

**Introduction of Hindu epics at  
school/kindergarten level**

1978. SHRIRIPUN BORA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government proposes to introduce Hindu epic literature from the kindergarten and/or school level;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether Government also proposes to narrate and/or include other minority epics of the world related to the country thereof; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK'): (a) and (b) Literary pieces from Indian literature and epic tradition are introduced to children at various stages of learning for inculcating values and enriching their learning experiences. Content related to stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata have been incorporated in the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)'s Class VI History textbook: Our pasts-I. The content about Mahabharata has also been given in the form of textual as well as visual material in Class XII History textbook: Themes in Indian History Part-I.

(c) and (d) References about different religions of the world have been included in different history textbooks of NCERT.

**Quality of mid-day meals across the country**

1979. SHRI KANAKAMEDALA RAVINDRA KUMAR: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has put in place any stringent mechanism to ensure that quality food is served under Mid-day Meal Scheme in the schools across the country including the State of Andhra Pradesh;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government has come across any instances or received any complaints regarding serving of sub-standard food under Mid-day Meal Scheme; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and action taken in such cases?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK'): (a) and (b) The Government has adopted an elaborate monitoring mechanism at Central, State and District levels across the country including the State of Andhra Pradesh to ensure quality food is served to children under the Scheme. At national level, an Empowered Committee, headed by Minister of Human Resource Development and also a National level Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee (NSMC) as well as Programme Approval Board (PAB) monitor the scheme and suggest measures for its smooth and effective implementation. At the State level, a State level Steering-cum-Monitoring Committee headed by the State Chief Secretary and, at the District Level, a District Level Committee under the Chairpersonship of the senior-most Member of Parliament of Lok Sabha of the district monitor the implementation of the scheme.

At local level Gram Panchayats/Gram Sabhas, members of Village Education Committees (VECs), Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and the School Management Committees (SMCs) monitor the regularity and wholesomeness of the mid-day meal served to children, cleanliness in cooking and serving of the meal, timeliness in procurement of good quality ingredients, fuel, etc., implementation of variety in menu so as to make it attractive to children and ensuring social and gender equity on daily basis. In addition to directing States and UTs to carry out Social Audit, the Centre constitutes Joint Review Missions (JRM)s consisting of educational and nutritional experts, which review the scheme through field visits from time to time. The reports of JRM)s are shared with concerned States and UTs for taking suitable action on the findings.

The Government of India has also issued guidelines on quality, safety and hygiene in school level kitchens to all the States and UTs. These guidelines, *inter-alia*, provide for instructions to schools to procure Agmark quality and branded items for preparation of mid day meals, tasting of meals by 2-3 adult members of School Management Committee including at least one teacher before serving to children and to put in place a system of testing of food samples by accredited laboratories. Further, the MDM Rules, 2015 provide for mandatory testing of food samples by Government recognized laboratories to ensure that the meals meet nutritional standards and quality.

(c) and (d) A Total number of 16 complaints regarding substandard food quality have been reported during the last two years and current year. The year-wise details are as under:—

Complaints regarding Substandard Food Quality			TOTAL
2017	2018	2019	
6	6	4	16

The overall responsibility for providing cooked and nutritious Mid Day Meal to the eligible children lies with State Governments and UTs Administrations. Respective State Governments and UT Administrations were requested to furnish Action Taken Report (ATR) in the matter. As per Action Taken Reports (ATRs) received from States and UTs, action such as issuing warning against the official responsible, terminating the contract of concerned NGOs / Organisations, initiating criminal proceedings and imposing penalties against the defaulting persons/officials/organisations have been taken by the concerned State Governments and UT Administrations.

**Status of disbursement of Means-cum-Merit  
Scholarship**

1980. SHRI K. K. RAGESH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether disbursement of sanctioned Means-cum-Merit Scholarship under the National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS) is pending with Government;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor and the State-wise number of sanctioned Means-cum-Merit Scholarship of which disbursement remains pending;
- (c) whether any steps have been taken to clear the dues; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAMESH POKHRIYAL 'NISHANK'): (a) to (d) To avail of National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS) Scholarship, the eligible students from different States/UTs have to register themselves on National Scholarship Portal (NSP). The scholarships are sanctioned after due verification. Scholarships are disbursed by the State Bank of India (SBI), New Delhi, directly by electronic transfer into the accounts of students through Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

The scholarship amount sanctioned under NMMSS against online applications of the 2018-19 on NSP is under process for disbursement because of revision of the payment