

(d) If so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) No student has gone to USSR for Medical and Engineering studies during 1991 under the Cultural Exchange Programmes administered by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

(b) No, Sir. They are not working under the supervision of the Government.

(c) and (d). The Government of India have not approved the activities of any private agencies for sending the students to the USSR. If any specific case of violation of Indian laws by these agencies comes to the notice of law enforcing agencies, suitable action will be taken against them.

[English]

Price of School Books

1948. SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the steep increase in the prices of school books and note books in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to bring down these prices?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The increase in the prices of school textbooks is mainly due to increase in the

cost of paper which is the main constituent of the cost of production and the increase in the printing rates.

(c) The following steps are being taken by the NCERT to contain the prices of textbooks:

- i) To continue to price the NCERT textbooks on a no-profit no loss basis.
- ii) Not to price textbooks for classes I-VIII beyond Rs. 15/- and to absorb the losses, if any.
- iii) To fix price of Urdu version NCERT textbooks at par with the corresponding English or Hindi version, whichever is lower and to absorb the losses, if any.

Merging of areas of SER with SCR

1949. SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to merge some of the areas of South-Eastern Railway with South-Central Railway (Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts in Andhra Pradesh as a result of creation of new zones; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAY (SHRI MALIKARJUN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.