

Nadu has been classified as a backward class community in the Mandal List;

(b) whether they have represented that they should now be classified as most backward class; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) At present Government does not propose to classify any community as most backward.

Elections to Panchayati Raj

146. SHRI COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY :
SHRI P.S. GHATOWAR :

Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the elections to Panchayati Raj bodies are held regularly in all the States;

(b) if not, the reasons for not holding elections regularly;

(c) whether some States have not given necessary financial and administrative powers to Panchayati Raj bodies;

(d) if so, the names of such States together with reasons therefor;

(e) whether the Government propose to strengthen the Panchayati Raj institutions throughout the country; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) and (b) Yes, sir in all States and Union Territories where the Constitution 73rd Amendment applies, but with the following exceptions and reasons :

(i) Arunachal Pradesh: Elections have not been held in the State as the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Bill has not received the assent of the President.

(ii) Bihar : Panchayat elections have not been held in the State as certain provisions in the Bihar Panchayati Raj Act have been challenged and the matter is to be decided by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

(iii) Assam : Panchayat Elections have not been held after the expiry of the term of

the Panchayats in October, 1997. The State Government has been citing several reasons.

(iv) Pondicherry : Elections were not held in the UT, as the validity of certain provisions in the Pondicherry Panchayati Raj Act was challenged. The judgement of the Chennai High Court has become available and the UT Administration is examining its implications.

(c) and (d) All the States where Panchayats are in position have devolved financial and administrative powers upon the Panchayats, but in widely varying degrees. States other than Kerala and Madhya Pradesh have not devolved adequate powers upon Panchayats. The State Governments have been urged to devolve adequate financial and administrative powers upon the Panchayat to enable them function as institutions of self government.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. The Government has set up a Task Force to Study the Structure & Functioning of Panchayats. Among other things, the Task Force is required to recommend measures for strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions throughout the country.

[Translation]

Tomb of Mirza Ghalib

147. SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the tomb of the renowned Indian Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib in Capital is in dilapidated condition; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to renovate the same?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) Mirza Ghalib's tomb is maintained by Anjuman Taraqi Urdu Hindi and the Ghalib Academy. It is not in a dilapidated condition.

(b) Question does not arise.

[English]

Measures for Empowerment of SC/ST

148. SHRI R.S. GAVAI : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to