

- (i) Facilitating identification of suitable exporters, willing to locate their production activities in rural areas,
  - (ii) Fostering a mutually beneficial business relationship between such exporters and rural producers, availing of the support and facilitation of Panchayats,
  - (iii) Facilitating wider visibility and promotion of identified products of RBHs in international markets by linking these products to EXIM Bank's rural portal and by displaying such products at the overseas offices of EXIM Bank,
  - (iv) Familiarizing select RBHs with the process of obtaining Ethical Trading, Fair Trade, Organic certification etc., so that market realization is better.
- (c) The Scheme has been discontinued during Twelfth Five Year Plan.

#### **Shortage of manpower in Panchayati Raj**

1457.DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Panchayati Raj department is having shortage of personnel, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that the existing personnel in the Ministry is insufficient and reflecting the strength on the basis of the needs of 1964; and
- (c) since then number of years have passed and workload has also increased, the steps taken by Government to cope with the present needs and necessities?

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

- (a) to (c) The Ministry of Panchayati Raj came into existence on the 24 May, 2004 with a skeletal staff strength to look after all matters relating to Panchayati Raj and Panchayati Raj Institutions. Since then there has been a manifold increase in the subjects allocated to this Ministry including the implementation of two flagship programmes - Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) and the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayat Sashaktikaran Abhiyan (RGPSA). The present sanctioned staff strength

of the Ministry is 100 which includes 13 new posts of Under Secretary/Section Officer Assistant created in May 2012. Against this actual number in position is 68.

**Denial of rights to disabled persons to contest panchayat elections**

1458. SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether there have been instances where disabled persons have been denied the right to contest panchayat elections; and

(b) if so, the action Government contemplates to ensure that persons with disabilities are not denied their right to participate in the political process and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA DEO):  
(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. On one reference received from Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities about one person with visual impairment in Odisha not being allowed to file his nomination for Gram Panchayat election, this Ministry referred the matter to the Chairperson of Standing Committee of State Election Commissioners for consideration of the issue. However, the States/ Union Territories covered by Part IX of the Constitution and their State Election Commissions have to deal with such issues in compliance with their respective statutes/laws. The Constitution mandates that where the Part IX of the Constitution applies, Panchayat elections are to be conducted every five years, under the overall superintendence, direction and control of the State Election Commission. The Constitution also empowers the States Legislatures to make laws regarding elections.

**Steps taken for proper implementation of RTI Act**

1459. SHRI AAYANUR MANJUNATHA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the RTI Act has not been able to reach its objectives in providing the information to the applicants, if so, whether Government has noticed any deviation to the desired aims and objectives; and

(b) if so, the reasons for ineffective implementation and bottlenecks and the measures being taken by Government for proper implementation of RTI Act and making it effective?