

(b) what has been the result towards developing greater technical support for each Gram Panchayat and attaching Agriculture University students with the Panchayati Raj institutions; and

(c) whether structured programmes were formulated for achieving the objectives stipulated during March, 2008 session?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI C.P. JOSHI): (a) to (c) During the National Consultation of Panchayats for operationalisation of National Policy for Farmers 2007 held on 16-17 March, 2008, it was unanimously agreed that Panchayats have an important role to play in order to give an impetus to agricultural production, productivity and sustainability to farming. Accordingly, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Ministry of Agriculture have written to all concerned Ministries and Departments, Agriculture Universities and State Governments to operationalize the National Policy for Farmers in accordance with the decision taken/recommendations made during the National Consultation. Indian Council of Agriculture Research has also been requested to organize a conference of Vice Chancellors of all the universities and other related organizations and PRIs in order to achieve greater technical support to farmers by involving Agriculture Universities' students to strengthen the extension services at the grass root level.

Categorization of BPL beneficiaries

399. SHRI SUBHASH PRASAD YADAV: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the cases for categorization of Below Poverty Line (BPL) beneficiaries;

(b) whether there have been variations in the poverty estimates of Union and State Governments;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any committee under Shri N.C. Saxena has been set up to look into the matter;

(e) if so, the details thereof including terms of references;

(f) whether any order has been passed by any court in respect of estimates of poverty and the base year for reckoning such estimates;

(g) if so, the details thereof;

(h) whether a new survey for poverty estimates is proposed; and

(i) if so, the details thereof along with the likely time therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRADEEP JAIN): (a) to (c) The Planning Commission is the nodal agency in the Government of India for estimation of poverty at the national and State level which categorises the people as Below Poverty Line (BPL). The State-wise poverty is estimated from the State-specific poverty lines and State Specific Consumer Expenditure Distribution obtained from the large sample surveys on Household Consumer Expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) after an interval of 5 years approximately following the Expert Group method.

(d) and (e) The Ministry of Rural Development conducts the BPL Census in association with States and UTs to identify the households in the rural areas living below the poverty line who could be

targeted under its programmes. An Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Dr. N.C. Saxena has been constituted by the Ministry in August, 2008 to recommend suitable methodology for conducting the next BPL Census to identify the BPL households in the rural areas with the following Terms of Reference:-

- (i) To recommend more suitable methodology to conduct the next BPL Census with simple, transparent and objectively measurable indicators for identification of BPL for providing assistance under the programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development.
- (ii) To recommend institutional system for conducting survey, processing of data validation and approval of BPL List at various levels.
- (iii) To recommend institutional mechanism to address grievances of public on exclusion/inclusion in the BPL List.
- (iv) To briefly look at the relationship between estimation and identification of poor and the issue of putting a limit on the total number of BPL families to be identified.
- (v) Any other recommendation to make the exercise of BPL Census simple and acceptable.

(f) and (g) The Government is not aware of any Court order in respect of estimates of poverty, however, while hearing a Civil Writ Petition No.196 of 2001 in the matter of PUCL Vs Union of India, the Supreme Court had passed an Order on 5.5.2003 directing that the Government of India will not insist the State Governments to remove any person from the existing BPL list. The above Stay Order was vacated on 14th February, 2006.

(h) and (i) The estimation of poverty in the country is carried out by the Planning Commission on the basis of large sample survey on Household Consumer Expenditure conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) at an interval of approximately 5 years. The latest poverty estimates based on the Household Consumer Expenditure of 61st Round of the NSS are available for the year 2004-05.

Amendment in NREGA

400. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to amend the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) to make the same more effective and also to provide employment for more days to the rural poor; and

(b) the details of various State Governments which have failed to utilize the grant allotted for National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRADEEP JAIN): (a) At present there is no proposal under consideration regarding increasing the number of days of guaranteed employment under the Act.

(b) NREGA is demand driven. Funds are released to the districts by the Central Government based on labour demand. State-wise details of funds released by the Central Government, total available funds and funds utilized during the years 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 (up to May, 2009) are given in the Statement.