

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The performance of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme in Karnataka was reviewed by the Joint Review Mission of the Government of India in January, 2011, then by two independent Monitoring Institutes whose review reports dated 27th August, 2012 and 9th July, 2012 have been received, in the States Education Secretaries' Conference on 27th July, 2012 as well as in a Financial Review of SSA on 29th - 30th October, 2012. The reviews have revealed that the State's progress on issues of access, retention and quality is satisfactory. However, further attention needs to be given *inter-alia*, to children with special needs, improving quality interventions, functionality of drinking water and toilet facilities, addressing the shortage of teachers.

Findings of the reviews have been utilized by the SSA programme in Karnataka. The Central Government has released Rs. 399.37 crore to the State for SSA implementation in 2012-13, so far.

Drop-out of students

244. SHRI N.K. SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware that substantial number of students drop-out before completing Twelfth standard;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to check drop-out rate in schools across the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) and (b) Drop out rate of students for the Classes I-V, Classes I-VIII and Classes I-X during 2010-11 (Provisional) in the country are 27.0, 40.6 and 49.3 respectively.

(c) Government has been making consistent progress to meet the goals of Universal Elementary Education through implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Programme. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, which became operational with effect from 1st April, 2010, provides that every child in the 6 to 14 age-group shall have a right to free and compulsory

education till completion of elementary education. The SSA Framework of Implementation has been revised to correspond with the provisions of the RTE Act 2009 and the SSA programme is being implemented in accordance with the norms and standards of the RTE Act to enhance enrolment and retention of children. A multi-pronged approach has been adopted for reducing drop-out rates. This includes *inter-alia* strengthening of school infrastructure and facilities, residential hostel buildings for children in habitations un-served by regular schools, provisioning for additional teachers, regular training of teachers, provision for text books and uniforms to children. Mid Day Meal Scheme is also being implemented with a view to enhance enrolment and retention of children in school. Further, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan has been launched for universal access to secondary education.

Launching of Aakash tablet

245. SHRI PALVAI GOVARDHAN REDDY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the reasons for the target of launching of Aakash tablet in October having been missed again;
- (b) whether Aakash is technically ready for being launched; and
- (c) how the new Aakash is different from the earlier one?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) to (c) Evolution of Aakash 2 from Aakash 1 has been a continuing multistep effort, requiring time at each step for stabilising the product. Many of these steps have been necessitated by availability of better hardware within the targeted price band. Deliveries of final version of Aakash commenced in October and after receiving and testing these tablets in sizeable numbers, the new version called Aakash 2 was launched by the Hon'ble President of India on the occasion of National Education Day *i.e.* 11th November, 2012.

Earlier, on 5.10.2011, the Low Cost Access-cum-computing Devices (LCAD) Aakash was launched and based on the feedback received; the specifications of Aakash tablet have been enhanced. Difference between new Aakash from the earlier one is as furnished in the table below: