

The UGC provides plan grants to all eligible Central and State Universities and affiliated colleges under its plan schemes as per the prescribed norms and subject to the availability of resources. The plan proposals received from all the eligible universities and colleges are examined by the experts, nominated by UGC for deciding the quantum of plan assistance to various grantees under the UGC schemes. As the existing system is working satisfactorily, there is no need to direct the UGC to modify the existing formula for providing grants to the universities.

Speed of Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani

†*458. SHRI DEVDAS APTE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any instructions have been issued by the Ministry of Railways, to slow down the speed of Howrah-Delhi Rajdhani Express, between Dhanbad and Mughalsarai; and

(b) if so, whether the Ministry has announced its information?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) A temporary speed restriction of 75 km/h has been imposed on Dhanbad, Mughalsarai and Danapur Divisions of East Central Railway and Madhupur-Jhajha section of Eastern Railway during night time as a precautionary measure on security considerations. This has resulted temporarily in the partial slowing down and resultant late running of the Howrah-New Delhi Rajdhani Expresses. In case the temporary speed restriction is extended further for a significant period, the schedule of Howrah-New Delhi Rajdhani Express will be revised and the public notified.

Air pollution

*459. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that pollution level in the air in our country went up by 50 per cent in the last decade, as found by the Department of Space, Thiruvananthapuram, which has been monitoring the aerosol levels; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.