

Reading levels of children

1340. SHRI JAGAT PRAKASH NADDA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per the provisional report of ASER, 2012 reading levels as well as basic arithmetic skills of children between the age group of 6-14 years have declined further since 2011;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures Government has taken to ensure quality education to children of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) and (b) The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), which is an assessment brought out annually by PRATHAM, a non-governmental organization, expresses concern regarding learning levels of children in schools in rural areas. However, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), which uses a rigorous research methodology, conducts very detailed periodic national surveys of learning achievements of children in classes – III, V and VIII. Two rounds of National Learners' Achievement Surveys have been completed by the NCERT which have revealed improvements in the overall learning levels, even though achievements remain low. The findings of the third round conducted recently for class V also indicate that there is enhancement in the level of achievement in most States.

(c) Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which specially focuses on rural and backward areas, the State Governments and UT Administrations are supported on several interventions to improve the quality of elementary education, including *inter-alia*, regular in-service teacher training, the distribution of free and improved textbooks, the recruitment of additional teachers for better pupil-teacher ratios, academic support for schools and teachers through block and cluster resource centres, a continuous and comprehensive evaluation system, teacher and school grants for development of appropriate teaching-learning materials, etc.

Restructuring of ICSSR

1341. DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has contemplated certain major structural changes in the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR);