

**UGC's instructions against Ragging**

† 4360. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the University Grants Commission, concerned with the incidence of ragging, has issued instructions to State Governments and Universities for taking stern steps against ragging and for declaring it a cognizable offence;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the said instructions would come into effect ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI JAYSINGRAO GAIKWAD PATIL) :

(a) to (c) According to the information furnished by the UGC, the Commission has circulated the report of the UGC Committee to all Universities for curbing the menace of ragging in educational institutions. The Committee has, *inter alia*, recommended that the Central/State Governments may enact legislation prohibiting ragging in educational institutions; treating ragging as a cognizable offence and prescribing suitable punishment keeping in view the gravity of the offences committed. The relevant recommendations have been made effective from 29-1-2000.

**Plight of Bengali Widows at Agra, Vrindaban and Kashi**

4361. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have conducted any survey of the plight of the Bengali widows living in Agra, Vrindaban and Kashi;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what action has been taken by Government in this matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Uttar Pradesh State Social Welfare Advisory Board had conducted a survey in 1998 and its report indicated that more than 5000 widows were living at Vrindavan and more than 1000 widows were living at Varanasi. Apart from the

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

above, Government of West Bengal has also commissioned a survey of Bengali women in Vrindavan. The report of this survey reveals the following :

- (1) The number of destitute Bengali women living in Vrindavan is much less than what is projected in the media. Inflow of aged destitutes from West Bengal to Vrindavan is demographically insignificant. Of the 2910 widows interviewed during the course of the survey, 2113 were from West Bengal, 297 were from East Bengal and 500 were from other States;
- (2) There is a strong religious fervor among most of the widows who want to remain in Vrindavan because of the pious life;
- (3) Natural calamities like floods still prompt some families to come to Vrindavan temporarily to tide over the distress;
- (4) 53% of Bengali women covered in the survey depended on Bhajanashrams' and begging as their only means of livelihood;
- (5) The large majority of widows who settled here for partly economic and partly religious reasons are not willing to go back.

The report has been forwarded to the Government of Uttar Pradesh for necessary action.

(c) The Central Government has set up a Committee under the Chairpersonship of the Minister of State for Women and Child Development to coordinate the efforts of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal Governments and the Central Government organisations for rehabilitation of the marginalised women of Vrindavan and to monitor flow of benefits of Central Schemes to the target group. The State Government of Uttar Pradesh has established two shelter houses and provided necessary arrangements of medical care and protection of the inmates living in these shelter houses. The State Government has also established a Women Police Cell at Vrindavan. The State Government is also persuading Non-Governmental Organisations to set up more shelter houses for the rehabilitation of widows. Besides, there are various central Government schemes for self employment for women such as Setting up of Employment-cum-Income Generating Units for Women (NORAD), Support to Training and Employment Programme (STEP), Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), Socio-Economic Programme (SEP). Condensed Courses of Educational and Vocational Training for Women (CCE&VT) under which preference is given to such marginalized women in the matter of providing assistance. The Rashtriya Mahila

Kosh is also implementing programmes, with special focus on marginalized women under which financial assistance is provided for implementing self employment programmes through Non-Governmental Organisations. Other schemes such as National Old Age Pension Schemes and the Social Defence Schemes provide for pension and rehabilitation of such aged and marginalized women.

**Merger of ICHR and ICSSR**

4362. MISS MABEL REBELLO :  
SHRI GAYA SINGH :

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to merger Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) with the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR).

(b) whether this merger is being done because of withdrawal of the Towards Freedom Series; and

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

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI JAYSINGRAO GAIKWAD PATIL): (a) No Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

**Setting up of Commission for Women in Gujarat**

4363. SHRI AHMED PATEL : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether State level Commission for women has been set up in Gujarat;

(b) If so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether Government have advised the Gujarat Government to set up such a Commission in the State; and

(e) if so, the response of the State Government in that regard ?