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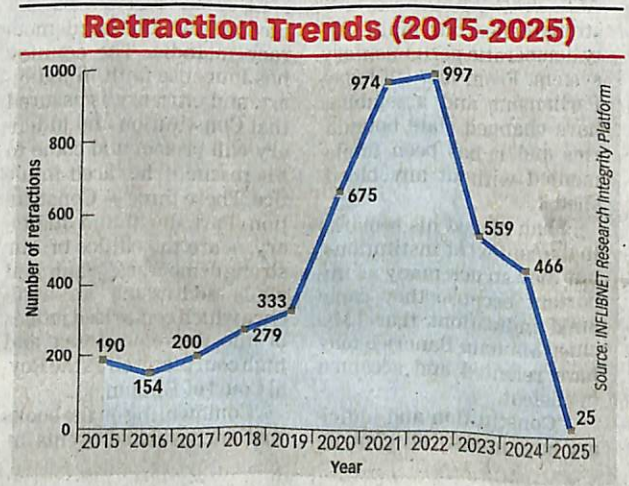
ANRF cracks down on retractions to check plagiarism surge

Institutions have recorded 6,008 paper retractions, with 4,099 occurring in past five years

Divyansh.Kumar
@timesofindia.com

Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) has introduced stricter rules to address high retraction rate, control plagiarism and data fabrication in research work. The new Advanced Research Grant (ARG) rules have made publication retractions and AI use part of the scrutiny process, to enhance research integrity. The Principal Investigators (PIs) and co-PIs applying for ARG, need to declare and explain any publication retractions in past five years and sign an undertaking on use of AI-generated proposal. The proposals will be checked through third-party plagiarism tools, AI-detection methods before being sent to technical programme committee.

India accounted for over 20% of global research retractions as of 2025, despite contributing only 5% of the world's research papers, according to an Indian Research Watch (IRW) analysis of the Retraction Watch Database. Achal Agrawal, founder, IRW, says, "This imbalance makes ANRF's move a landmark change because it forces the researchers to confront weak oversight, dubious collaborations, and publication-driven incentives that have gone unchallenged."



According to INFLIBNET Research Integrity Platform, an initiative of Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), Indian institutions have recorded 6,008 paper retractions, of which, 4,099 of retractions occurred between 2022-2025.

For years, the Indian academic ecosystem has suffered from dubious collaborations driven by flawed evaluation metrics. The new ANRF rules will reduce blind academic partnerships. "This will make people closely evaluate the work of someone before collaborating with them. This transparency measure will eventually push universities to run background checks on retraction histories before hiring faculty," Agrawal adds.

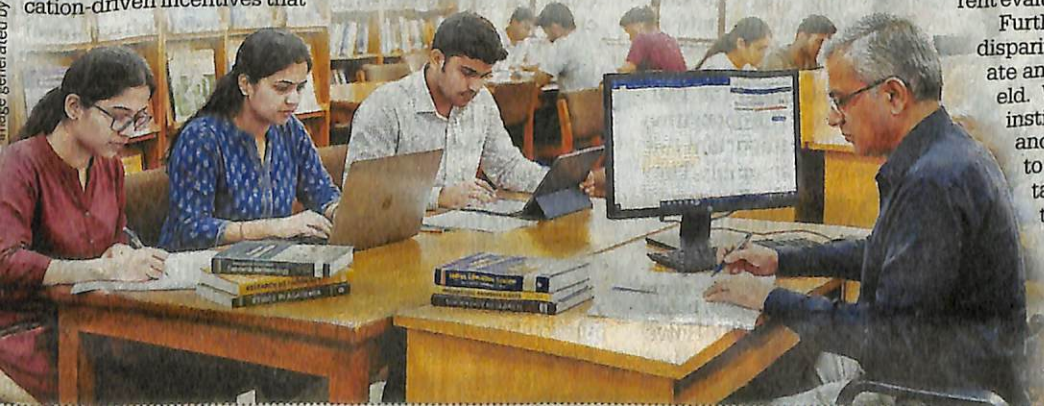
The ANRF is also cracking down on threats of GenAI. Asserting a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, the applicants must sign an undertaking stating their research proposals are not AI-generated. Senior academicians advocate for a nuanced approach. Prof V Ramgopal Rao, group VC, BITS Pilani campuses, says, "Asking applicants to declare retractions in the last five years is not meant to punish honest errors. Science progresses through mistakes too, but it will certainly discourage careless, unethical, and dubious publication practices. Using AI to improve language, structure, or clarity should be acceptable, especially for researchers who may have good ideas but weaker English. The researcher must have scientific idea, hypothesis, methodology, and originality."

Prof Rao stresses that accountability cannot rest solely on individual declarations. "Institutions must strengthen internal ethics committees and conduct publication audits. At BITS Pilani, a standing committee reviews misconduct monthly, and we have made research integrity course mandatory for all PhD students," he adds.

Resource Disparities

The policy risks discouraging researchers from self-correcting honest errors out of fear of losing future funding. Moumita Koley, senior research analyst, DST-Centre for Policy Research, IISc Bangalore, says, "Evaluators must be trained to differentiate between deliberate fraud and scientific self-correction. Retractions do not always stem from misconduct and can result from honest errors and serve as part of elf-correcting nature of science. The system will function fairly if ANRF builds a transparent evaluation framework."

Furthermore, resource disparity threatens to create an uneven playing field. While well-funded institutions like IITs and IISc have access to expensive proprietary plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin, researchers at smaller state universities often lack internal oversight infrastructure.



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