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Funding Delays in India's Biocare Programme | Challenges for Young Researchers

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GS III - Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

- 75 women selected for the Department of Biotechnology's Biocare programme have received neither sanction letters nor salaries is reminiscent of an irksome and persistent malaise in India's research administration.

Young researchers facing problem

1. Scant laboratory space,
2. Cumbersome university bureaucracies,
3. Labyrinthine grant applications,
4. Uneven mentorship
5. Uncertain career prospects
6. Salaries and fellowships are modest in relation to living costs
7. Trapped in protracted postdoctoral or contractual roles without long-term security
8. Opportunities for postdoctoral work and tenure-track openings abroad are also narrowing
9. Immigration regimes in the West have become tighter
10. Competition for limited faculty posts has intensified

- These problem deters talented graduates from pursuing research.
- Delays in disbursing fellowships and grants can derail entire careers.
- The country aspires to expand its global scientific standing, to convert research into innovation, and to train a generation of scientists to address challenges in health, energy, agriculture and climate resilience.
- This ambition may not be possible if funding administration falters at basic execution.

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- Treasury Single Account system, the stated reason for the Biocare delay, may strengthen transparency in the long run but we need to solve imminent concern.

What will happen if delays

- Science is time-sensitive: experiments must begin when facilities, collaborators and seasonal or biological conditions align. Delays break these cycles irreversibly.
- When schemes that are progressive on paper fail to reach beneficiaries, the resulting credibility deficit will make it harder to attract domestic talent and international partnerships.
- Equity demands consistency. Women scientists, early-career fellows and those from under-represented backgrounds already contend with systemic barriers. Erratic access to funds affects them disproportionately.

Suggestion

- Transparency must be implemented with contingencies so that beneficiaries do not become collateral damage in bureaucratic transitions.
- Accountability must be tightened at the level of Ministries and programme managers.
- Policymakers must recognise that a delay in accounting procedures for them is the interruption of livelihoods and careers for researchers.

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