

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) Section 7(1) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act provides that the Central Government and the State Governments shall have concurrent responsibility for providing funds for carrying out the provisions of this Act. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the main vehicle for implementation of the RTE Act. The fund sharing ratio of the RTE-SSA programme has been revised to 65 : 35 ratio for a five year period from 2010-11 to 2014-15 for non-NER States and to 90 : 10 for NER States.

(b) Section 12 (1) (c) of the RTE Act *inter alia* provides that an unaided private school shall admit in class I (or pre-primary class, as the case may be), to the extent of at least twenty-five per cent of the strength of that class, children belonging to weaker section and disadvantaged group in the neighbourhood and provide them free and compulsory elementary education till its completion. Section 12(2) provides that unaided private schools shall be reimbursed expenditure so incurred to the extent of per-child-expenditure incurred by the State, or the actual amount charged from the child, whichever is less.

(c) and (d) States have presently been advised to defray the reimbursement amount from the 8% annual increase in State Education outlays mandated for utilizing the 13th Finance Commission award for elementary education.

Reduction in area under agriculture

*513. SHRI BHARATSINH PRABHATSINH PARMAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that due to increasing urbanisation, industrialisation and indiscriminate mining, area under agriculture cover is getting reduced;

(b) if so, the reduction in agricultural area due to such activities during the last five years; and

(c) the specific measures intended to bring new areas under agriculture to neutralise the loss of agricultural area?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) As per the Land Use Statistics data compiled by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture, the cultivable land in the country has come down to 182.5 million hectares during 2009-10 as compared to 182.7 million hectares during 2005-06.

(c) As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, Land falls under the purview of State Governments and, therefore, it is for the State Governments to bring in suitable Policy/Act/Legislation to check the diversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes or to bring new areas under agriculture to neutralize the loss of agricultural area. However, as per the National Policy for Farmers, 2007, it has been recommended that Prime farmland must be conserved for agriculture except under exceptional circumstances, provided that the agencies that are provided with agricultural land for non-agricultural projects should compensate for treatment and full development of equivalent degraded/wastelands elsewhere.

Further, to increase the agricultural land area in the country and for maintaining balance in different types of land uses, the Government is implementing various Programmes/Schemes, such as, (i) National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA), (ii) Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Projects and Flood Prone Rivers (RVP & FPR), (iii) Reclamation & Development of Alkali and Acid Soils (RADAS) and (iv) Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSA).

Incentives to States for improving higher education

*514.DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is planning a scheme to incentivise the States for improving higher education in the country, in view of low and inadequate enrolment;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any proposal to subsume the current scheme of setting up of Model Degree Colleges in 374 educationally backward districts of the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) The need for central support, to address issues of fund constraints and poor quality education, has been highlighted in the Approach Paper to the Twelfth Plan. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) has been envisioned by the