

2.5 lakh girls in 18 states to get Premji scholarship in higher education

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Bengaluru: Azim Premji Foundation (APF) will expand Azim Premji Scholarship to 2.5 lakh girl students across 18 states from this year to support them in pursuing higher education.

The programme started as a pilot project in 2024-25 was operational in Madhya Pradesh and certain districts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

The Foundation hopes it will reach 2.5 lakh girls in the academic year 2025-26. That is a commitment of Rs 750 crore in one year and Rs 2,250 crore in three years.

Girls who have completed class 10 and 12 schooling in govt schools and have admission in a bona fide higher education institution, including all govt higher education institutions and select private institutions, are eligible for the scholarship.

The scholarship will include Rs 30,000 a year for the duration of the degree or diploma programme. "A girl pursuing a four-year BSc (Nursing) will get Rs 1,20,000 scholarship support in those four years. The money will be transferred in two instalments to the girl's bank account directly every year. She may use the money as needed," stated the foundation.

In the pilot project, APF received 1.1 lakh applications and 25,000 were found eligible. A commitment of Rs 75 crore this year was made for those girls. The students have been in college only for a few months now.

"In most govt institutions, girls have a tuition-fee waiver. But there's also a lot of other expenses. They end up spending money on clothing, books, and transportation for which she will get this Rs 30,000. There's no restriction that she has to spend it for a particular cause," said Anurag Behar, chief executive officer, APF.

"There's nothing complicated in the design of this scholarship. The primary school enrolment percentage of girls and boys is almost equal. But as you progress through primary school to middle school to higher secondary and then college, things change. Among those who come from disadvantaged, vulnerable families, very often it is the girl who sacrifices. It's not as though money is the only reason. But financial issues are one reason because of which a very large percentage of girls do not continue into higher education. Therefore, our hope is that with this kind of scholarship support, many more girls will continue into that also. Higher education, after all, changes life prospects," he said.

The scholarship programme is likely to be expanded to the entire country in coming years, he added.

This is neither a merit-based scholarship nor is it bounded by family income. "The practical reality is that if you start going into all those kinds of details, it's impossible to handle it. Around 90-95% of the children going to govt school come from relatively disadvantaged families. No rich people's kids go to govt schools these days, unfortunately. We don't want to do any further diligence on that," he said.

WHICH ARE THE STATES

* Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Telangana, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand

* Application process for 2025-26 starts in Sept 2025