

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO -293
ANSWERED ON - 27/11/2024

NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP FOR SCHEDULED CASTES

293. SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:-

- (a) steps taken by Government to address significant decline in actual spending on the National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes, which fell from 68% of the budgeted amount in 2019-20 to 40% in 2021-22;
- (b) the reasons for 30% drop in the number of fellowships awarded in 2022-23 compared to 2018-19, despite the inclusion of backlogs; and
- (c) the measures considered for timely disbursement of funds and increase the number of fellowships to support Scheduled Caste (SC) students pursuing higher education?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE)

(a) There was decline in expenditure under the National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes (NFSC) in 2020-21 from 2019-20 of Rs. 70.94 Crore (2019-20:Rs 204.04 cr - 2020-21 : Rs 133.10 cr) due to COVID-19 pandemic. To address this, validity period of award letter issued under NFSC was extended up to one more year vide Public Notice dated 06.09.2023. From Financial Year 2021-22, expenditure under NFSC has been continuously increasing. Expenditure was Rs. 127.85 Crore in 2021-22, Rs. 134.07 Crore in 2022-23 and Rs. 199.82 Crore in 2023-24.

(b) The drop was because of delay in conducting the University Grant Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC -NET) and Joint Council of Scientific & Industrial Research-University Grant Commission National Eligibility Test (Joint CSIR-UGC NET) during the year 2020-21 and 2021-22 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

(c) As per Scheme Guidelines, confirmation for continuation of the fellowship is given by the University twice a year on semester basis within 10th of the initial month of the semester. Based on this certification, the fellowship is released to the research scholars within the 15th of every month without any further intervention of the University.

The fellowship is claimed online by the Scholar and after receipt of claim, the same is released through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode into Adhaar Seeded bank account of the research scholars. 2,000 slots per year have been earmarked under the Scheme of NFSC and these slots are over and above the number of SC students already selected as per the reservation policy by the University Grants Commission (UGC).