

Need to restore allocation of funds under various scholarship schemes meant for students belonging to marginalized communities-Laid

DR. SHASHI THAROOR (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): I wish to draw the Union Government's attention to the proposed drastic budget cuts to key scholarship programmes, which would severely impact marginalised students' access to higher education. The Union Budget 2025 proposes a 99.8% cut to the National Overseas Scholarship, reducing it from Rs. 6 crore in revised estimates (RE) 2024 to Rs. 0.01 crore in budget estimates (BE) 2025. Similarly, the National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students proposes a 99.99% reduction, from Rs. 240 crore in RE 2024 to Rs. 0.02 crore in BE 2025. Additionally, the Pre-Matric and Post-Matric Scholarships for Minorities are set to decrease by 72.4% and 69.9%, respectively according to the proposed Budget. Additionally, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment has pointed out that no new schemes have been introduced to replace the Maulana Azad National Fellowship and the Padho Pardesh Interest Subsidy Scheme which were discontinued in 2022-23 due to overlaps with other government programs. I, therefore, urge the Ministers of Finance and other concerned Ministries to take immediate measures to restore funding for these crucial scholarships and ensure that financial constraints do not prevent students from disadvantaged backgrounds from accessing higher education.