

lands through afforestation including :

- in-situ soil and moisture conservation
- plantation
- maintenance of plantation
- protection

The force consists of 300 ex-servicemen under the command of Territorial Army and the Core Group of 15 Army/Territorial Army personnel. The Force has been deployed specifically for the development of the ravines of Chambal in the State of Madhya Pradesh with a target of development of 1170 hectares area with the financial outlay of about 3.81 crores. No such Wastelands Development Task Force has been constituted in any other State/Union Territory.

Reserved Fund of JRY for SC/ST

*328. SHRI ARJUN SETHI : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the schemes of Community Irrigation Projects and Water Harvesting Structures have been implemented by some of the States in lieu of Million Wells scheme and 22.5 per cent of funds from Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) reserved for the direct benefits of SCs/STs in individual beneficiary schemes;

(b) if so, the details thereof, State-wise ;

(c) whether the Government are aware that the Central guidelines on rights over the possession of land in the name of SC/ST beneficiaries are being violated in revenue districts of Balasore and Bhadrak of Orissa; and

(d) if so, the remedial steps proposed to be taken to set the matter right ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) and (b) The funds under the Million Wells Scheme (MWS) which is primarily intended for open irrigation wells can also be utilised for the other schemes of minor irrigation like irrigation tanks, water harvesting structures and also for the development of lands belonging to small and marginal farmers, if construction of wells is not feasible due to geological factors. At least two-thirds of the funds utilised under the scheme in any year are to be spent on poor small and marginal farmers belonging to SCs and STs. Similarly under Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), 22.5% of the funds earmarked at all three levels of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) i.e. Zilla Parishad /DRDA, Intermediate Panchayat and Village Panchayat must be spent on individual beneficiary schemes for SCs and STs. These guidelines have generally been followed and no major deviation has been reported. The State-wise information, however, is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) and (d) Information is being collected from State Government of Orissa and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Air Link to Buddha Pilgrimage Centres

*329. SHRI HARI KEWAL PRASAD : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether any scheme for connecting Buddha Pilgrimage Centres by air services in order to boost tourism in the country is under consideration of the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether there is also a scheme for connecting Saarnath, Kushinagar and Lumbini in Uttar Pradesh by air services; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) No, Sir. However, the needs of the pilgrims visiting Saarnath, Kushinagar and Lumbini (Nepal) are being met by Varanasi Airport which is in close proximity to these places and connected with Mumbai, Delhi, Agra, Khajuraho, Kathmandu and Lucknow.

[English]

Sanitation Programme

*330. SHRI MADHAV RAO PATIL :
SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL :

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

(a) whether any centrally sponsored rural sanitation programme for construction of individual latrine is being undertaken in the country;

(b) if so, the per unit cost prescribed in the scheme alongwith the Central share to be made available to State Governments;

(c) whether due to increase in the cost of building material the State Governments are facing difficulty in the construction of such latrines at the rate of prescribed limit;

(d) if so, whether the State Governments particularly Maharashtra Government have written to the Union Government to raise the prescribed per unit cost limit and also to raise the Central share;

- (e) if so, the details thereof ; and
 (f) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI BABAGOUDA PATIL) : (a) to (f) A Centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP) has been in operation in the country since 1986. The programme aims to :

(a) inter-alia accelerate the coverage of rural population below the poverty line with sanitation facilities, to generate felt need to, awareness generation, etc. and to eradicate manual scavenging. In addition to the construction of individual sanitation latrines with subsidy for below poverty households, the programme component also includes :

- (a) conversion of dry latrines into low cost sanitary latrines,
 (b) construction of village sanitary complexes for women,
 (c) setting up of sanitary marts, and
 (d) campaigns for awareness generation, etc.

As per guidelines, a maximum unit cost of Rs. 2500 has been fixed. 80% of the unit cost is subsidy, equally contributed by the Government of India and the State Government. 20% of the unit cost is to be borne by the beneficiaries.

Almost all the States are implementing the programme as per national norms. Only a few States have expressed their difficulty in the construction of latrines within the prescribed cost ceiling.

Though Maharashtra had represented, it was informed to them, based on the technological options developed by the Ministry, the existing cost norms were found to be more than sufficient to meet the requirements. The State Government has also been apprised the wide range of low-cost, appropriate technological options that could help in reducing the per unit costs, and any further enhancement of the unit cost would reduce the extent of physical coverage and that costs in excess of Rs. 2500/- should be borne by the beneficiary.

Gauge Conversion

*331. SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

- (a) the total length of metre gauge in the country at present ;
 (b) the names of places in Maharashtra and other States having metre gauge railway lines with state-wise breakup;
 (c) whether the Government propose to convert

these metre gauge lines into broad gauge under the phased programme; and

- (d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) The total length of metre gauge (route kilometre) in the country as on 31.3.1997 (latest available) is 17,044 Kms.

(b) The State-wise details of places having metre gauge lines are not maintained. However, the State-wise breakup of metre gauge lines is given below :

S.No.	State/Union Territory	Length of M.G. lines (Route Kms.)
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1015
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	1
3.	Assam	1903
4.	Bihar	1427
5.	Delhi	22
6.	Gujarat	2532
7.	Haryana	322
8.	Karnataka	717
9.	Kerala	117
10.	Madhya Pradesh	500
11.	Maharashtra	542
12.	Manipur	1
13.	Mizoram	1
14.	Nagaland	13
15.	Rajasthan	2916
16.	Tamil Nadu	2477
17.	Tripura	45
18.	Uttar Pradesh	2019
19.	West Bengal	463

Union Territories

1.	Pondicherry	11
Total		17044

(The remaining States/Union Territories have no metre gauge railway line.)

(c) and (d) There is no plan to convert all the MG lines to BG. However, some of these lines have been identified for conversion to BG in the action plan, under Project Unigauge taken up by the Railways. Out of these, some lines have already been included in the budget and the works are in progress. The details of lines included in the action plan and those on which work is in progress are as under :