

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 6110
ANSWERED ON 01/04/2026**

INSPIRE SCHEME

6110. MS. PRANITI SUSHILKUMAR SHINDE:

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

- (a) the objectives and key components of the Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Scheme and the number of students covered under the scheme and if so, the details thereof particularly from rural areas;**
- (b) the steps taken by the Government to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and research among students in rural area in the country including teacher training, infrastructure support, digital access and laboratory facilities;**
- (c) the outreach programmes, competitions, science fairs, mentorship initiatives and partnerships with universities/industry conducted under the INSPIRE Scheme to encourage rural students' participation in STEM fields;**
- (d) the evaluation mechanism used to assess the impact of the INSPIRE Scheme and other STEM promotional efforts in improving enrolment, performance and career uptake among rural students; and**
- (e) the future plans and resources allocated to further enhance STEM education opportunities in rural areas?**

ANSWER

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

(a) The Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE) Scheme of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, is a national initiative aimed at attracting meritorious youth to study basic and natural sciences at the school, college, and university levels, and to pursue careers in both basic and applied research, including fields such as engineering, medicine, agriculture, and veterinary sciences. The ultimate objective of the scheme is to strengthen and expand the country's research and development (R&D) base.

The scheme is implemented through multiple components designed to nurture scientific talent across different stages of education. INSPIRE-MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) component targets students aged 10–17 years studying in Classes VI to XII. It aims to foster scientific curiosity and innovation by encouraging students

to develop original ideas. Schools can nominate up to five students annually through the E-MIAS portal. Selected students receive financial support of ₹10,000 through Direct Benefit Transfer to develop their projects and participate in district, state, and national-level exhibitions. INSPIRE Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) component supports talented students aged 17–22 years who wish to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate studies in basic and natural sciences. A total of 12,000 scholarships is awarded annually, each valued at ₹80,000 per annum, along with mentoring support. INSPIRE Fellowship component provides financial assistance to outstanding students pursuing PhD programmes in science and related fields. The fellowship is awarded for up to five years and is equivalent to the CSIR-UGC NET fellowship, offering ₹37,000 per month as Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and ₹42,000 per month as Senior Research Fellowship (SRF), along with House Rent Allowance (HRA) and a contingency grant of ₹20,000 per annum. INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship component is aimed at early-career researchers aged 27–32 years. It provides a five-year fellowship with a monthly remuneration of ₹1,25,000, annual increments, and a research grant of ₹35 lakh. The objective is to support post-doctoral researchers in establishing independent research careers in both basic and applied sciences. Together, these components create a continuous pipeline that nurtures scientific talent from the school level through to advanced research, thereby contributing to the development of a strong and sustainable scientific workforce in the country.

The details of number of students supported under various components of the INSPIRE Scheme including students from rural areas during the last three years are as follows:

INSPIRE Components	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
INSPIRE-MANAK	46926	50009	49805
INSPIRE (SHE)	7976	9494	9046
INSPIRE Fellowship	796	305	923
INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship	100	58	171

The number of INSPIRE-MANAK and INSPIRE-SHE students covered under the scheme in rural areas during the last three years is given below:

Financial Year	INSPIRE-MANAK		INSPIRE-SHE	
	No. of students covered	No. of students covered from rural areas	No. of students covered	No. of students covered from rural areas
2023-24	854553	697116	7976	6256
2024-25	1013229	847849	9494	6645
2025-26	1147343	967897	9046	4648

(b) to (c): The Government has undertaken a comprehensive set of measures to promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and research among students across the country including rural areas, with a focus on access, innovation, mentorship, and infrastructure development. Under the INSPIRE scheme, several targeted initiatives have been implemented. The INSPIRE-MANAK programme encourages students from Classes VI to XII, including those in rural areas, to develop innovative ideas and scientific thinking. Financial support is provided to selected students to convert their ideas into projects and models, fostering hands-on learning and creativity. Teachers play a key role in this process and are trained to identify and nurture innovative ideas among students. Their capacity is further enhanced through programmes such as iRISE, particularly its Teacher Development Strand, which promotes learner-centric and innovation-driven teaching methodologies. To support higher education in STEM, the INSPIRE Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) provides financial assistance, mentorship, and exposure to research through summer projects under experienced scientists. Scholars also receive mentorship grants and opportunities to work in leading laboratories and institutions, helping bridge the gap between rural students and advanced research environments. The Early Career Researcher Development Strand under iRISE further strengthens research skills and provides industry exposure to young researchers.

The Government has also emphasized strengthening infrastructure and laboratory facilities. Schemes such as the Fund for Improvement of S&T Infrastructure (FIST) and Promotion of University Research and Scientific Excellence (PURSE) support universities and colleges in upgrading laboratories and research equipment. National facilities like Sophisticated Analytical Instrument Facilities (SAIF) and Sophisticated Analytical & Technical Help Institutes (SATHI) provide shared access to advanced scientific instruments, benefiting institutions, including those in rural regions, that lack such resources.

Digital access has been improved through enhancements to the INSPIRE-MANAK portal, including the introduction of a chatbot for guidance, upgraded E-MIAS access for senior classes, improved U-DISE data synchronization, and a more user-friendly nomination interface. These measures have increased accessibility, transparency, and efficiency, especially for rural students and schools.

Outreach programmes under the INSPIRE Scheme include science exhibitions, competitions, and science fairs at school, district, and national levels, which encourage participation and showcase student innovations. Students are also given opportunities to visit premier institutions such as IITs, NITs, and AIIMS, where they gain exposure to real-world applications of STEM. Mentorship initiatives connect students with scientists, researchers, and faculty from reputed institutions, providing guidance and

inspiration. Partnerships with universities, research institutions, and industry stakeholders further enhance opportunities for students by offering access to laboratories, internships, and hands-on learning experiences. Activities such as coding sessions, tinkering labs, academic support classes, and distribution of learning resources help strengthen scientific aptitude.

Overall, these integrated efforts spanning teacher training, infrastructure development, digital access, laboratory support, outreach activities, competitions, mentorship, and institutional partnerships have created an enabling ecosystem that encourages and supports students to actively participate and excel in STEM education and careers.

(d) The impact of the INSPIRE Scheme and other STEM promotion efforts is assessed through a multi-layered evaluation and monitoring framework. Scheme activities are periodically reviewed by a standing committee and through annual group monitoring meetings across the country. Student tracking is a key component to assess academic performance, and higher enrolment in STEM education, including rural students. The scheme has undergone periodic independent evaluations by expert committees upon its continuation in successive phases which reviewed its effectiveness in strengthening the pipeline of scientific talent. Individual scholars are monitored through academic performance, continuation in studies, and submission of certified research reports, with financial support linked to these outcomes. Fellowships require annual certification and are evaluated by subject experts to assess scientific progress. At the faculty level, mid-term and end-term peer reviews measure research output, employment outcomes, and contributions such as publications, patents, and professional recognition. Overall, this continuous evaluation system tracks enrolment, performance, and career progression, ensuring transparency and helping assess the scheme's effectiveness in promoting STEM participation and career uptake, particularly among rural students.

(e) The Government envisages an expanded and strengthened framework for STEM education including rural areas through STEM education opportunities with continuation of the existing S&T schemes/programs such as Vigyan Jyoti and INSPIRE especially focusing on basic and applied research to strengthen the research and development base of the country.
