

Provision of amenities in rural areas at par with urban areas

613. SHRI RAM NATH THAKUR: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether two-third of population living in rural areas do not have access to adequate public amenities and livelihood opportunities;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether rural-urban divide has been widening day-by-day in the country;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;
- (e) whether there is an urgent need for providing urban amenities to rural areas to end the divide; and
- (f) the steps being taken by Government for improving the quality of life in rural areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI UPENDRA KUSHWAHA): (a) to (f) The Department of Rural Development is not maintaining any database of the rural population who are not having access to urban amenities. However, the Government is implementing the Scheme of Provision of Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) on pilot basis for bridging the urban-rural divide. The scheme proposes holistic and accelerated development of compact areas around a potential growth centre in a Gram Panchayat(s) through Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework for providing livelihood opportunities and urban amenities to improve the quality of life in rural areas. Leveraging of public funds with private capital and management expertise for creation and maintenance of rural infrastructure is the essence of the PURA scheme.

Development of waterways

614. DR. R. LAKSHMANAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether, in spite of the fact that water transport is cheaper, can handle huge volumes of cargo and has less impact on environment, no big development in waterways has taken place in the country, so far;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;