

of roads, footpaths and street-lighting, and burial and cremation grounds, etc. In order to ensure proper utilization of these funds and achieve convergence with other programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the Ministry has facilitated preparation of State guidelines for Gram Panchayat level development plans.

The scheme of RGPSA which is being implemented by this Ministry supports States/UTs in developing and empowering their Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Under RGPSA, financial assistance has been provided to States for engaging administrative and technical staff, construction of Gram Panchayat Bhawans, training and creation of training infrastructure for Elected Representatives and functionaries of Panchayats etc. While the Constitution leaves it to the States to devolve powers to Panchayats, Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has encouraged and supported States in empowering Panchayats, including awarding States that have devolved most powers to Panchayats.

Pace of construction and repair of highways

†*86. SHRI NARESH AGRAWAL: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the pace of construction and repair of highways is very slow as compared to the past;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) if not, the names of highways being constructed and repaired at present along with the status of their progress?

THE MINISTER OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI NITIN JAIRAM GADKARI): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The pace of construction and repair of highways is more than 16 km per day which is comparable with the past. At present, About 1050 numbers of Development projects are on-going for improvement/construction covering a length of 31944 km of various National Highways of the country out of 98973 km of total length of National Highways in the country. The remaining length of National Highways are being repaired and maintained in the traffic worthy condition subject to availability of funds and *inter-se* priority.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.