

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3804
ANSWERED ON 03/04/2025

INNOVATION IN SCIENCE PURSUIT FOR INSPIRED RESEARCH SCHEME

3804 SHRI S NIRANJAN REDDY:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of total budget allocated and utilized under the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research Scheme (INSPIRE) since its inception, State-wise;
- (b) the total number of students who have received the scholarship for higher Education under INSPIRE for the last three years;
- (c) the number of researchers who have been granted the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship since its inception and the measures in place to assess the research output and impact of faculty fellows funded under the scheme; and
- (d) the key challenges faced in the implementation of the INSPIRE scheme and how Government is addressing them?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR THE
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY & EARTH SCIENCES
(DR. JITENDRA SINGH)

- (a) The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is implementing Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) scheme to attract, nurture and retain meritorious youth to study natural sciences areas 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 objective is to expand the R&D base of the country. INSPIRE scheme is a Central Sector Scheme and the total budget allocated and utilized for the implementation of INSPIRE Scheme since its inception is given below:

| Duration | Allocation (Rs. in Cr.) | Expenditure (Rs. in Cr.) |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 01.04.2009- 31.03.2012 | 581.00 | 546.27 |
| 01.04.2012- 31.03.2017 | 1332.53 | 1295.75 |
| 01.04.2017- 31.03.2021 | 2083.58 | 2069.96 |
| 01.04.2021- 29.03.2025 | 1692.61 | 1692.61 |

- (b) Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) component of INSPIRE aims to enhance the rate of attachment of talented youth to undertake higher education in science intensive programs by providing scholarships and mentorship support. The scheme offers 12,000 scholarships of 5-year duration @ Rs. 0.80 lakh per year to undertake Bachelor and Masters level education in basic and natural Sciences area for the top 1% talented youth as per central and state education board data in the age group 17-22 years. The total number of students who have received the Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) under INSPIRE scheme for the last three years is given below:

| Year | No. of Students |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 2022-23 | 9485 |
| 2023-24 | 9126 |
| 2024-25 | 11741 |

(c) INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship component of INSPIRE aims to provide opportunities to 150 post- doctoral researchers in the age group of 27-32 year (the upper age limit for SC/ST/Women candidates and persons with benchmark disabilities is 37 and 42 years respectively) for 5 years in both basic and applied sciences area including engineering, agriculture, veterinary and medicine every year. Aspirants having Ph.D. degree with strong academic and research track record are considered on competitive basis. It grants an attractive fellowship for a duration of 5 years with a consolidated emolument of Rs. 1,25,000/- p.m. with annual increment of Rs.2000 per annum and a research grant of Rs.7 lakh per annum. This scheme has motivated young researchers to pursue high-quality post-Ph.D. research within the country. Since the inception of INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship component of INSPIRE in 2011, 1,601 young researchers have been granted the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship for pursuing independent research career in India. Out of the total supported INSPIRE Faculty Fellows, 926 have secured regular/ permanent position in academic and/ research institutions across the country. INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship component of INSPIRE scheme has in-build mechanism/ measures to assess the research output and impact of research work carried out by the INSPIRE Faculty Fellows. Every year annual research progress is assessed before the release of annual fellowship grant(s); further to ensure the effectiveness of the component, faculty fellows who have completed at least two years, undergo a performance review by a domain-specific expert committee. So far, five review meetings have been conducted, evaluating 1,208 fellows from the 2011–2020 cohorts. These reviews highlight a strong research output, with each fellow publishing an average of more than six research papers till the tenure of the review process, with overall productivity increasing over the full five-year tenure. The fellowship plays a crucial role in fostering independent research, strengthening India's scientific workforce, and enhancing research contributions, particularly in Central and State universities and aids to develop future leaders in science and technology.

(d) No challenges were/are being faced in the implementation of the INSPIRE scheme. The implementation of the INSPIRE Scheme has largely been smooth and effective as government continues to support and enhance its reach and impact.
