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INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research)

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INSPIRE (Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research)

This lesson explains INSPIRE, the Department of Science and Technology's scheme that follows talented students from school to research careers. It covers the parts of the scheme, the school awards, the latest numbers and the common exam traps.

Run by The Department of Science and Technology (DST) runs INSPIRE. The Prime Minister launched it on 13 December 2008.

ReachIt covers people aged 10 to 32, from school pupils to young faculty.

PartsIt has three schemes. They hold the Award, Internship, Scholarship, Fellowship and Faculty components.

NumbersA Lok Sabha reply of July 2026 says over 3.75 lakh people benefited in five years.

What is INSPIRE and how is it built?

1 What is INSPIRE, and who runs it?

INSPIRE stands for Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) runs it.

What does INSPIRE try to do?

The DST says INSPIRE aims to attract, nurture and retain meritorious youth. They study natural sciences at college level and then take up research careers. The larger goal is to expand the country's research and development (R&D) base.

When did it start?

- **November 2008:** The scheme was approved, with an outlay of Rs 1,979.25 crore in the 11th Five Year Plan.
- **13 December 2008:** The Prime Minister launched it.
- **2009-10:** Implementation began.
- **12th Plan:** The budget was Rs 2,200 crore.



Illustration: Dates from the DST INSPIRE page.



The Prime Minister launching INSPIRE on 13 December 2008. Photo: Prime Minister's Office, via Wikimedia Commons (licence: GODL-India). Resized from the original.

> **Quick check 1.** INSPIRE is run by the Ministry of Education. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: online-inspire.gov.in; inspireawards-dst.gov.in

2 How does INSPIRE follow a student from school to research?

INSPIRE works like a ladder. Each rung suits a different age.

Which part covers which age?

Component	Age group	Scheme
Award (MANAK)	10 to 15	SEATS

Component	Age group	Scheme
Internship	16 to 17	SEATS
Scholarship (SHE)	17 to 22	SHE
Fellowship	22 to 27	AORC
Faculty Fellowship	27 to 32	AORC

SEATS means Scheme for Early Attraction of Talents for Science. SHE means Scholarship for Higher Education. AORC means Assured Opportunity for Research Careers.

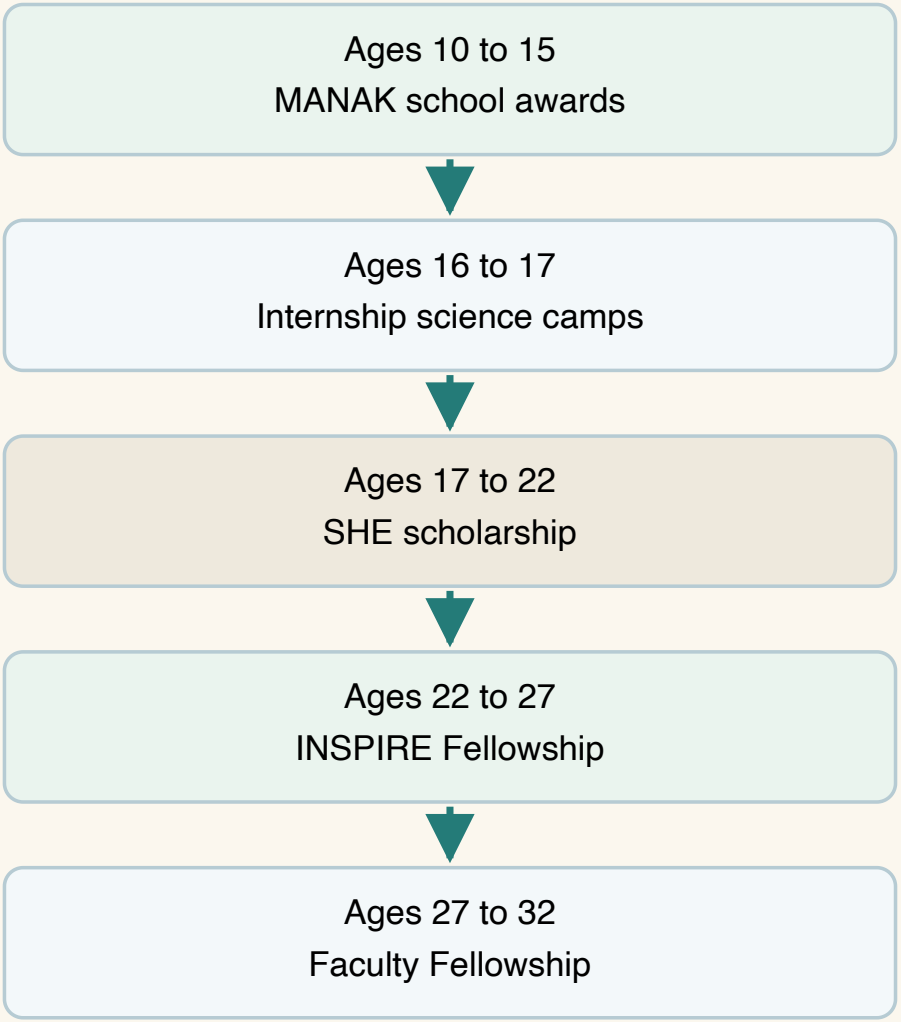

Illustration: Age groups from the DST pages and PIB.

Do sources count four parts or five?

The DST's MANAK page says INSPIRE has five components. A PIB reply of March 2025 lists four. It leaves out the school Award and keeps the Internship. A Lok Sabha reply of July 2026 also lists four. It keeps

the Award and leaves out the Internship.

For an exam, read which source the question follows.

> **Quick check 2.** INSPIRE covers people aged 10 to 32. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: inspireawards-dst.gov.in; pib.gov.in; devdiscourse.com

How does INSPIRE find talent in school?

3 What is INSPIRE-MANAK?

MANAK stands for Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge. It was once called the INSPIRE Award Scheme. It is the first component, for pupils in Classes VI to X, aged 10 to 15.

State and Union Territory governments carry it out. The India Science and Technology portal says the scheme was revamped in the context of Start-up India and renamed INSPIRE Awards-MANAK.

How does an idea become an award?

1. Each school can nominate 2 to 3 students a year, with a short write-up of each idea.
2. The scheme targets 10 lakh ideas a year from over 5 lakh middle and high schools.
3. The National Innovation Foundation (NIF) in Ahmedabad shortlists 1 lakh ideas. NIF is an autonomous body of the DST.
4. Each shortlisted student gets Rs 10,000 by Direct Benefit Transfer, to build a project or model.



School pupils meet the President at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Children's Day 2006. This is a general picture, not an INSPIRE event. Photo: President's Secretariat, via Wikimedia Commons (licence: GODL-India). Resized from the original.

Where do the best ideas go next?

The shortlisted students compete at a District Level Exhibition and Project Competition (DLEPC). The best 10,000 go on to the State Level (SLEPC). The best 1,000 reach the National Level (NLEPC), and the top 60 are picked for national awards. NIF arranges mentoring with IITs, NITs and IISERs.



Illustration: Stages from the DST MANAK page and the MANAK manual.

> **Quick check 3.** Every one of the 10 lakh MANAK ideas gets Rs 10,000. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: inspireawards-dst.gov.in; indiascienceandtechnology.gov.in

4 What happened in the 2020-21 MANAK round?

PIB gave full figures for the 2020-21 round on 16 September 2022. The round ran during the COVID-19 pandemic. It drew a record number of ideas.

How many ideas became awards?

- **Ideas received:** 6.53 lakh, from all States and Union Territories.
- **Students funded:** 53,021 got Rs 10,000 each to build prototypes.
- **National finalists:** 556 reached the 9th NLEPC.

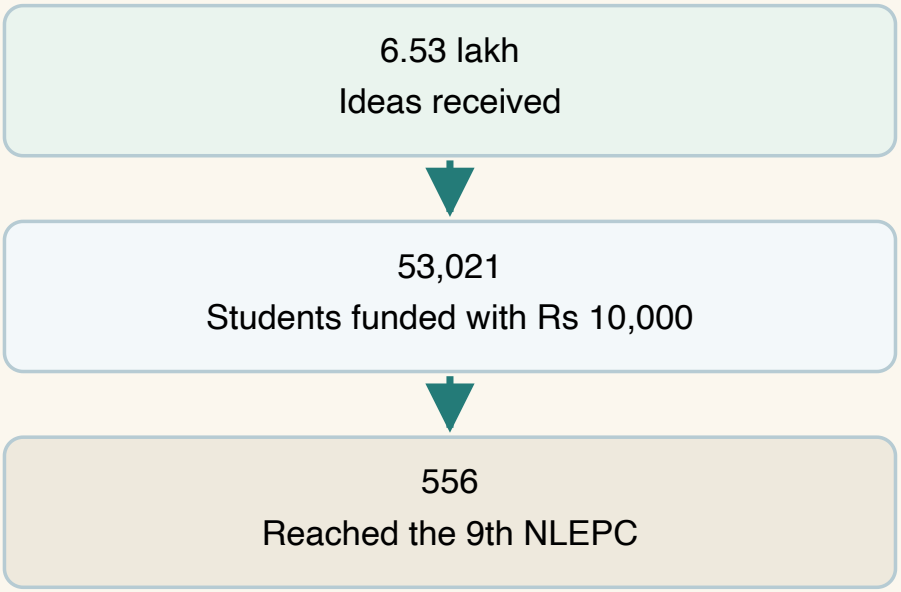

Illustration: Figures from PIB, 16 September 2022.

Who took part?

PIB said ideas came from 702 districts, which is 96% of the country. They included 123 of the 124 aspirational districts. Girls made up 51% of the representation. Rural schools gave 84% of the participation. State and Union Territory government schools were 71%.

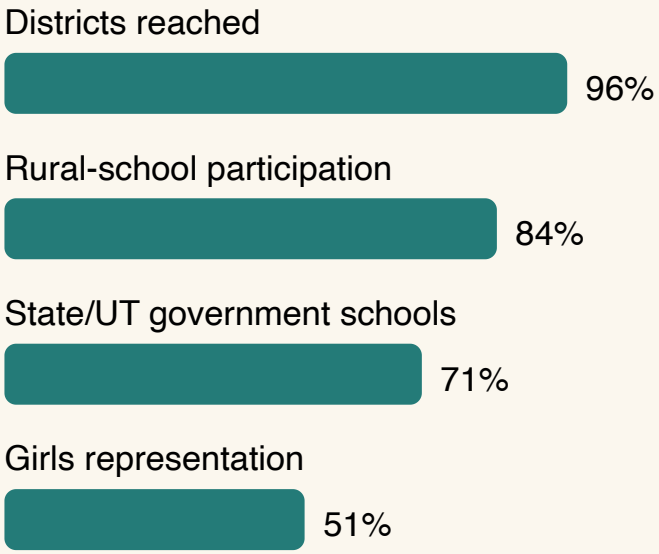

Illustration: Percentages from PIB, 16 September 2022.

Mentoring workshops for these students were held at institutes such as the IITs, BITS and NITs.

> **Quick check 4.** In 2020-21, 84 per cent of the participation in MANAK came from rural schools. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in

How does INSPIRE support college and research careers?

5 What is INSPIRE-SHE?

SHE is the college scholarship. It aims to draw talented youth into science-heavy degrees. It adds mentorship support to the money.

Who gets a SHE scholarship?

- **Who:** The top 1% as per central and state education board data.
- **Age:** 17 to 22 years.
- **Courses:** Bachelor and Master level study in basic and natural sciences.
- **Scholarships:** 12,000, each lasting five years.
- **Amount:** Rs 0.80 lakh a year.

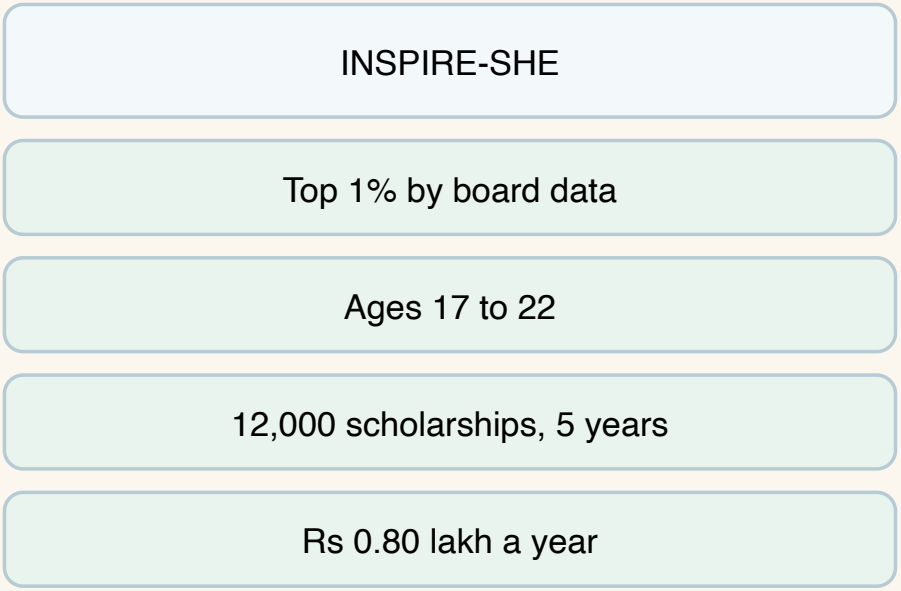

Illustration: SHE terms from PIB, 27 March 2025.

The older DST text gave 10,000 scholarships, so check which source an exam question follows.

Sources: pib.gov.in; online-inspire.gov.in

6 What is the INSPIRE Fellowship?

The Fellowship pays for a full-time PhD. It sits in the AORC scheme.

Who can apply?

- M.Sc. first-rank holders in basic and applied sciences, including engineering, medicine, agriculture and veterinary sciences. The exam is at a university or at institutes of national importance such as the IITs, NITs and IISERs.

- INSPIRE Scholars who score 70% in aggregate at M.Sc. level and can enter a PhD.

What does a fellow receive?

A fellowship runs for at most five years, or until the PhD ends. The first two years are as a Junior Research Fellow (JRF). The last three are as a Senior Research Fellow (SRF).

- **JRF pay:** Rs 37,000 a month for the first two years.
- **SRF pay:** Rs 42,000 a month for the last three years.

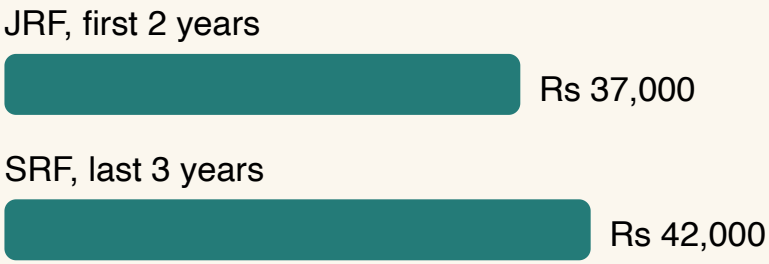

Illustration: Pay from PIB, 27 March 2025.

Both stages also carry a house rent allowance (HRA) and a contingency grant of Rs 20,000 a year. The scheme allows at most 1,000 fellowships a year.



IISER Pune campus. IISERs are among the institutes whose M.Sc. first-rank holders can apply for the Fellowship. Photo: Vpsonawane.agile, via Wikimedia Commons (licence: CC BY-SA 4.0). Resized from the original.

> **Quick check 5.** An INSPIRE Fellow is paid as a JRF for the whole five years. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in

7 What is the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship?

This is the top rung. It gives post-doctoral researchers a five-year research post in India.

Who qualifies and what do they get?

The age band is 27 to 32 years. The upper limit is 37 for SC, ST and women candidates, and 42 for persons with benchmark disabilities. Applicants need a PhD and a strong research record.

- **Pay:** a consolidated Rs 1,25,000 a month for five years.
- **Increment:** Rs 200 a year.
- **Research grant:** Rs 7 lakh a year.

Faculty Fellowship

Ages 27 to 32

Rs 1,25,000 a month

Increment Rs 200 a year

Research grant Rs 7 lakh a year

Up to 150 a year

Illustration: Faculty terms from PIB, 27 March 2025.

PIB says the fellowship has motivated young researchers to do high-quality post-PhD research within the country. The scheme allows at most 150 Faculty Fellowships a year.

Quick check 6. The yearly increment for a Faculty Fellow is Rs 2,000. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Sources: pib.gov.in

How far has INSPIRE reached, and what should I not mix up?

8 How many people has INSPIRE reached?

A Lok Sabha reply of July 2026 gave the latest picture. The Minister said over 3.75 lakh students and researchers benefited in five years across the four components.

What were the 2025-26 numbers?

- **MANAK:** 49,805.
- **SHE:** 24,276.
- **Fellowship:** 3,364.
- **Faculty Fellowship:** 477.

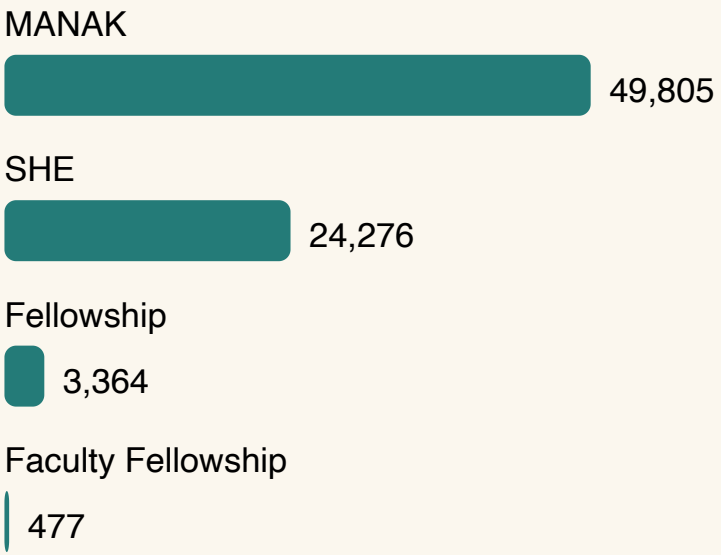

Illustration: Figures from the Lok Sabha reply of July 2026.

These are the reply's figures for one year. They are not the yearly caps in the scheme rules.

How did the grants flow?

On 4 February 2026, PIB said grants had been released for 3,143 INSPIRE Fellows and 458 Faculty Fellows. They covered the year up to 31 March 2026.

The way funds reach host institutions changed on 16 January 2025. Hosts first had to finish onboarding and file their documents. That is why some grants came late.

Two reports give different Fellowship counts, 3,364 and 3,143. Use the one the question names.

Sources: devdiscourse.com; neindiabroadcast.com; pib.gov.in

9 How does INSPIRE reach rural and aspirational districts?

The Minister listed several steps in the same reply. They aim at rural and remote areas and at aspirational districts.

What steps were listed?

- **Spreading the word:** State Education Departments, District Education Officers, schools and digital platforms carry the information.
- **Awareness work:** campaigns, orientation sessions, webinars and capacity-building workshops.
- **Contests:** exhibitions at district, state and national levels.
- **Guidance:** mentoring by IITs, NITs and IISERs.

The reply said Odisha and Rajasthan show strong participation.

Sources: devdiscourse.com; neindiabroadcast.com

10 How is INSPIRE different from Vigyan Jyoti?

Vigyan Jyoti is a separate DST scheme. It tackles the low share of women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

How do the two schemes differ?

- **Group:** Vigyan Jyoti is for meritorious girls in Classes IX to XII. INSPIRE-MANAK is open to pupils in Classes VI to X.
- **Support:** Vigyan Jyoti offers science camps, special lectures, counselling and talks with role models.
- **Span:** Vigyan Jyoti plans support from Class IX to the PhD level.

Do not mix them up in a match-the-list question.

Sources: indiascienceandtechnology.gov.in

How do I revise INSPIRE in one minute?

11 What should I remember about INSPIRE?

What are the key points?

- **Owner:** the DST.
- **Launch:** 13 December 2008.
- **Ages:** 10 to 32.
- **School awards:** MANAK, with 1 lakh ideas funded at Rs 10,000.
- **College:** SHE, with 12,000 five-year scholarships.
- **Research:** the Fellowship for PhDs and the Faculty Fellowship for post-doctoral work.

Sources: online-inspire.gov.in; inspireawards-dst.gov.in; pib.gov.in; neindiabroadcast.com

How do INSPIRE questions appear in exams?

Exam practice

12 How do I answer an exam question on INSPIRE?

What did the past paper ask?

The answer is (a), attraction of talent for science and research.

What are the traps?

1. **Wording.** PIB also says “attract, nurture and retain”. The word “attract” leads, so pick option (a).
2. **Age.** The whole range is 10 to 32, not just school.
3. **Money.** MANAK pays Rs 10,000 to 1 lakh ideas, not to all 10 lakh.
4. **Increment.** The Faculty Fellowship rises Rs 200 a year.
5. **Counts.** Sources list four or five components.

Sources: mcqquestion.com; pib.gov.in; inspireawards-dst.gov.in

Review your 6 understanding checks

Review the feedback after each answer. The understanding-check score lasts for this page session.

Reset the checks when you want another attempt. This score is separate from the practice score below.

Questions to think through

Why does INSPIRE start at age 10?

The aim is to catch interest in science early. The Internship camps then draw 16 and 17 year olds towards science subjects.

Why do sources count the components differently?

Each report lists the parts it needs to explain. One counts five, others list four. Read the question and use its source.

What does top 1% mean for SHE?

SHE picks the top 1% by central and state board data. Rank decides entry. The scholarship then runs for five years.

Why can a school nominate only 2 to 3 students?

Two to three nominations from over 5 lakh schools fit the target of 10 lakh ideas. NIF then shortlists 1 lakh of them.

Sources: pib.gov.in; inspireawards-dst.gov.in

Practice MCQs

1. INSPIRE is a flagship scheme of which government body?

A. ISRO

B. Department of Science and Technology (DST)

C. University Grants Commission

D. Ministry of Education

See answer ↓

2. On what date did the Prime Minister formally launch the INSPIRE scheme?

A. 26 January 2009

B. 13 December 2008

C. 1 April 2009

D. 15 August 2008

See answer ↓

3. Under the INSPIRE Fellowship, what is the monthly stipend for a Junior Research Fellow (JRF), before promotion to Senior Research Fellow?

A. ₹20,000

B. ₹1,25,000

C. ₹37,000

D. ₹80,000

See answer ↓

4. Over the last five years, how many students and researchers have benefited under the INSPIRE Programme's four components combined?

A. Over 3.75 lakh

B. About 1.5 lakh

C. About 50,000

D. Over 10 lakh

See answer ↓

5. To expand INSPIRE's reach into rural and aspirational districts, the government pairs students with premier institutions and runs project-exhibition competitions at which levels?

A. Only within IITs and NITs

B. District, State, and National levels (DLEPC, SLEPC, NLEPC)

C. Only at the National level

D. Block, Tehsil, and Panchayat levels

See answer ↓

6. INSPIRE is an ongoing initiative of Government of India for

A. promoting research among various S & T stakeholders

B. augmenting quality manpower in niche areas of research

C. attraction of talent for science and research

D. research advancement through nurturing

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.** The correct answer is **the Department of Science and Technology (DST)**. PIB's reply of 27 March 2025 says the DST implements INSPIRE. The Ministry of Education is wrong because the reply gives it no role. The University Grants Commission is wrong because it is not named either. ISRO is wrong because it is a space agency, and the reply names the DST. Memory hook: INSPIRE is a DST scheme for young scientists. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The correct answer is **13 December 2008**. The DST's INSPIRE page says the scheme was approved in November 2008 and launched by the Prime Minister that December. 15 August 2008 is wrong because it comes before the approval. 26 January 2009 is wrong because the launch had already happened. 1 April 2009 is wrong because implementation began later, in 2009-10. Memory hook: approved in November, launched in December 2008. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** The correct answer is **Rs 37,000**. PIB says a fellow gets Rs 37,000 a month as a JRF for two years. The pay then rises to Rs 42,000 a month as an SRF. Rs 20,000 is wrong because that is the yearly contingency grant. Rs 80,000 is wrong because Rs 0.80 lakh is the yearly SHE scholarship. Rs 1,25,000 is wrong because that is the monthly pay of a Faculty Fellow. Memory hook: 37 for the JRF, 42 for the SRF. ↑ Q3
4. **A.** The correct answer is **over 3.75 lakh**. The Lok Sabha reply of July 2026 says over 3.75 lakh students and researchers benefited in five years. About 50,000 is wrong because 49,805 is only the MANAK count for 2025-26. About 1.5 lakh is wrong because the reply gives a larger five-year total. Over 10 lakh is wrong because 10 lakh is the yearly target for MANAK ideas, not people helped. Memory hook: 3.75 lakh in five years. ↑ Q4
5. **B.** The correct answer is **District, State and National levels (DLEPC, SLEPC, NLEPC)**. The July 2026 reply lists exhibitions at those three levels, with mentoring by IITs, NITs and IISERs. Block, Tehsil and Panchayat levels are wrong because the reply names no such levels. Only the National level is wrong because the contests begin at district level. Only within IITs and NITs is wrong because those institutes give mentoring, not the venue. Memory hook: District, State, National, in that order. ↑ Q5

6. **C.** The correct answer is **attraction of talent for science and research**. PIB says INSPIRE aims to attract, nurture and retain meritorious youth, and the word attract leads. Research advancement through nurturing is wrong because nurturing is only one of the three verbs. Promoting research among various S & T stakeholders is wrong because the scheme targets young talent, not stakeholders. Augmenting quality manpower in niche areas is wrong because the stated goal is the wider R&D base. Memory hook: INSPIRE attracts first. ↑ Q6

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** PIB's reply of 27 March 2025 says the Department of Science and Technology (DST) implements INSPIRE. ↑ 1
2. **True.** The DST's MANAK page says the programme covers students in the age group 10-32 years. ↑ 2
3. **False.** The DST's page targets 10 lakh ideas a year. Only 1 lakh ideas are shortlisted for the Rs 10,000 award. ↑ 3
4. **True.** PIB's release of 16 September 2022 says 84% of the participation came from schools in rural areas. ↑ 4
5. **False.** PIB says the first 2 years are as a JRF at Rs 37,000 a month. The last 3 years are as an SRF at Rs 42,000 a month. ↑ 5
6. **False.** PIB's reply of 27 March 2025 gives an annual increment of Rs 200 for the INSPIRE Faculty Fellowship. ↑ 6

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