

(b) whether the Central Government would provide any separate amount to Panchayats for this work, or the amount may be provided for video recording in the name of administrative expenditure;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether information about meetings of Gram Sabha keeps coming in from each State through Collector; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA DEO):

(a) The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has advised the State Governments and the Union Territories to make full video-and-audio-graphic record of all Gram Sabha meetings including the proceedings therein and of the members present in regard to sensitive, controversial and contentious issues relating to forest produce, land acquisition, mining and natural resources likely to affect the traditions and way of life of the community, and on which the consensual agreement of the Gram Sabha in PESA areas is necessary, thereby ensuring transparency of decision making. The Ministry has also advised the State Governments to retain a copy of such records in both the Panchayat office and in the District Panchayat Secretary's office and to issue directions to the District Collectors/ZP/CEOs to take necessary administrative action to enable the Gram Panchayat to make and keep such records.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) In view of 'b' above, the question does not arise.

(d) and (e) The Ministry is not maintaining a data base containing information about Gram Sabha meetings held in the respective States.

#### **Reduction in Government expenses**

†\*9. SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to reduce various Government expenses in view of huge difference between the budgetary economic estimates during the financial year 2012-13;

(b) if so, the details of such expenses and whether any priority has been set in the determination of orders of reduction in these expenses; and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

- (c) if so, the details of the order of reduction on priority basis?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government has taken the following steps to rationalize Government expenditure:—

- (i) In the current financial year, Government has imposed economy measures like rationalization of expenditure and optimization of available resources with a view to improve macroeconomic environment. This include 10% mandatory cut on Non-Plan expenditure in the current financial year, ban on holding of meetings and conferences at five star hotels, ban on creation of Plan and Non-Plan posts, restrictions on foreign travel, restrictions on re-appropriation of funds, observance of discipline in fiscal transfers to States, Public Sector Undertakings, Autonomous Bodies such as releases to any entity shall be based on furnishing of Utilization Certificates, no release of funds will be made in relaxation of conditionalities attached to such transfers (matching funding), etc.;
- (ii) Government has also imposed expenditure restriction upto (a) 33% of the Budget Estimates in the last quarter of the financial year and (b) 15% of the Budget Estimates in the month of March under Monthly Expenditure Plan and Cash Management System;
- (iii) Government has advised Ministries/Departments against making advance payments for the goods and services being procured;
- (iv) Financial Advisors of Ministries/Departments have been advised to ensure compliance with these measures and also to submit an overall report to the Minister-in-Charge/the Ministry of Finance on a quarterly basis regarding various action taken on these measures/guidelines;
- (v) Government has introduced 'Medium-term Expenditure Framework Statement', setting forth a three-year rolling target for expenditure indicators with a view to undertaking a *de-novo* exercise for allocating resources for prioritised schemes and weeding out others that have outlived their utility. It would also encourage efficiencies in expenditure management; and
- (vi) Government also endeavours to restrict the expenditure on Central subsidies.

The above steps and measures are expected to reduce/rationalize the Government expenditure under the designated items of expenditure except under the obligatory

expenditure like interest payment, repayment of debt, Defence capital, salaries, pensions and the Finance Commission grants to the State Governments. Government also expects to be able to contain and economise on expenditure.

(c) At present, the mid-year review of Government expenditure and receipts is in progress and the results of such review will be reflected in RE 2012-2013 at the time of presentation of Budget for 2013-2014.

#### **Assistance to Indians languishing in foreign jails**

\*10. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of Indians are languishing in different jails in different countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action taken by Government to extend legal assistance/help to fight cases in different courts in those countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) and (b) As per our records, the total number of Indian nationals in foreign jails is 6293. The details are given in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) and (d) In general, Indian nationals are jailed abroad for crimes like violation of immigration/visa rules such as overstay and illegal entry, non-possession of valid travel documents, economic offences, violation of employment contracts, working without any valid visa/permit, consumption of alcohol (in countries where there is prohibition), etc. However, there are also a few cases of grave offences like drug trafficking, theft, murder, etc., committed by Indian nationals.

Indian Missions/Posts abroad always strive to respond promptly to the requests/appeals by Indian citizens who are in distress. As soon as the information about detention/arrest of an Indian national abroad is received by the Indian Mission/Post, it immediately gets in touch with the local Foreign Office and other concerned local authorities to get consular access to the detained/arrested Indian national. In some countries where *pro bono* lawyers are available, the Mission arranges such legal assistance to the Indian prisoners.