

expenditure towards establishment of Courts, etc., the same could also be indicated in the Financial Memorandum. However, this will slow down the pace of a legislation—in relation to social, labour or other legislation of progressive nature—as unforeseen expenditure has to be assessed before undertaking such legislation.

Free and fair elections

2749. SHRI SILVIUS CONDPAN: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether considering the illiteracy and ignorance among the communities Government would take up a scheme to regularly educate the society in the matter of fair, free and fearless elections which is considered to be a very important area in upholding the democracy; and

(b) whether any strict measures would be adopted to prevent rigging, intimidation, booth capturing etc., during elections?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) The Election Commission has informed that it had launched a countrywide National Voter Awareness Campaign (NVAC) on 15th August, 1994, through the Chief Electoral Officer (CEOs) of various States/Union Territories involving non-political and Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs), etc., with broad aims and objectives of improving the general awareness about the importance of right of franchise and its free and fair exercise. In 1997, the Commission allowed the CEOs to utilize the services of Government Agencies/Departments like Public Relations Department in the States, Districts, etc. in addition to NGOs for implementation of programmes under this Scheme.

(b) The Election Commission has informed that to prevent rigging, intimidation, booth capturing etc. during elections, it issues necessary directions from time to time. It adopts measures like area dominations by security forces, deployment of Central Para Military and other security forces at the polling booths, asking the State Governments to execute non-bailable warrants, launch special drives to unearth illegal arms, ammunitions, explosives, make preventive arrests, ban on issue of

new licenses, identify sensitive/trouble-prone areas/polling stations and compulsory identification of voters.

Fatwas issued by religious institutions

2750. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) what procedures are followed by the jurisdictional courts when Fatwas are issued by the Islamic institutions or even local panchayats in criminal cases at variance with the existing criminal laws;

(b) whether there are any specific guidelines or instructions relating to dealing with such cases or it is left to the discretion of the local courts; and

(c) the steps Government propose to ensure that ends of justice are adequately met particularly in respect of the victims of major crimes perpetrated on them?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ): (a) The procedure to be followed by courts in the criminal cases are set out in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and Fatwas issued by the Islamic institutions are not having any legal backing and they are not valid in the eye of law.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) To meet the ends of justice to the victims, the law enforcing agencies of the Government takes the recourse as mandated under the law.

Administration of Criminal Justice

2751. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rate of disposal of criminal cases under Indian Penal Code specially local laws over the last several years has highly dismal;

(b) the steps Government have taken for expeditious disposal of the criminal cases during the last three years; and