

[3 December, 1999]

RAJYA SABHA

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SPACE (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) The Supreme Court in its judgement delivered on May 6, 1996 had observed that a law providing for forfeiture of properties acquired by holders of 'public offices' by indulging in corrupt and illegal acts and deals was a crying necessity in the present state of our society.

(b) The Law Commission of India by its letter dated 4.2.1999 forwarded its 166th Report on "The Corrupt Public Servants (Forfeiture of Property) Bill" to the Ministry of Law, Justice & Company Affairs who laid the Report on the table of the Rajya Sabha on 28th October, 1999.

(c) No final view has been taken by the Government on the issue.

UNDP's Report on Governance in India

361. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "India Pakistan poorly governed nations" appearing in the News time dated 3rd November, 1999;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto, especially the charge made in the report, prepared by United Nations Development programme (UNDP) that ruling elite in India is very powerful and non-accountable which creates severe bottlenecks in the development process; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to root out corruption and poor governance as alleged in the said report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Making the administration corruption free, accountable, transparent and more effective has been on the agenda of the Government. Policies, in this regard, have been formulated and are being continuously monitored and, wherever necessary, modified in order to make them more effective and responsive to the needs of a changing environment.

The work of the Central Government in the field of combating corruption in public administration has been considerably stepped up during the last few years. The Annual Action Plan prepared by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions envisages three-pronged strategy comprising preventive vigilance, surveillance and

detection, and deterrent punitive action. It was initially launched in 1985-86 and is being continued on annual basis. The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947 has been re-enacted, consolidated and effectively strengthened in 1988, to give it more teeth and to make it more comprehensive. The government has also taken several steps in the recent past to make the vigilance machinery more effective. These include the steps for strengthening the institution of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

The Government has also taken up simplification of laws, rules and procedures under its policy of preventive vigilance as well as for improving efficiency in the organisation. Towards this end, over 40 Departments have undertaken, through expert Task Forces or by internal exercises, a detailed review of laws, regulations and procedures administered by them.

The Government had also set up a Commission on Review of Administrative Laws on 8 May, 1998 to make recommendations for repeal/amendment of laws, regulations, procedures, legislative processes etc. The Commission submitted its report on 30 September, 1998.

The important recommendations of the Commission include repeal of almost 50% of Central Laws (1382 out of 2500 Laws), expeditious amendmnets to a critical list of 109 identified Acts, documentation of administrative laws (rules, regulations, executive instructions) by all the Ministries/ Departments, harmonisation of statutes and laws with reference to the perspective of domestic and foreign investors, trade and industry, consumers, exporters and importers, and development of a viable alternative disputes resolution machinery.

The Government has constituted a Standing Committee under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Personnel) for monitoring the follow-up action on implementation of the recommendations contained in the report. The Committee has held fifteen meetings with different Ministries/Departments in groups. Most of the Ministries/Departments have initiated action to bring about suitable amendments/modifications in or repeal of the Acts and Laws being administered by them with a view to improve service delivery and transparency in the functioning of Government.

The Government has also taken measures to bring more and more transparency and accountability in its functioning. Several Ministries/Departments/Organisations with considerable public interface have already introduced Citizens' Charters indicating broadly the quality of service, the public would be entitled to, within a specified time frame. Information and Facilitation Counters have been set up by 45 Ministries/Departments/Central Government organisations to provide information on procedures and the schemes of the concerned organisation as well as to access information pertaining to the status of individual cases.