

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.1933
TO BE ANSWERED ON 15.12.2021**

Re-opening of schools

1933 Shri Bhaskar Rao Nekkanti:

Will the Minister of Education be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of systematic re-opening of schools across the country and protocols to be followed by schools thereto;
- (b) the details of measures undertaken and planned by Government to ensure complete vaccination of all students, teachers and allied staff at the earliest;
- (c) whether Government has taken into consideration the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children and Youth titled 'Plans for Bridging the Learning Gap caused due to School Lockdown'; and
- (d) if so, the steps taken by Government with regard to the various suggestions/recommendations mentioned in the said report?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SMT. ANNPURNA DEVI)**

(a) Education being in the concurrent list of the Constitution and majority of the schools are under the domain of respective State and UT Governments. The opening and closing of schools are within the purview of State Governments and UT Administrations. Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) vide their order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) dated 30th September, 2020 has stated that State/UT Governments may take a decision in respect of re-opening of schools, after 15th October, 2020, in a graded manner, the decision shall be taken in consultation with the respective school/institution management, based on their assessment of the situation. The students may attend schools/institutions only with the written consent of parents. Online /distance learning shall continue to be the preferred mode of teaching and shall be encouraged. Further, the Department of School Education and Literacy has issued detailed SOP/guidelines regarding health and safety precautions for reopening of schools after issue of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) guidelines for unlock-5, on 5th October, 2020. These guidelines can be accessed at:
https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/SOP_Guidelines_for_reopening_schools_0.pdf

(b) Ministry of Home Affairs, vide its order dated 29th April, 2021 has circulated the advisory issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the containment of COVID-19 in the country. As per the advisory "100 % vaccination for the eligible age-groups shall be undertaken duly creating additional vaccination centers and optimal capacity utilization of existing Centers".

A National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEFVAC) has been established by Government of India which provides guidance on all aspects of COVID-19 vaccination including prioritization of population groups. Effective from 1st May 2021, all citizens of the country above the age 18 years are eligible for free vaccination in the Government vaccination centre and those who can afford may avail the services at the private vaccination centre. Therefore, all the students above the age of 18 years are eligible for vaccination against COVID -19. Further, all the States/UTs Government were requested to encourage both teaching and non-teaching staff of schools for getting themselves vaccinated for containment of COVID-19 in the country and were requested to update the Status of vaccinated school staffs to this Department.

(c) & (d) Yes, on the suggestion/recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, the Department advised the States/UTs to conduct survey of children with access and without access to digital devices. Accordingly, various initiatives were taken by the Ministry of Education, States and Union Territories to mitigate the effect of the Covid pandemic on school education. A detailed report on these initiatives may be seen at the website of Education Ministry at following link:

https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/update/covid_initiatives.pdf

A comprehensive initiative called PM eVIDYA has been initiated which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The initiative includes, where work is in progress:

- DIKSHA the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in states/UTs: and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all grades (one nation, one digital platform)
- One earmarked Swayam Prabha TV channel per class from 1 to 12 (one class, one channel)
- Extensive use of Radio, Community radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani
- Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube

Where the digital facility (mobile device/ DTH television) is not available, Ministry of Education has taken many initiatives like Community Radio Stations and a podcast called Shiksha Vani of CBSE, Textbooks, worksheet supplied to residence of learners, Handbook on 21st Century Skills and community/mohalla classes are being organized. Innovation Funds of the Department are used to set up mobile school, virtual studios, virtual class rooms in schools, Continuous Learning Plan (CLP) for States/UTs has been initiated in all States/UTs, pre-loaded tablets under Samagra Shiksha in various states and UTs are effectively used in remote/rural areas where online classes are difficult. Further in order to provide continuous professional development opportunities to the teachers at the elementary level, this Department launched the NISHTHA online training programme using DIKSHA platform in October 2020. NISHTHA online for elementary level covered 18 modules in 11 languages, including use of ICT in teaching-learning.
