

Demand to increase the stipend of non-NET Fellows

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): Sir, I wish to draw the attention of the hon. Education Minister and the Chairman of the University Grants Commission towards the plight of the non-NET Ph.D. research fellows concerning the stipend they receive.

As you are aware, these are for researchers who do get scholarships through the UGC NET exam. However, the researches get a stipend of Rs. 8,000 a month with a contingency of Rs. 10,000 per annum for Science subjects, and Rs. 8,000 per annum for Humanities and Social Science subjects, which has remained the same since 2006. Unlike other fellowship programmes, the stipend is yet to be subject to revision. Normally, revisions take place every four years. There should normally have been four upward revisions in the fellowship amounts they are getting. UGC is responsible for ensuring a conducive environment for scholars to conduct research. However, delayed revisions have imposed a financial burden due to the rise in inflation. We all know how prices are rising in our country. Living costs are going up, impacting their daily lives and their commitment to doing meaningful, effective, impactful research. The fact is that money is only part of the problem. The research scholars are also facing difficulties due to insufficient resources in their institutions like the infrastructure of the research institutes, inadequate support from their supervisors, and the absence of grievance redressal committees. The Government must address these and also ensure regular disbursements of the stipend without delays.

I therefore, urge the Minister to consider hiking significantly the stipend amount of the non-NET fellows as their contributions are pivotal in advancing our nation's growth in research and development.