

- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY): (a) to (c) No. There is no proposal to abolish NEET exam. Section 10 D of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 prescribes conducting of a uniform entrance examination namely National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) to all medical educational institutions at undergraduate and post-graduate level. The provisions of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 for conducting NEET shall apply across the country without any exemption to any State. NEET has resulted in ensuring better and minimum standards of medical education, curbing malpractices in medical admission, led to greater transparency and reduced the burden on prospective students of appearing in multiple entrance exams.

Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court *vide* order dated 11.04.2016 in R.P. 2159-2268 of 2013 in T.C. (c) 98 of 2013 had allowed conducting of NEET. Further, the apex court *vide* order dated 09.05.2016 also ruled that only NEET would enable students to get admission to MBBS or BDS studies.

In addition, in the draft National Medical Commission Bill, there was a provision for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). Some objections were made by some States against this provision before the Departmental related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare. The Standing Committee took cognizance of these observations and after due consideration recommended in its 109th Report on NMC Bill 2017 to conduct a uniform National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for admission to the undergraduate medical education in all medical institutions. Subsequently, the Parliament has deliberated upon the Bill and passed the NMC Act along with the provision of NEET and the Act has been enacted on 8th August, 2019.

#### **State Food Testing Laboratories**

2647. SHRI PRABHAKAR REDDY VEMIREDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) the States which have State Food Testing Laboratories (SFTL);
- (b) the States that have not set up SFTL and the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that Government has undertaken upgradation of SFTLs and if so, details thereof, with a particular reference to Andhra Pradesh; and

(d) how FSSAI can be compared with other food testing labs in the world and how SFTLs are compared with FSSAI and efforts being made to improve the quality of testing in our food testing labs?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI ASHWINI KUMAR CHOUBEY): (a) The following 29 States/UTs have State Food Testing Laboratories (SFTLs):

Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Tripura. Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal.

These laboratories are under network of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

(b) The following 7 States/UTs do not have State Food Testing Laboratories (SFTLs):

Andaman and Nicobar, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, Lakshadweep and Mizoram.

The setting up of a SFTL is subject to availability of resources and feasibility.

(c) A Central Sector Scheme for "Strengthening of Food Testing System in the Country including Provision of Mobile Food Testing Labs" has been rolled out by the FSSAI with an outlay of ₹481.95 crore under which 42 state food laboratories would *inter-alia*, be upgraded (atleast one in each State/UT and two in larger States) with state of the art analytical equipment including establishment of new food laboratories in North Eastern (NE) States, subject to readiness of the State Governments. So far, a total of 38 food laboratories of 29 States/UTs have been taken up for upgradation and a total grant of ₹280.19 crore has been released. This includes release of ₹0.50 crore to Regional Public Health Laboratory, Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

FSSAI has a provision in its Central Sector Scheme to provide grant-in-aid for setting up of new food laboratories in North-Eastern States subject to readiness of State Governments.

(d) FSSAI recognises and notifies primary food testing laboratories under Section 43 (1) of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act, 2006. It also recognises and notifies referral (appellate) labs under Section 43(2) of the said Act. At present, a total of 187 primary food testing labs and 18 referral labs have been notified under these Sections. In addition, there are 59 State food testing labs which are notified under transition provision under Section 98 of the FSS Act. FSSAI recognises and notifies only those food testing laboratories which are compliant to ISO 17025, which is an international standard for accreditation of testing laboratories.

For improvement in the quality of testing, FSSAI is strengthening State/UT Food Testing Laboratories by upgrading them with 3 high end equipments (*viz.*, ICP-MS, GC-MSMS and LC-MSMS)/basic equipments and by setting up of microbiological laboratory. As stated in reply to part (c), an amount of ₹280.19 crore has been released so far for the purpose. These equipments would enable SFTLs to analyze quality and safety parameters including pesticide residues, veterinary drug residues, contaminants, heavy metals, microbiological contamination in food products etc. and enable them to obtain accreditation from National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).

Further, FSSAI under its Capacity Building initiative has conducted 8 NABL Awareness Training programs across the country for laboratory personnel/food analysts of SFTLs to acquaint them of the process of obtaining NABL Accreditation.

#### **Deaths of under-five children from pneumonia**

2648. SHRI R. VAITHILINGAM: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the proportion of children receiving important treatments as compared to a number of other countries remain below targets in India;

(b) whether it is also a fact that pneumonia killed more than 1,27,000 children under five in 2018;

(c) whether India is expected to reach the 2025 Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea target in 2026; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?