GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PLANNING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2075
ANSWERED ON:14.03.2007
DEPRIVATION INDEX FORMULA
Adsul Shri Anandrao Vithoba;Mondal Shri Abu Ayes;Scindia Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao

Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Knowledge Commission has recommended the adoption of a Deprivation Index Formula to assess the backwardness of students, to quantify deprivation of various kinds to introduce affirmative action and make higher education as inclusive as possible;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Deprivation Index Formula was intended to assess deprivation on various counts including economic backwardness and poverty apart from mere caste and community backwardness;

(d) if so, the decision of the Government in this regard;

(e) whether there is any proposal to set up an Independent Regulatory body to monitor standards and degrees; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN)

(a) to (c): The National Knowledge Commission in its Recommendations for Higher education − Section VII-ACCESS has mentioned that `a major aim of the higher education system must be to ensure that access to education for economically and historically socially underprivileged students is enhanced in a substantially more effective manner.

Reservation are essential but they are only a part, and one form, of affirmative action.

Disparities in educational attainments are related to caste and social groups, but are also strongly related to other indicators such as income, gender, region and place of residence. Therefore, there is a need to develop a meaningful and comprehensive framework that would account for the multi-dimensionality of differences that still persist. For example, a deprivation index could be used to provide weighted scores to students and the cumulative score could be used to supplement a student`s school examination score. After adding the score from the deprivation index, all students could compete for admissions.

The indicators need to be easily identifiable and verifiable for the system to work effectively. They should cover the different types of disadvantages that a student could face at the school level, and while applying for admissions to higher education. This system serves the dual purpose of considering various disadvantages and ensuring that a reserved category student who has otherwise enjoyed other benefits does not get great preference at the time of admissions.

Illustrative indicators of backwardness that need to be measured by such an index could include social background covering caste (keeping in view regional variations), religion and gender, family education history, family income, type of school distinguishing between government and private schools and between schools from different locations, the medium of instruction, place of residence distinguishing between urban and rural areas and accounting for regional deprivation by sorting districts along an index of infrastructure or access to social benefits and physical disability.`

The above paras indicate that the proposed deprivation index is intended to be a comprehensive index covering different types of disadvantages giving weightage to various counts like economic backwardness/poverty caste and community backwardness, social indicators such as family education history, place of residence, type of school attended physical disability etc.

(d), (e) and (f): The recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission pertaining to Higher Education including the proposal to set up an Independent Regulatory Authority have been sent to the concerned Ministries for their comments.