

(b) whether it is also a fact that his Ministry has conducted the tests in March, 2004; and

(c) if so, the results of the tests so conducted?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As a part of the research and development activity in this new area, investigative studies and tests are being carried out on a regular basis. The test results are satisfactory. These tests form part of a step-by-step approach to better understand the various parameters in this new area.

Unspent MPLAD Fund

1024. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the unspent amount of MP Local Area Development (MPLAD) Fund has reached to staggering amount of Rs. 2,352 crore;

(b) if so, whether the Ministry is planning to give regular details of non-utilisation of funds in each session of Parliament; and

(c) if so, the details of how it would be done?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES):

(a) Yes, Sir. As on 9th June, 2004, the unspent amount of MPLADS Fund was Rs. 2352 crore.

(b) and (c) It has been decided that each Member of Parliament would be provided periodically the details of release of funds, its utilization, unspent balance and the physical progress of the works three times in a year during the Parliament Session.

Health Facilities in West Bengal

1025. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether food, health, health care and water facilities have not

reached people in the remote areas like Amlashol in Midnapore (West Bengal) where starvation deaths have been reported in June, 2004; and

(b) the measures taken to alleviate rural distress on a national level?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES):

(a) and (b)

Food and Nutrition

The Government has implemented a poverty alleviation scheme at the national level, namely, Sampoorna Gramin Rojgar Yojana with the objective of providing additional wage employment in all rural areas and thereby providing food security and to improve nutritional levels. During 2004-05 for West Midnapore (where Amlasol is located), Central share of Rs. 1091.15 lakhs, as first instalment, has been released. 15173 tonnes of food grains have been authorized to West Midnapore District. During the previous year (2003-04) the off take under the Targeted Public Distribution System was 17.35 lakh tonnes for West Bengal.

Drinking Water Supply

As per the assessment of coverage of habitations made in 1999 and subsequent coverage reported by the Government of West Bengal, all the rural habitations in West Bengal are fully covered with drinking water facilities.

Health and Family Welfare

For West Midnapore Rs. 307 lakh have been provided in the Annual Plan (2003-04) for Health and Family Welfare sector. Various disease control programmes are in operation. Under the National Leprosy Eradication Programme, free Leprosy diagnostic and Treatment services have been made available at all Primary Health Centres and Government Health Institutions. National Programme for Control of Blindness is in operation. With an objective to achieve a cure rate of 85% of new sputum positive cases and to detect 70% of such cases the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme is being implemented in entire West

Bengal and the treatment success rate had been 86%. The treatment success rate in case of West Midnapore had been 85%.

Increasing of MPLAD Fund

1026. SHRI LALITBHAI MEHTA: Will the Minister of STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry are considering the proposal in increase the amount of rupees two crores under MPLAD;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The budgetary provision under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme for the current financial year (2004-05) is at the rate of Rs. 2 crore per MP.

ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): I wish to submit that for the election of the Deputy Chairman, I have been in consultations with my colleagues in the National Democratic Alliance as also others. I do not wish to go into all the reasoning and persuasion that have prompted our valued colleagues take the step that we had. Nevertheless, it is our collective and considered view that when a new beginning in the management of the House or in the stewardship of the House is to be made, then it would be advisable, preferable indeed, that the new beginning was unopposed. Accordingly, I had requested my colleagues, particularly of Shiv Sena, and the candidate who wanted to contest for very good reasons, to withdraw. I had also then requested the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to share our request and he had very kindly and graciously consented to be with us in a meeting and, upon our joint request, we had decided that the election of the Deputy Chairman to the Rajya Sabha be unopposed. And, I accordingly, request the House to elect Shri Rahman Khan as Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha unopposed.