

(d) As stated in reply to (a) above, the BRGF has been de-linked from the budgetary support of the Central Government.

Special category status to States

761. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any plan to give special category status to some of the most under-developed smaller States in the country;

(b) whether Jharkhand figures in the list of such States for providing special package and special status; and

(c) if so, the details and the justifications thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) Special category status for plan assistance have been granted in the past by the National Development Council (NDC) to some States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration. These features include: (i) hilly and difficult terrain; (ii) low population density and/or sizeable share of tribal population; (iii) strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness; and (v) non-viable nature of State finances. At present there is no proposal to modify the criteria for grant of special category status to States including for Jharkhand.

The Fourteenth Finance Commission recommendations while considering the various criteria for devolution has taken into account the total requirements of the States under Plan and non-Plan. As per the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC), the Union Government has decided to increase the share of net shareable taxes to the States from 32% earlier to 42% for the period 2015-20. FFC has not made any distinction between general category states and special category states in the horizontal distribution of shareable taxes amongst the States.

Release of plan funds to Uttarakhand

†762. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the plan funds for the fiscal year 2016-17 has been released to Uttarakhand;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

- (b) if not, the reasons for not providing the funds to the State, so far;
- (c) whether the development of the State would be adversely affected due to plan funds being not available in time; and
- (d) if not, in what manners?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (d) Funds are released to States under Central Assistance to State and UT Plans. The releases under the Central Assistance to State Plans (CASP) is made by the concerned Ministries/Departments for the various schemes. During 2016-17 (upto 20.07.2016), releases under Central Assistance to State Plans is ₹ 830.92 crore for Uttarakhand.

Revisiting NITI Aayog concept

763. DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that NITI Aayog has failed to be either a think tank or an advisory body since its inception;
- (b) if so, whether Government would revisit the NITI Aayog concept; and
- (c) if not, the areas where NITI Aayog has made an impact and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) No Sir, NITI Aayog has been performing its role as a think tank or an advisory body since its inception. NITI Aayog, as per defined role in setting up of its resolution, believes in cooperative federalism recognizing that strong States make a strong nation. The aim is to progress from a stage when the Centre decided development policies to a truly federal Government wherein States are equal partners. There are two important aspects of cooperative federalism, (i) developing National Development Agenda jointly by the States and the Centre, and (ii) developing State perspective for advocacy with Central Ministries. NITI Aayog is performing its role as advisory body in a persuasive manner and through series of consultations at various levels on all development matters. A few examples of cooperative federalism, where impact of NITI Aayog has been established; are (i) setting up of 3 Sub-Groups of Chief Ministers on rationalization of CSSs (ii) Swachh Bharat Mission and (iii) Skill Development. The States have participated in the deliberations and came forward with their views. The same is true for both the Task Forces set up under Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog on