

(c) whether it is a fact that even after 63 years of independence, Government has paid no attention to Himachal Pradesh where the presence of railway network is almost negligible?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): (a) and (b) The work of Nangal Dam-Talwara new line had to be suspended from 1991-92 to 1999-2000 as the State Government of Himachal Pradesh backed out of their initial commitment to provide land for the project free of cost, labour for earthwork etc. The work was restarted in 1999-2000 after the State Government agreed to provide Government land free of cost. Out of 83.74 Km. total length, the line has already been commissioned from Nangaldam - Amb Andaura (43 Km.). The work on the remaining section is in progress and an outlay of Rs. 50 crore has been provided in 2010-11.

(c) No, Sir. Bhanupalli-Bilaspur-Beri (63.1 km.). Chandigarh-Baddi (33.23 km.) and Nangal Dam-Talwara (83.74 km.) are sanctioned new line projects falling partly/fully in the State of Himachal Pradesh.

Vegetable farm clusters

*70. DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government plans to set up dedicated vegetable farm clusters near major cities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the cities identified for the purpose, including those in the State of Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) A vegetable initiative for establishing dedicated vegetable farm clusters around all state capitals and urban centres with population greater than 10 lakh is under consideration. However, State Governments have been advised to leverage the components of existing schemes under Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH) and National Horticulture Mission (NHM) to ensure steady supply of quality vegetables to urban areas.

Under HMNEH, which is in operation from 2001-02, in eleven States* and NHM which is in operation from 2005-06 in the remaining States and 3 Union Territories**, assistance is provided for promotion of vegetable cultivation through vegetable seed production, cultivation of high value vegetables under protected condition (green houses, shade net houses and plastic tunnels) and organic cultivation of vegetables. Under HMNEH, assistance is also provided to farmers for vegetable cultivation in open field conditions.

Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have already taken concrete steps in this direction and recently one project on protected cultivation of vegetables in four districts around Hyderabad, and another for three districts around Chennai have been sanctioned under NHM for Rs. 541.50 lakhs and Rs. 174.56 lakhs respectively during 2010-11.

*Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and J&K.

**A&N Islands, Puducherry and Lakshadweep.

Educational reforms

*71. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether educational reforms are taking place;
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) to (c) Education reforms are a continuous process and the Government seek to carry them forward through expansion, inclusion and rapid improvement in quality through institutional and policy reforms and by enhancing public spending.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2010 has been enacted which envisages significant reforms in the Elementary Education sector. The Act makes it incumbent on Government to provide free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years of age; ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by every child of the age of six to fourteen years. It also makes it mandatory for the States to ensure availability of neighbourhood school within three years of the commencement of the Act. The Act stipulates that the State needs to provide infrastructure including school building, trained teaching staff and learning equipment as well as ensure good quality elementary education according to the standards and norms specified.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) follows a holistic approach to improve the quality of elementary education, and subject to certain norms, provides for opening of new primary schools, upgradation of primary schools to upper primary schools, construction of school buildings, construction of additional classrooms to improve the students classroom ratio, recruitment of additional teachers to improve the pupil teacher ratio, in-service training of the teachers and training of the teachers and training of untrained teachers, provision of text books, learning enhancement programme, remedial teaching, school and teacher grant and regular academic support to the school through Block Resource Centres and Cluster Resource Centres to improve the quality of classroom practices.