

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3342
ANSWERED ON:12.02.2014
DISCRIMINATION IN MID DAY MEAL SCHEME
Rawat Shri Ashok Kumar

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether instances of students not availing the mid day meals at some places because of caste factor have come to the notice of the Government;
- (b) if so, the details of such instances reported during 2012 and 2013; and
- (c) the remedial measures taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (Dr. SHASHI THAROOR)

(a) & (b): Yes, Madam. The half yearly report for the period 1st October 2011 to 31st March 2012 of Monitoring Institutes (MIs) for Odisha, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh reported cases of children not taking their mid-day meal because of caste factors. Based on the report of the Monitoring Institutes, a Central team was deputed to the said States. The Central team, after its field visit, found that there was a case of caste discrimination in Amthapada PUPS, Boudh block of District Boudh, Odisha. This was brought to the notice of State Government of Odisha, who took immediate action and suspended the Headmaster of the school. However, the Central teams did not find any case of caste discrimination in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Subsequently, on the directions of the Parliamentary Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Monitoring Institutes viz. Naba Krishna Chaudhury Centre for Development Studies and Dr. P.M. Institute of Advanced Study in Education were deputed to carry out a detailed investigation in the coastal districts of Odisha. They have reported that there is no caste discrimination in schools under the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. The Central teams were also sent to five coastal districts (Puri, Jagatsingpur, Baleswar, Khordha, Bhadrak) in Odisha from 11-15 November, 2013 to investigate the cases of untouchability, to see the gravity of the situation and to suggest ways and means to tackle the malaise. The teams visited 76 schools in the above districts but could not come across a single case of discrimination in the visited schools.

(c): The States / UTs have formed Committees / Samities with members from Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes to inspect the preparation and distribution of food. Similarly, priority is given to these communities in the recruitment of cook-cum-helpers. At present, more than 36% cook-cum-helpers are from the SC and the ST communities.

The States / UTs have been advised that the nodal officer or nodal agency in the States should make regular field visits and conduct surprise inspections every month for any incidents of untouchability and submit the report to the State Government/UT Administration. They have further been requested to advise the schools to hold periodic interactive sessions on untouchability, particularly its fall out and impact on the minds of the tender aged children.

The District Vigilance and Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of senior most MP of the district also monitors the Mid Day Meal Scheme on a quarterly basis including cases of caste discrimination if any.

The MDM guidelines lay down that on an average 25% of schools should be inspected every quarter by State Government officers belonging to different departments at District, Sub-Division, Tehsil/Taluka, block and other suitable levels. In addition, the Joint Review Mission consisting of representatives of Central Government, State Government, UNICEF and Supreme Court Commissionerate, also help in detecting the malaise. Similarly, 41 independent Monitoring Institutions such as IIT Chennai and Visva-Bharati etc. also monitor this aspect.