

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION No.3484
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.03.2021

WELFARE OF TRIBAL STUDENTS IN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

3484 DR. L. HANUMANTHAIAH:

Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government is aware of persistent media reports of substandard education and food, sexual assault, and deaths, reported in Government-run residential schools for tribals;
- (b) whether Government maintains data on the same, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government is aware that residential schools for tribal students have been used to forcefully assimilate indigenous tribal students in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and Australia; and
- (d) whether Government has taken any steps to learn from the failures of this model in these countries or reconsider the model?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRIBAL AFFAIRS
(SMT RENUKA SINGH SARUTA)

(a) and (b) Ministry of Tribal Affairs does not have any official information regarding substandard education and food, sexual assault, and deaths in Government-run residential schools for tribals.

Presently, Ministry is funding two schemes of Government run residential schools for tribal students, viz. (i) Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) and (ii) Construction of Ashram School. Under the scheme of Ashram School, only construction grant in cost sharing ratio basis is released to the State Government for construction of such schools. So far, this Ministry has funded 1205 number of Ashram Schools across the country for quality education of ST children. Recurring grants for these schools are released by the concerned State Government and all administrative management, academic issues including food, education and safety/security are being taken care of by the concerned State Government.

Under the scheme of EMRS, funds are released by this Ministry for construction, upgradation of schools and also recurring expenditure of all the students studying in class VI to XII. The Government is committed to provide quality education to the tribal students. In this endeavour, the recurring costs per student per annum have been substantially increased from Rs. 42,000 in 2017-18 to Rs. 61,500 in 2018-19 and subsequently to Rs. 1,09,000 in 2019-20 to provide best quality facilities to the students. EMRSs have become an island of excellence in the remote tribal hinterlands attracting large number of tribal children. Through extra classes, special coaching, educational tours, exposure visits, special camps, sports camps students have been encouraged to dream high and motivated to achieve as well. Students have done exceptionally well in academics. Regular monitoring is being done through the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) and the State/UT EMRS Society at the State Level to ensure that all the facilities as envisaged in the scheme including nutritious food, quality education, secure environment etc. is provided to the students.

(c) and (d) Ministry does not have any official information regarding forceful assimilation of indigenous tribal students in some countries. The authenticity of media reports on this account if any is not verifiable.

As per the policy of Government, EMRSs have been established since 1998 in remote tribal locations to provide quality education to tribals in their vicinity. Furthering this, the Government revamped the scheme to ensure that every block with 50% or more ST population and 20,000 or more tribal persons has an EMRS. EMRSs have always been located close to the tribal habitations to ensure that the students remain connected to their roots and do not get disconnected from their identity and culture. The design of the schools has also been ensured in a manner to reflect the vibrant culture of the tribal communities. Moreover, the rationale behind a campus with around 15 acres land was to provide the students an open and free environment. In order to ensure that students remain connected to their identity and culture, establishment of mini-museums have been encouraged in the schools. During 2020-21, the school uniform for the EMRS students designed by National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi is based on the basic premise of reflection of the vibrant culture of the tribals and their closeness to nature.
