

(b) if so, whether Government has received any complaint from an NGO pointing out the abnormally low wages; and

(c) if the answer to parts (a) and (b) above are in affirmative, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRADEEP JAIN) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The news item as well as a reference from the NGO - 'Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan' regarding payment of low wages to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers in Rajasthan, was considered by the Ministry and a preliminary report has been obtained from the State Government being the implementation authority of MGNREGA. Low wages can be attributed to various reasons including use of machinery by the workers, work not being carried out as per the prescribed norms and quantum prescribed, wrong feeding of data in MIS etc. The Ministry has decided to assign the task of in-depth investigation of the complaint to a National Level Monitor.

Expansion of pension system

3076. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN :

SHRI D. RAJA :

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government has agreed to expand the existing pension system by including more categories of vulnerable men and women and disabled people and doing away with the distinction of APL/BPL categories;

(b) whether Government has agreed to increase the quantum of monthly pension considering the current cost of living; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and by when the new universal pension scheme is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI LAL CHAND KATARIA) : (a) to (c) On the direction of the Union Cabinet, a Task Force was constituted under the Chairmanship of Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission to prepare a proposal for a Comprehensive National Social Assistance Programme. The Task Force considered various issues, demands and suggestions relating to pension schemes under NSAP, received from various quarters including those on lowering the widow pension age to eighteen years and expanding

the widow pension to single and divorced women, the quantum of assistance and indexing it to inflation. The Task Force has submitted its report to this Ministry.

SC/ST beneficiaries under IGNOAPS

3077. SHRI AMBETHRAJAN : Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to State:

(a) whether Government has taken steps to enumerate beneficiaries belonging to SC/ST categories under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) which is one of the important component of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI LALCHAND KATARIA) : (a) to (c) The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) which includes the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) was transferred to State Plan in the year 2002-03 and States/Union Territories have been given requisite flexibility in the implementation of the schemes. Hence the identification of beneficiaries as well as sanctioning and disbursement of assistance under the schemes of NSAP is the responsibility of the State Government/UT Administration concerned. Therefore no details of the beneficiaries are maintained at the central level. Universal coverage of all persons satisfying the prescribed eligibility criteria is envisaged under IGNOAPS.

Employment of differently-abled in MGNREGA

3078. SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI :

SHRI VIVEK GUPTA :

Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has included differently-abled persons under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA);

(b) if so, the details of such people working, their percentage to the total MGNREGA workers in State, and the type of projects they are employed during the last three years, State-wise;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;