

Education Loan to handicapped students

839. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the role of the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) with regard to the grant of education loan to the handicapped students who pursue higher studies;

(b) the number of handicapped students who availed education loan for the past three years; and

(c) whether NHFDC directly bears the responsibility or recommends the loan applications received from the handicapped students to the Nationalised Banks and the State Co-operative banks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI D. NAPOLEON): (a) National Handicapped Finance & Development Corporation (NHFDC) provides education loan at concessional interest rates to handicapped students (fulfilling eligibility criteria to avail loan) to pursue higher studies in India up to Rs. 7.50 lakh and Abroad up to Rs 15.00 lakh.

The interest rates are:-

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| (i) Up to Rs. 50,000/- | 5% p.a. |
| (ii) Above Rs. 50,000/- and up to Rs. 5.00 lakh | 6% p.a. |
| (iii) Above Rs. 5.00 lakh | 8% p.a. |

A rebate of 1% p.a. on interest for disabled women.

(b) 21 handicapped students have availed education loans from NHFDC w.e.f. 2006-2007 to 2009-2010 (up to 23.02.2010).

(c) NHFDC, functions as an apex corporation and channelizes its funds through State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) for the welfare of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

The proposals for education loan above Rs. 1.50 lakhs received from SCAs are sanctioned at NHFDC level from its own funds.

Untouchability

840. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that untouchability is still prevalent in India;

(b) if so, the concerted efforts that are consciously being made to eradicate it completely from the Indian soil;

(c) whether Government is aware of the fact that untouchability is practiced surprisingly by upper subcaste Dalits against the lower subcaste Dalits; and

(d) if so, the measures that are being taken to uproot it totally?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI D. NAPOLEON): (a) to (d) Article 17 of the Constitution of India has abolished practice of untouchability, its practice in any form is forbidden and it is an offence punishable in accordance with law. The protection of Civil rights Act, 1955, prescribes punishment for the enforcement of any disability arising from preaching and practice of untouchability. As per the data provided by National Crime Records Bureau, in regard to offences against Scheduled Castes, number of cases registered by Police, under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, during the year 2008 are 248.

The Act is implemented by the concerned State Governments and Union Territory Administrations. With a view to ensure effective implementation of provisions of the Act, central assistance is provided to States/Union Territories, which includes strengthening of enforcement and judicial machinery, incentive for inter-caste marriages and awareness generation. They are requested to implement provisions of the Act in letter and spirit. Review meetings are also held with State Governments from time to time.

Residential schools for SC/ST students

841. SHRI RANJITSINH VIJAYSINH MOHITE-PATIL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) how many residential schools are presently running for the students of SC/ST in all over the country with specific reference to Maharashtra;

(b) whether Government has any plan to establish some more residential schools for students of SC/ST in the State; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI D. NAPOLEON): (a) Under the Scheme of Grant-in-aid to Voluntary Organizations working for Scheduled Castes, 168 residential schools are getting Grant-in-Aid, including 20 in Maharashtra.

As regards Scheduled Tribes, Ministry of Tribal Affairs releases grant-in-aid to State Governments for setting up Eklavaya Model Residential Schools (EMRS). 88 EMRS, including 4 in Maharashtra, are functional. That Ministry also implements a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal Sub Plan Areas, under which central assistance is released to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations, for construction of Ashram School buildings. During Tenth and Eleventh Five Year Plan (up to 2009-10), central assistance has been sanctioned for 460 Ashram Schools, including 31 in Maharashtra.