

Capitation fee charged by self-financing colleges

2737. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of the exorbitantly high capitation fee prevalent in many of the private self-financing colleges;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the action proposed to be taken to regulate the fee structure of the private self-financing colleges in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) It has been stressed in National Policy on Education as well as in several judicial pronouncements that education is a not-for-profit activity and commercialisation of education is to be avoided. The tuition fee to be charged by Self-financed colleges for particular technical programmes is fixed by State Level Fee Committee constituted by the respective State Governments under the direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the TMA Pai Foundation and others *V/s* State of Karnataka and others WP (civil) No. 317 of 1993.

Extension of MDMS to private schools

2738. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is considering extending the Mid-Day-Meal Scheme (MDMS) to reserved quota students in private schools;
- (b) whether Government considers this to be an effective step in a private school environment; and
- (c) if so, the details of the progress on the plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (c) The Working Group on Elementary Education and Literacy for the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17), has recommended extension of MDMS to the children studying in the private unaided schools in Tribal areas.

Contract labour in cleaning operations

2739. DR. T.N. SEEMA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that Southern Railway is continuing with contract labour in cleaning operations inspite of Supreme Court's direction to abolish contract labour system in Railways;
- (b) whether any cleaning services have been sub-contracted by Railways in Kerala;

- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether any complaint has been received from contract workers about low wages and inhuman working conditions at railway stations in Kerala; and
- (e) whether Railways would take steps to make regular appointments for cleaning operations in trains, stations and catering units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) to (c) In terms of extant policy, activities like, mechanised cleaning, garbage disposal, rag picking etc., are contracted out for ensuring cleanliness and proper upkeep of station premises. Outsourcing of these activities has not been prohibited by the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Cleaning activities at 23 important stations in Kerala have been outsourced.

(d) Yes, Sir. Two complaints about non-payment of minimum wages by the contractors are being investigated by the Labour Enforcement Officer (Central) and the Railway.

- (e) Wherever vacancies exist, prompt action is taken to fill up the same.

Fire in Howrah-Dehradun Express

2740. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Howrah-Dehradun Express caught fire in Jharkhand's Giridih district;
- (b) if so, the cause of the fire; and
- (c) the steps Railways are taking to avoid recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BHARATSINH SOLANKI): (a) Yes, Sir. An unfortunate incident of fire took place in train no. 13009 Howrah-Dehradun Doon Express between Nimiaghat and Parasnath stations of Dhanbad Division of East Central Railway at about 02.35 hrs. on 22.11.2011. While the train was on run, fire broke out in Three Air Conditioned Coach B1, positioned 8th from train engine. Subsequently, it also spread to adjacent Three Tier AC coach B2. As a result of the fire, the two coaches got completely burnt. In this unfortunate incident, 7 passengers lost their lives and 2 passengers sustained simple injuries.

(b) The cause of the incident of fire is being investigated from all possible angles, including miscreant activity, in cooperation with the State Government authorities of Jharkhand. However, a statutory inquiry into this incident has already been ordered to be conducted by Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS), Eastern Circle, under the Ministry of Civil Aviation.