

THE MINISTER OF POWER (SHRI P.R. KUMARA-MANGALAM) : (a) to (d) Under Section 17(1) of the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, 1998, there is a provision that the State Government may, if it deems fit, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish for the purposes of this Act, a Commission for the State to be known as the (name of the State) Electricity Regulatory Commission. Hence setting up of State Electricity Regulatory Commission (SERC) is at the discretion of individual State Governments. So far the State Governments of Orissa & Haryana have set up SERCs under their respective State Power Sector Reform Acts.

[English]

#### Drop-Out

3460. SHRI ARJUN SETHI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the measures being taken by the Government to reduce the drop outs in Class-I to VII amongst the rural poor students;

(b) whether the Government propose to provide financial and other incentives to check it; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) to (c) Government have taken a number of measures to reduce dropout rates. These include Micro-planning, Community Mobilisation, improvement of school infrastructure through Operation Blackboard Scheme, incentives for girls and SC/ST students such as free text books, uniforms and attendance scholarships, establishing and strengthening of institutions of teacher education, introduction of Minimum Levels of Learning and residential schools and hostels for SC/ST boys and girls.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), which is being implemented in 149 districts, have designed contextually relevant strategies to ensure better participation and retention of children at primary level.

#### Japanese Collaboration in Road/Bridges

3461. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have formulated any scheme to induce latest Japanese knowhow for rehabilitation of road bridges in the country;

(b) if so, whether a new collaborative programme has been chalked out between the Ministry of Surface Transport and Japanese International Co-operation Agency in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (DR. DEBENDRA PRAHDAN) : (a) to (c) Upgradation of technology in the highway sector including that in the field of rehabilitation of road bridges is a continuous process. As a part of this process, two Japanese experts visited India under grants-in-aid programme of Japan International Cooperation Agency in November 1998. For wider dissemination of their knowledge and experience, a seminar on "Condition Survey and Rehabilitation of Road Bridges" was organised in New Delhi on 14th November, 1998.

[Translation]

#### Research Centre for Fossils

3462. SHRI SOM MARANDI : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether hills of Rajmahal in Bihar are famous for fossils;

(b) if so, whether any survey and research of this area has been undertaken by various scientists;

(c) if so, whether the Government contemplate to set up a research centre regarding fossils in Rajmahal;

(d) if so, the time by which it is likely to be set up; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Rajmahal hills in Bihar are known for the occurrence of Upper Gondwana plant fossils. The pioneering work on the survey of fossils in this area has been undertaken by Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Birbal Sahani Institute of Palaeobotany (BSIP). This work started around 1863 and is still continuing. The results have been published from time to time.

(c) to (e) There are no plans to set up a research centre regarding fossils in Rajmahal as the needful is being done adequately by GSI and BSIP.

#### Technical Education

3463. SHRI RAMSHAKAL : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any policy for the development of technical education;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the State-wise break-up of funds spent in this regard during 1996-97; and

(d) the reasons for not making any allocations for Uttar Pradesh in this regard ?