

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING ( COL. RAJYAVARDHAN SINGH RATHORE ): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Prasar Bharati has informed that Doordarshan and All India Radio engage Part Time Correspondents (PTCs) and Stringers at the field level including several district Headquarters for reporting from the different corners of India. Citizen journalists are also allowed to provide news ascitizens. This is in addition to the other regular sources and modes of reporting, which include Staff Correspondents, various news agencies, press release/communiqués received from Central/State Government agencies/departments and also reputed private organisations. Such inputs are used after proper verification.

#### **Handling of issues of minorities**

1436. SHRIMATI JHARNA DAS BAIDYA: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry is having sufficient human resources to handle the issues of minorities *i.e.* religious, linguistic and ethnic minorities in such a large country; and

(b) if so, how many staff are working in the Ministry and to what extent the modern technological support has been provided to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI) : (a) and (b) Ministry of Minority Affairs has a sanctioned strength of 98 regular officers/officials out of which 66 are at present in position. They deal with the matters relating to the notified and linguistic minorities in the country efficiently.

Continuous attempts are made to fill up the vacant posts. However, contractual personnel are engaged on need basis to augment the manpower required for normal functioning of this Ministry. The computers, printers, fax machines and internet connections have been provided to the officers and staff of the Ministry along with backup support from NIC.

#### **Improvement of economic conditions of Muslims**

1437. DR. BHALCHANDRA MUNGEKAR: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the position of Muslims below poverty line has been always higher than the other religious Minorities during the years for which the

information is available;

(b) if so, what were the specific reasons for such situations; and

(c) what special steps would the Ministry take to improve the economic conditions of the Muslim community?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI): (a) The erstwhile Planning Commission used to estimate poverty from the Large Sample Surveys on Household Consumer Expenditure carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. These surveys are normally conducted on quinquennial basis. The latest data of Large Sample Survey on Household Consumer Expenditure has been collected by NSSO in its 68th round conducted in 2011-12. In the process of collection of consumption expenditure data from households, NSSO records the religious affiliation of the household. But the NSSO consumer expenditure data is not stratified with respect to religious groups of population. As a result, Planning Commission has not estimated the poverty ratios for Muslims and the people from other minority communities living below poverty line in 2011-12.

However, a High Level Committee, constituted under the Chairmanship of Justice (Retd.) Rajinder Sachar (Sachar Committee), in its report submitted to the Government in the year 2006 has indicated *inter-alia*, that in the year 2004-05, 38.4 % of Muslims in urban areas and 26.9 % in rural areas live below the poverty level, which is higher than the other minorities.

(b) The Sachar Committee Report has *inter-alia*, observed that there is low educational achievement among the Muslim community, lack of educational facilities in the minority concentration areas, relatively higher engagement of Muslims in self employment in the unorganized sector and low participation in regular salaried jobs, which contribute to their relative backwardness.

(c) The focus of the Government is to improve the educational and skill level of minority communities for their gainful employment leading to improvement in the overall condition of minorities. For welfare of minority communities, Ministry of Minority Affairs implements following programmes/schemes:

(i) **Schemes for educational empowerment**— Ministry implements Pre-matric, Post-matric, Merit-cum-Means based scholarships and Maulana Azad National Fellowship. Under these schemes, 30% seats are earmarked for girl students. In addition, Maulana Azad Education Foundation implements a scheme exclusively for scholarship to girls belonging to minority

communities. Assistance for free coaching is also provided to students for competitive examinations. A new scheme 'Padho Pardesh' has been launched for interest subsidy on educational loans for minority students for their overseas studies. Another Scheme 'Nai Udaan' has also been started for giving financial support to minority candidates clearing preliminary exams conducted by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC) and State Public Service Commissions (SPSCs). Further, to strengthen educational infrastructure, construction of schools, additional classrooms and toilets are taken up under Multi-sectoral Development Programme.

- (ii) **Scheme for economic empowerment**— National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NMDFC) provides for concessional loans to minorities. Ministry has also launched "Seekho aur Kamao (Learn & Earn)" for placement linked skill development of minorities in the year 2013-14. The scheme envisages a minimum of 75% employment of trained minority youth and out of them 50% in organized sector. A new Scheme 'Upgradation of Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD)' has also been approved for implementation. The scheme aims at capacity building of minority artists and craftsmen including lesser known artists/craftsmen.
- (iii) **Scheme for area development**— Multi-sectoral Development Programme (MsDP) launched in 2008-09, is the flagship programme of the Ministry to address the development deficits by creating socio-economic infrastructure and providing basic amenities in identified minority concentration areas. Digital literacy under Cybergram as one of the components of the scheme is also being implemented.
- (iv) **Scheme for women empowerment**— Ministry started "Nai Roshni", an exclusive Leadership Development Programme for Minority Women during 2012-13. The scheme aims to empower and instill confidence among minority women by providing knowledge, tools and techniques for interacting with Government systems, Banks and other institutions.

#### Interest subsidy on loan on overseas study

†1438. SHRI LAL SINH VADODIA: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

— (a) — whether it is a fact that Government proposes to pay interest for the loans up  
† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.