schemes are yet to materialise. The programmes and schemes launched by ANRF are focusing on science and engineering areas only. It is disheartening that humanities and social science field is neglected. NEP 2020 mandates the ANRF to fund research in all disciplines.

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