NATIONAL STARTUP AWARDS 6.0 (NSA 6.0)

Brief note on Student Innovator/ Aspiring Entrepreneur

1. About Startup India

Startup India is a flagship initiative of the Government of India, implemented by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Launched in January 2016, the initiative aims to foster innovation, support entrepreneurship, and enable startup growth through simplification and handholding, funding support, incentives, market access, and ecosystem development.

As of October 2026, more than 2,56,000 startups have been recognised by Startup India, DPIIT. The startup ecosystem spans across 56 industries & sectors, with entrepreneurs developing solutions to economic, social, technological, and environmental challenges.

2. National Startup Awards (NSA)

The National Startup Awards is a flagship initiative of Startup India to recognise and reward startups developing innovative products, services, and solutions with the potential to scale, generate employment and wealth, and create measurable socio-economic impact. The Awards also help connect recognised startups with relevant ecosystem support, including mentorship, investors, corporates, markets, and government stakeholders.

Five editions of the National Startup Awards have been successfully completed since the initiative was conceptualised in 2019. The fifth edition recognised startups across 20 award categories and received 3,163 applications from across the country. The results of NSA 5.0 were announced on 16 January 2026, National Startup Day, in the presence of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal.

3. The 6th edition of National Startup Awards

The 6th edition of NSA marks a pivotal stage in the evolution of India's startup ecosystem, with a focus on recognizing innovation that contributes to inclusive growth, technological advancement, manufacturing competitiveness, and the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 through innovation-led growth and employment generation.

NSA 6.0 is anchored in the recognition that entrepreneurship in India has evolved into a widespread driver of innovation, economic growth, and problem-solving across sectors and geographies. This is reflected in the growing participation of innovators from across the country, including young entrepreneurs addressing local challenges, women-led startups, DeepTech startups in emerging sectors such as semiconductors, and social innovators delivering scalable and affordable solutions for grassroots impact.

Accordingly, NSA 6.0 seeks to recognise, celebrate, and amplify India's most innovative startups that are contributing towards building a self-reliant and innovation-driven Bharat as the country enters the next decade of entrepreneurship

In addition to the 20 sectotal categories, three special categories are proposed: Women-Led Startup of the Year, North-East Startup Excellence, and Student Innovator/ Aspiring Entrepreneur.

4. Opportunities for Students and Young Innovators

Students can play an important role in the startup ecosystem by identifying real-world problems, developing innovative solutions, validating prototypes, and building ventures with the potential to grow into sustainable businesses. Through outreach to universities, colleges, incubators, and student innovation communities, Startup India aims to improve awareness of entrepreneurship pathways and national platforms that can support student-founded startups.

This category aims to identify and nurture young innovators from schools and colleges across the country. The award structure comprises four sub-categories and eight national awardees, as follows:

Sub-category	Age Criteria	Winner	Runner-up	Total (approx.)
I. Budding Innovators	10-14 Years	₹3 lakh	₹2 lakh	₹5 lakh
II. Rising Innovators	14-16 Years	₹3 lakh	₹2 lakh	₹5 lakh
III. Young Changemakers	16-18 Years	₹4 lakh	₹2 lakh	₹6 lakh
IV. Emerging Entrepreneurs	18 Years and above	₹6 lakh	₹3 lakh	₹9 lakh

5. Process of application

The proposed special category seeks to identify promising student-led innovations from schools and colleges across India, including solutions aligned with **"Seven Stream of Shakti Ki Sapta Dhara"** and **the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.** DPIIT recognition is not required for this category. Individuals or teams of up to four may apply, applicants should demonstrate a prototype, minimum viable product (MVP), working model or proof of concept, with clear problem-solving, scalability and potential impact.

5.1. Category focus: Shakti ki Sapta Dhara

S. No.	Stream	Focus as stated in the address	How students can participate (indicative ideas)
1	**Manufacturing: Cost, Quality and Scale**	India to become a reliable hub in global supply chains, meeting global standards on cost, quality and scale.	Low-cost redesigns of everyday products using local materials, simple tools, jigs or testing devices for local workshops and MSMEs, ideas that cut waste or energy use in production.
2	**Agriculture and Food Processing**	Moving from farm to export market, traditional cuisine, millets, spices, fruits and flowers to become global brands.	Low-cost post-harvest storage or preservation, soil or moisture sensors, value-added millet and local food products, tools linking farmers to buyers.
3	**Technology and Innovation**	Third pillar of Saptadhara.	Apps, AI or IoT solutions for local problems, assistive devices for persons with disabilities, learning tools in regional languages.
4	**Gati Shakti: Seamless and High-Speed Connectivity**	Seamless and high-speed connectivity, port-led development.	Road-safety alert systems, last-mile transport solutions for villages, route or delivery tracking for local vendors, accessible public transport aids.
5	**Defence Shakti: Self-Reliance in Defence**	Self-reliance in defence production and becoming a global supplier, next-generation technologies, drones, counter-drone systems, indigenous technologies and cyber security.	Cyber-safety and digital-fraud awareness tools, drone or sensor concepts for disaster response and search and rescue, low-cost communication aids for remote areas.
6	**Green and Blue Economy**	Global scale in green hydrogen, renewable energy, energy storage, green mobility and green manufacturing, blue economy opportunities from fisheries, ports, shipping, offshore energy and marine resources.	Solar or other clean-energy devices, waste-to-energy and plastic recycling, water conservation, coastal clean-up, fish-freshness or marine monitoring solutions.
7	**Soft Power: Yoga, Ayurveda, Tourism,**	Yoga, Ayurveda, handicrafts, culture, tourism, wildlife, sports, films, VFX,	Digital marketplaces for local artisans, heritage or eco-tourism apps, educational games and

S. No.	Stream	Focus as stated in the address	How students can participate (indicative ideas)
	Culture and Creative Industries	animation, gaming, digital content and the creative economy.	animation based on Indian history and folklore, wellness and Yoga apps.

5.2. Student category: proposed seven-stage process flow

Stage	Process
1. Call opens	Applications opened on Startup India portal
2. Student applications	Individuals or teams submit online applications
3. Outreach and handholding	State-wide dissemination, guidance and mentoring through schools/colleges
4. Window closes	Applications compiled and shared with State/UT-wise
5. State/UT evaluation	Nominate up to 10 teams per State/UT, irrespective of subcategory
6. National Jury	Nominated teams present to jury, grouped by subcategory
7. Winners announced	One winner and one runner-up in each of four subcategories

Scoring Criteria

Scoring	Points
Innovation	45
Scalability	25
Economic Impact	20
Inclusivity & Team Diversity	10

5.3. Objectives and learning outcomes

The initiative should not be viewed only as a competition or an award exercise. Its broader objectives are to familiarise students with India's entrepreneurship and startup movement, encourage them to identify local and real-world challenges, and help them develop teamwork, communication, problem-solving, feasibility assessment and presentation skills. Students should be encouraged to explain the problem they seek to solve, the users/beneficiaries, the feasibility of the proposed solution, the stage of development and its potential impact. Team-based entries should provide each member an opportunity to contribute and present.

Schools and colleges should be encouraged to create broad awareness and enable as many students as possible to participate, while selection at each subsequent level should remain competitive and merit-based.

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Annexure – I

1. Information to be collected from students

The proposed application form should collect the following information in a clear, student-friendly format:

Information group	Details to collect
Student details	Student's full name, class/year of study, school/college name, father's name, mother's name. Contact details.
Location	State/Union Territory and district.
Category selection	One Shakti Ki Sapta dhara stream/category selected by the student/team.
Project details	Project title, problem being addressed, proposed solution, how it works, intended users/beneficiaries, expected impact.
Development stage	Idea, prototype, working model, minimum viable product (MVP) or proof of concept.
Team details	Individual or team application, names and classes/years of team members, where applicable. The working brief allows teams of up to four.
Supporting material	Project description, photographs, presentation, video, prototype link or other evidence.

2. Step-by-step application process for students

Step 1 – Access the application. Open the application link/portal communicated by Startup India, DPIIT or the State/UT nodal agency.

Step 2 – Enter student details. Fill in full name, class/year, school/college name, father's name, mother's name, State/UT and district, along with any other required details.

Step 3 – Select one Saptdhara stream. Review the seven approved streams and select the one that best fits the project. Selection should be based on the innovation's focus.

Step 4 – Describe the problem. Explain the real-world problem or need, who experiences it and why it matters.

Step 5 – Explain the innovation. Describe the solution, what is new or different, how it works and how it may benefit people or communities.

Step 6 – Indicate development stage. Select the current stage: idea, prototype, working model, MVP or proof of concept—and attach supporting material where available.

Step 7 – Review and submit. Check the information, complete any required declarations/consents, submit before the deadline and save the acknowledgement/reference if generated.