

Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee meetings with all States/UTs Education Secretaries, and during Programme Approval Board meetings. To ensure accountability, registers for attendance, the details of Mid Day Meal beneficiaries and of foodgrains buffer stocks of one month are being maintained at the school level. These registers are also inspected by block and district level officers. In addition the Central Review Missions visit the States for an on-the-spot assessment. 41 Independent Monitoring Institutes also evaluate the Scheme at regular intervals.

Literacy among dalits

2428. SHRI AVINASH PANDE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the total percentage of literate people in the country;
- (b) the total dalit population in the country;
- (c) the percentage of dalit literates;
- (d) the reasons for the large proportion of illiterate dalit population, even now, inspite of the efforts of Government and the details thereof; and
- (e) how does Government plan to further address the challenge and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) As per the Census of 2011, 74.04% people in the country are literate.

(b) and (c) The data on the SC population and its literacy rate on the basis of the 2011 Census is not yet available. The total population and literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes in the country, as per the 2001 census, is 166,635,700 and 54.69% respectively.

(d) Illiteracy amongst the SCs is on account of various social and economic factors.

(e) Saakshar Bharat, the new variant of the National Literacy Mission, was launched on 8 September, 2009 and became operational *w.e.f.* 1st October, 2009. The Mission aims to provide adults (in the age group of 15 and above), in rural areas of low female literacy districts, opportunities for functional literacy, basic

education, skill development and continuing education. The focus of the Mission is on excluded and disadvantaged groups, including the SCs.

Caste and gender based discrimination under MDMS

2429. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether certain cases of bias and discrimination have come to light in different regions under Mid-Day-Meal Scheme (MDMS);

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether a gender and caste bias has been noticed during the serving of meals in certain States;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the existing system of monitoring of this project in different regions in the country to control such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) to (d) Independent Monitoring Institutes have been engaged to monitor the Mid Day Meal Scheme and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan as per the defined Terms of Reference. The Monitoring Institutions have reported about caste discrimination in some districts in the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Gujarat and Karnataka Central teams were deputed in the 2nd week of the August, 2012 to these States to investigate into the matter. The teams did not come across any discrimination except in one school in district Boudh in Odisha. The matter was taken up by this Ministry with the Government of Odisha for taking immediate remedial action. The State Government have placed the Headmaster of the school under suspension and initiated disciplinary action against the Sub-Inspector of Schools. The District Administration has been instructed by the State Government to ensure social equity in all the schools.

(e) The Government has made it clear that discrimination in the MDMS is unacceptable and has issued guidelines to the States to take preventive and corrective measures to ensure that discrimination does not occur, and is firmly dealt with if it does. The States/UTs have formed Committees/Samities with members from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to inspect preparation and distribution of