

PARLIAMENT QUESTION: SCIENCE STREAM SCHEME

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The Department of Science and Technology is implementing Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE)- Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge (MANAK); INSPIRE Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) and Vigyan Jyoti programmes with an objective to attract meritorious youth to study basic and natural sciences at the college and university level and to pursue research careers in both basic and applied science areas including engineering, medicine, agriculture and veterinary sciences. The ultimate aim of these science stream programs is to expand the R&D base of the country.

INSPIRE MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) scheme is implemented with objectives (i) to attract young students to study science and pursue research career (ii) to promote creative thinking and foster a culture of innovation among them. The INSPIRE MANAK Scheme intends to target young students in the age group of 10-17 years and studying in class VI to XII. All schools in the country, recognized by the District/ State Education authorities, whether Government or private, aided or un- aided, run by Central Government or State Government or local bodies, and having classes 6 to 12 are eligible to nominate 5 students from their schools, during the financial year. The nominations are sought from schools, by the Department, during specific period of the year, through online mode at E-MIAS portal (www.inspireawards-dst.gov.in).

The nomination process includes submitting of basic details of the students, bank account details, along with a brief idea/ synopsis of the proposed model/project. These online nominations are scrutinized on the basis of the idea provided by the students and the selected students receive financial assistance of Rs.10,000/- each, for preparation of project/model/showcasing of idea and participation at exhibitions organized at three levels viz. District, State and National. The financial assistance under this scheme is being transferred directly into the bank accounts of the students through Direct Benefit Transfer.

Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) aims to enhance the rate of attachment of talented youth to undertake higher education in science intensive programs by providing scholarships and mentoring through summer attachment with leading researchers. The scheme offers 12,000 Scholarships every year @ Rs 0.80 lakh per year for undertaking Bachelor and Masters level education in natural and basic sciences for the talented youth in the age group of 17-22 years.

Vigyan Jyoti program encourages meritorious school girls to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). The program primarily targets girls from classes 9th - 12th, especially those from underrepresented regions, to bridge the gender gap in STEM education and careers. Vigyan Jyoti also focuses on building confidence, leadership skills, and communication abilities, helping girls excel academically and socially. By nurturing talent at the school level, Vigyan Jyoti helps create a pipeline of future women scientists, promotes gender equality in STEM, and encourages girls to aim for higher education and research careers.

The key performance indicators are being used to evaluate the success of scholarship/projects funded under these Science Stream Schemes.

The key performance indicators for evaluating the INSPIRE MANAK program include the innovativeness of ideas, as well as students' research and innovative aptitude in science and technology. Nominations are received from students across India, representing diverse backgrounds. The large number of participating students demonstrates wide engagement among schools and learners. Each year, about one million ideas are received nationwide. A rigorous screening process is conducted based on novelty, originality, and innovativeness. From these submissions, approximately 50,000 students are selected to participate in a three-tier competition at the District, State, and National levels. Students selected for the State-level competition receive mentoring support for prototype development and potential commercialization.

The key performance indicators for evaluating the INSPIRE-SHE program include the selection of students who rank within the top 1% of their respective Central or State Boards. For continuation of the scholarship, scholars are required to maintain consistent academic performance, securing at least First Class (60% marks) annually. In addition, students are encouraged to undertake a short-term summer internship of 6–8 weeks to conduct research at any reputed academic organization across the country. The research projects are evaluated by the respective research supervisors, and upon successful completion, mentorship support is provided to the students. Each year, mentorship support is extended to ~4000 scholars who successfully complete their research projects. INSPIRE-SHE has thus created a substantial academic and research talent pool for pursuing careers in Science and Technology.

The Vigyan Jyoti Program plays a pivotal role in increasing the participation of girls in STEM and addressing the underrepresentation of women in higher education and research in technology, engineering, mathematics, and high-energy physics. Activities such as student–parent counselling, role model interactions, visits to knowledge partners (IITs, NITs, CSIR labs), STEM sessions, tinkering activities, and resource distribution have significantly enhanced girls' interest in STEM. Hands-on tinkering activities have improved conceptual understanding. Academic support sessions have strengthened preparation for competitive examinations. Mentoring by scientists and STEM professionals has inspired girls to envision future careers in STEM fields.

Science stream schemes do cater the marginalized and underrepresented groups in science and research, and the details are as follows:

Financial Year	INSPIRE- MANAK			INSPIRE- SHE			Vigyan Jyoti		
	SC	ST	Female	SC	ST	Female	SC	ST	Female
2022-23	6614	4051	22150	621	153	5025	3470	3285	17859
2023-24	7767	4461	22687	622	105	4725	4823	3261	23149
2024-25	8803	4692	26127	881	143	5784	5961	3950	29437

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