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## Initiative 1: Himalayan Research Fellowships

*Promoting science culture by creation of dedicated future researchers*

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#### Background

The Himalaya as the youngest mountain system has been recognised amongst the important and sensitive ecosystems across the globe, which is facing several threats and challenges due to natural and anthropogenic causes. Considering its uniqueness, the research and development efforts in this mountain system require special attention to ensure sustainable development of the region. Promoting high quality research with adequate field data support is the need of the hour to find solutions for the prevailing environmental problems. Government of India through its National agencies like University Grants Commission (UGC), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Dept. of Science and Technology (DST) has created several fellowship opportunities for young researchers of the country (Box 1). Most of these fellowships are awarded through National Eligibility Test (NET) or similar tests and successful researchers prefer to join Institutions located in big cities outside of the Himalayan region. The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), due to its remoteness and inaccessibility, most often remains deprived of such young talents and a huge gap in quality research is created when research is conducted from outside the region.

#### Box 1

- CSIR is mandated since 1942 to provide Research Fellowships and Associateships to bright young men and women for training in methods of research under the expert guidance of faculty members/scientists working in University Departments/Institutes in various fields of Science & Technology and Medical Sciences.
- The UGC-JRF scheme is to provide opportunities to NET-qualified candidates to undertake advanced studies and research leading to M.Phil./Ph.D. Degrees in Humanities and Social Sciences including Languages and Sciences.

#### The Himalayan Research Fellowships

Recognizing the above gap, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development (GBPIHED) through the Himalayan Research Fellowship scheme of its Mountain Division seeks to fill this gap, create a cadre of trained Himalayan environmental managers, ecologists and socio-economists and thus help generate information on physical, biological, managerial and social aspects of Himalayan environment and development in concatenation. GBPIHED's research addresses applied and developmental issues in different ecological and geographic regions of all the Indian Himalayan states. The research efforts in these disciplines essentially require the field work aptitude.

This Himalayan Research Fellowship scheme is constituted at two levels: (1) **GBPIHED-Himalayan Research Associates (HRA)** and (2) **Himalayan Junior Research Fellowship (HJRF)**.

**GBPIHED-Himalayan Research Associates (HRAs)** – The programme has laid foundation to identify promising young researchers with innovative ideas and provide them with training and research opportunities in niche areas of Himalaya. It will also facilitate the generation of information on physical, biological, anthropogenic and managerial aspects of Himalayan environment and development. The scheme aims at facilitating their transition from mentored to independent research career. GBPIHED intends to offer such fellowships each year to promising fresh PhD holders for working in the Institute and its Units with state-of-the-art R&D facilities. To start with, the process of appointment of three such Research Associates has been initiated in 2013-14. New associateships may be created each year in different subjects considering the need of the Institute. PhD degree holders, within three years of award of degree or those who have submitted or likely to submit their theses and get their PhD degree before the expiry of the validity of the award offer, are eligible to apply. Applicants should have research publications in high impact SCI journals. The tenure of associates will be two years and extendable for maximum one more year based on performance. GBPIHED-Himalayan Research Associateship is open only to Indian nationals.

**GBPIHED-Himalayan Junior Research Fellowships (HJRFs)** – The programme envisages to create scientific temperament for mountain research among the fresh post-graduates of physical, biological and social sciences in the IHR region. This programme falls within the mandate of the Institute for promoting science of regional relevance and creating the trained human resources in the IHR. The Institute has already made a beginning with appointment of 6 HJRFs in 2013-14. A total of 24 such HJRFs shall be awarded in the 12<sup>th</sup> Plan in all six thematic areas, namely, Watershed Processes and Management (WPM), Socio Economic Development (SED), Environmental Assessment and Management (EAM), Biodiversity Conservation and Management (BCM), Biotechnology Applications (BTA) and Knowledge Products and Capacity Building (KCB) across IHR states. A candidate seeking selection as GBPIHED-HJRF must possess Masters Degree in Physical, Biological, Social Sciences or equivalent degree in any relevant subject or degree in Engineering or Medicine from a recognised University with a minimum of 60% aggregate marks. These fellowships will be awarded for two years as JRF and one year as SRF depending upon the performance.

The guidelines for the engagement of GBPIHED-Himalayan Research Associates and GBPIHED-Himalayan Junior Research Fellows have been developed based on the norms/guidelines prepared by DST, UGC and CSIR, and their fellowships are at par with CSIR/ UGC fellowships.

## **The outcomes**

It is envisioned that the Institute will be successful in attracting the best available talents from the country to work on the specific research problems of the IHR states to find the scientifically sound solutions for the sustainable development of the region. The most important outcome of the programme will be promotion of science culture by creation of a team of dedicated future researchers in the IHR.

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