

Dhankhar criticises 'freebies', urges Rajya Sabha to debate the issue

The Rajya Sabha Chairman says there is an urgent need for a national policy so that all investments of the government are used in a structured manner

Updated - March 19, 2025 09:36 pm IST - New Delhi:

THE HINDU BUREAU



Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar conducts proceedings in the House on March 19, 2025. Photo: Sansad TV via PTI

Criticising the culture of "freebies", Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday (March 19, 2025) said the issue should be debated in Parliament and there was an urgent need for a national policy so that all investments of the government were used in a structured manner.

His remarks came after Samajwadi Party MP and floor leader Ramgopal Yadav, during the Zero Hour, demanded that the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) funds should be increased to ₹20 crore per annum from the current outlay of ₹5 crore.

“On placatory mechanisms, on appeasement, which is often known as freebies, this House needs to deliberate....Because the country grows only with capex being available. Electoral process is such that these have become electoral allurements and thereafter the governments that came in saddle found themselves very uncomfortable, so uncomfortable that they wanted to revisit their thoughts. There is an urgent need for a national policy so that all investments of the government in any form are used in a structured manner for larger good,” Mr. Dhankhar said.

Subsidies, if required, Mr. Dhankhar argued, should be direct as was the case in developed countries. “I checked with the U.S. mechanism. The U.S. has one fifth of the farm households as our country, but the average income of a U.S. farm household is more than the general income of a U.S. household, and that is because the subsidy to the farmer is direct, transparent, without intermediary,” he said. If the leaders of both sides agree, there could be a discussion, he said, adding this was a very serious issue.

In his zero hour submission, Mr. Yadav said MLAs in Uttar Pradesh get ₹5 crore for constituency development and those in Delhi had ₹10 crore at their disposal. The cost of construction had risen in the last two decades, making the current outlay inadequate. He demanded that MPLAD fund amount be raised to ₹20 crore, it be exempt from GST and a technical cell be created for estimates and quality inspection of work done. “If this is not possible, then MPLADs should be abolished,” he said.