Science policy to help researchers access top journals for free

The proposed Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) aims to establish a system whereby all researchers in India can access research published in top international journals for no cost.

The government will negotiate, said Akhilesh Gupta, senior adviser in Department of Science and Technology, on behalf of all research bodies with publishers to enable access. Currently, it costs around ₹1,500 crore annually to subscribe to these journals.

"The price of subscription is very high and individual colleges cannot negotiate with publishers. Only a small fraction of our researchers are now able to benefit from these subscriptions and we would like to change that," Mr. Gupta said at a media briefing on Wednesday.

The Science Ministry hadn't yet drawn up a plan of execution as the STI policy was still in draft mode. It was possible that the eventual cost to the exchequer would be higher but it would come with the benefit to increased access, he said.

Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Professor Ashutosh Sharma said, "Times have changed with the future coming at us at a much faster pace. This policy will help us prepare for the fast pace of change. New problems are emerging that could only be tackled through science, technology, and innovation, and this policy is a right step in that direction to build a strong foundation for the future."

The policy sets a target for doubling the number of Full-Time Equivalents (FTE) researchers, Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D (GERD) and private sector contribution to the GERD every five years.

The policy had been drafted through a "four track" process of consultation and endeavoured to major changes through short, medium and long-term mission mode projects.

Dr. Gupta said the process involved nearly 300 rounds of consultations with more than 40,000 stakeholders.

The policy is to identify and address the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI (Science, Technology, Innovation) ecosystem to catalyse the socio-economic development of the country and also make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.