

(e) whether Government has received any complaints of diversion of funds to other schemes; and

(f) if so, the details thereof, State-wise and the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI C.P. JOSHI): (a) The Panchayats and the Municipalities are implementing the development grant component of the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) Programme, administered by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The funds released under BRGF are to be utilized timely and effectively and utilization certificates thereof should be provided within 12 months from the close of the financial year during which release was made.

(b) and (c) No Madam, under the BRGF, many States including Himachal Pradesh have not been able to fully utilize the funds allocated. The main reasons for slow pace of utilisation of BRGF fund are as follows:

- (i) Delayed release of funds by the States to the implementing entities i.e. Panchayats and Municipalities.
- (ii) Delay in receipt of the Annual Plans of the districts.
- (iii) Good performing Panchayats and Municipalities have to wait for the release of funds till the whole district reaches the minimum required level of expenditure.

(d) The Ministry of Panchayati Raj insists on submission of Utilization Certificates and Expenditure Progress Reports for a certain percentage of the released amounts before sanctioning the second or subsequent installments of the grant. The Ministry is regularly monitoring and exhorting the States through written communications, video conferencing and meetings to expedite utilization of the funds. The Ministry has also decided to impose penal interest on the States for delay in transfer of BRGF funds to the implementing entities beyond 15 days.

(e) and (f) The Ministry has not received any complaint of diversion of BRGF funds to any other scheme.

Role for panchayats in afforestation scheme

225. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is considering a proposal for giving Panchayats a central role in afforestation and forest protection schemes with active participation of tribals to counter Maoist insurgency; and

(b) if so, the details of the modalities being worked out in consultation with the Ministry of Environment and Forests?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI C.P. JOSHI): (a) and (b) the proposal for giving Panchayats an effective role in afforestation and forest protection schemes is under consultation between the Ministry of Environment & Forests and Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The modalities are still to be worked out.

Centrally sponsored schemes for backward districts in the country

‡226. SHRI DHIRAJ PRASAD SAHU: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of districts identified as backward districts in the country;
- (b) the details of centrally sponsored schemes and programmes being implemented by the Ministry for the development of backward areas in the country, especially those in Jharkhand;
- (c) the criteria and process formulated regarding implementation of schemes under Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) programme; and
- (d) the details of amount allocated and utilized under the BRGF in the country including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during the last three years and current year, scheme-wise?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI C.P. JOSHI): (a) and (b) The Government has identified 250 districts in 27 States including 21 districts in Jharkhand as backward. Since 2006-07, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has been implementing the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF). Programme in these identified districts with the aim to redress regional imbalances in development by providing funds for supplementing and converging existing developmental inflows.

(c) The BRGF implemented by the MoPR comprises the Capacity Building (CB) and Development Grant components. CB Grants are provided to the States computed at Rs. 1 crore per BRGF District per annum for creation of training infrastructure and conducting training courses for the functionaries of the local bodies. Development Grants are apportioned among the 250 backward districts as per the following norms:

- (i) Rs. 10 crore per annum, is the basic minimum allocation.
- (ii) The balance allocation is distributed by giving equal weight to the population and area of the district in the total population and area of all the 250 backward districts.

‡Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.