

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-1171
ANSWERED ON –29/07/2026

Access to quality education

1171. Shri Sant Balbir Singh:

Will the Minister of EDUCATION be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps being taken by Government to ensure universal access to quality education, particularly in rural and underserved areas of the country specifically in the State of Punjab;
- (b) whether Government has any mechanism to ensure that education is accessible to children with disabilities and the manner in which schools are being made more inclusive;
- (c) the manner in which Government is addressing the challenges of illiteracy in certain areas, especially in tribal and marginalized communities; and
- (d) the measures being taken by Government to bridge the gap in educational access between urban and rural areas?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
(SHRI JAYANT CHAUDHARY)

(a): The Department of School Education & Literacy is implementing an integrated scheme for school education - Samagra Shiksha, which covers the entire gamut from pre-school to class XII. The scheme is aligned with NEP 2020 to ensure that all children have access to quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment which should take care of their diverse background, multilingual needs, different academic abilities and make them active participants in the learning process.

Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to States and UTs for undertaking various activities for providing universal access to holistic and qualitative school education including opening/strengthening of new schools upto senior secondary level, construction of school buildings & additional classrooms, development/strengthening of school infrastructure in border areas under Vibrant Village Programme through the convergence of existing scheme of DOSEL, setting up, construction of hostels for PVTGs under PM-JANMAN, setting up of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Avasiya Vidyalayas, construction of hostels under Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan for unsaturated ST population, free uniforms to eligible children and free text books at elementary level, transport allowance and undertaking enrolment

& retention drives. Special training for age-appropriate admission of out of school children and residential as well as non-residential training for older children, seasonal hostels / residential camps, special training centers at worksites, transport/ escort facility etc. are also supported to bring out of school children to the formal schooling system. Support is also provided for skill education, integrated science labs/math.

PM eVidya unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education across the country under the aegis of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. PM eVidya includes 200 DTH TV Channels and 400 Radio channels to provide supplementary education as per requirement in various Indian languages for classes 1-12.

Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) is a centrally sponsored scheme which aims to strengthen more than 14,500 schools from amongst the existing schools managed by Central Government/State/UT Government/local bodies. These PM SHRI schools are to showcase all the initiatives of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, be the exemplar schools, and also offer benchmarking leadership to other schools in the neighbourhood.

Under the Scheme(s), annual plans are prepared by the respective States /UTs, including for rural and underserved areas, as per their priority and requirements. These annual plans are appraised and approved by the Project Approval Board (PAB) in the Department, in consultation with the respective State/UT, as per the programmatic and financial norms of the Scheme.

Accordingly, for 2026-27, under Samagra Shiksha, central share of ₹ 722.93 crore has been approved for the State of Punjab and under PM SHRI, central share of ₹ 140.10 crore for 356 PM SHRI Schools has been approved for the State of Punjab for providing qualitative and holistic education in the State.

Further, education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution and majority of the schools are under the administrative control of the respective State/UT Government.

(b): Inclusive Education component of Samagra Shiksha provides support to CwSN via specific student-oriented interventions such as identification and assessment camps, provision of aids, appliances and assistive devices, scribe, transportation and escort allowance support, Braille books and large print books, stipend for girls with special needs and teaching-learning materials etc. in order to appropriately address their unique educational requirements in general schools. Further, individualized support is also provided through therapeutic interventions at the block level. Samagra Shiksha also has provisions for creation of differently abled friendly infrastructure such as ramps with handrails and differently-abled friendly toilets for barrier free access in schools.

(c): The Government of India is implementing Centrally Sponsored Scheme called Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram, popularly known as ULLAS: Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society from 2022-23 to 2026-27. The scheme, aligned with NEP 2020

targets adults (aged 15 and above) who are not literate and focuses on rural areas, districts/blocks with large SC/ST/ population, educationally backward areas, women etc. The scheme is implemented in a hybrid mode, allowing States/UTs to adopt offline, online or blended approaches. The scheme is based on volunteerism to impart foundational literacy and numeracy. 9 States/ UTs (Ladakh, Mizoram, Tripura, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, A & N Islands, Chandigarh, Sikkim and Uttarakhand) have declared Full Literacy.

(d): The Central Government provides financial assistance to States/UTs under the Centrally Sponsored scheme - Samagra Shiksha for strengthening of existing government schools, including, creation and augmentation of infrastructure facilities like buildings, toilets for Boys/Girls/CWSN, drinking water, electricity and digital facilities based on Annual Work Plan & Budget (AWP&B) proposal prepared by them and gaps determined from Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) database. These plans are then appraised and approved by the Project Approval Board (PAB) in the Department of School Education and Literacy in consultation with the State/UT as per the programmatic and financial norms of the scheme, physical and financial progress of works sanctioned earlier and availability of budgetary resources.

The Department of School Education & Literacy, from time to time, through review meetings and PAB meetings, requests the State Governments and UT administrations to fill up infrastructure gaps.
