

(d) In order to address the issues relating to hunger and malnutrition, Government has taken a number of steps to ensure food and nutritional security of the people particularly women, children and those below the poverty line. The initiatives taken include providing foodgrains at highly subsidized prices under the Targeted Public Distribution System/ National Food Security Act, implementing schemes such as Mid-Day Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), 'Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG)-Sabla', Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) and so on. Besides, the Food and Nutrition Board of the Ministry of WCD, through its 43 regional field units, is engaged in conducting training programmes in nutrition and generating awareness regarding importance of healthy balanced diets especially through the use of locally available foods, mass awareness campaigns and use of electronic and print media.

Special category status to Bihar

†1678. SHRIMATI KAHKASHAN PERWEEN: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government proposes to confer the Special Category Status to Bihar; and
- (b) if so, by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (RAOINDERJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) Special Category Status for plan assistance has been granted in the past by the National Development Council (NDC) to some States that are characterized by a number of features necessitating special consideration. These feature: include; (i) hilly and difficult terrain (ii) low population density and / or sizeable share of tribal population (iii) strategic location along borders with neighbouring countries (iv) economic and infrastructural backwardness and (v) non-viable nature of state finances. Earlier the request of Bihar for Special Category Status was considered by an Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) which submitted its Report on 30th March, 2012. The IMG came to a finding that based on existing NDC criteria the case for Special Category Status for Bihar is not made out. There is no proposal to modify the criteria for grant of Special Category Status to States.

Identification of special category States

1679. SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI: Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether, with the setting up of NITI Aayog in place of Planning Commission, the concept of identifying Special Category States has been given up;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.