

PARLIAMENT QUESTION: INNOVATION IN SCIENCE PURSUIT FOR INSPIRED RESEARCH (INSPIRE) PROGRAMME

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Over the last five years, the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Programme of the department of science and technology has systematically nurtured scientific talent at different stages of the academic and research pipeline through its four major components. INSPIRE MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) promotes innovation and scientific creativity among students aged 10-17 years (Classes VI-XII) by encouraging them to develop and showcase original ideas and innovations. INSPIRE Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) supports meritorious students aged 17-22 years pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies in natural and basic sciences by awarding 12,000 scholarships annually, each valued at ₹80,000 per year. INSPIRE Fellowship encourages outstanding graduates and INSPIRE scholars to pursue research through full-time Ph.D. programme(s) by providing financial support up to five years, including a fellowship of ₹37,000 per month as Junior Research Fellow (JRF), ₹42,000 per month as Senior Research Fellow (SRF), admissible House Rent Allowance (HRA), and an annual contingency grant of ₹20,000. INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship supports outstanding postdoctoral researchers, generally in the 27-32 years age group (with applicable age relaxations for reserved categories), through a five-year fellowship. Fellows receive ₹1,25,000 per month, an annual increment of ₹2,000, and a research grant of ₹35 lakh over the fellowship period.

The Government has been committed to promotion of the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Programme to encourage meritorious students to pursue higher education and research in science. The component-wise INSPIRE activities during the last five years, including the number of students and young researchers supported under each component, are provided below:

Program/Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
INSPIRE-MANAK	52720	43381	46926	50009	49805
INSPIRE-SHE	18039	19771	18236	20354	24276
INSPIRE Fellowship	2768	2872	2811	2448	3364
INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship	474	338	299	225	477

With a goal to enhance innovative research by the young generation in the country, impact of these components is being monitored and analysed to facilitate their strategic planning.

(d) The Government has undertaken a series of targeted interventions to significantly expand the outreach and inclusivity of INSPIRE Programme, with a special focus on rural, remote and aspirational districts across the country. These efforts include extensively deep dissemination of information through State Education Departments, District Education Officers, schools and digital platforms; organization of awareness campaigns, orientation programmes, webinars, and capacity-building workshops for teachers and school authorities to improve the quality and reach of nominations; and the conduct of District, State, and National Level Exhibition and Project Competitions (DLEPCs, SLEPCs, and NLEPCs) to identify, recognize and nurture innovative ideas among school students. To further strengthen the innovation ecosystem, mentorship programmes have been organized in collaboration with premier institutions such as IITs, NITs, IISERs, and other leading scientific organizations, providing selected students with guidance on prototype development, innovation, and scientific research. These sustained efforts have led to inclusive participation in the INSPIRE programmes spanning various regions across the country, sections of our society.

A growing number of students from rural and remote districts have benefited through innovation grants, mentoring support, and opportunities to showcase their scientific talent on national platforms. Collectively, these interventions have strengthened the scientific temper and culture of inquiry, fostered grassroots innovation, expanded equitable access to science education, scholarships and research fellowships and broadened the pipeline of young scientific talent from most regions of the country.

This information was given by the Minister of State (Ind. Charge) Science & Technology; Earth Sciences and Minister of State PMO; Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Department of Atomic Energy and Space Dr. Jitendra Singh in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

NKR/FT

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