

Standard of learning in Government schools in rural areas

†*5. SHRI DHARMENDRA PRADHAN: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the standard of learning among the students of Government schools in rural areas of the country is declining consistently year after year;

(b) if so, whether Government has any policy to assess the quality of education being imparted in Government schools in rural areas of the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the details of the steps taken by Government to improve the standard of education of schools in rural areas along with the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M.M. PALLAM RAJU): (a) to (c) The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), which is a cursory 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 achievement of children in classes-III, V and VIII. Two rounds of National Learners' Achievement Surveys have been completed by 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.

(d) 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 20-day in-service teacher training, distribution of free and improved textbooks, 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. For secondary education, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan programme similarly provides for in-service teacher training and academic support to schools for improving performance.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.