

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday, December 19, 1994/Agrahayana 28, 1916 (Saka)

*[The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock]*

[MR. SPEAKER, in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Deep Sea Fishing

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*161. SHRI MOHAN SINGH (DEORIA):
SHRI HARIBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the nationwide agitation by traditional fishermen on 23rd and 24th November, 1994;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the rationale behind allowing foreign deep sea vessels in Indian waters;

(d) whether the Government have received representations from traditional fishermen from all over the country, especially Gujarat and Kerala, demanding the cancellation of licences issued to foreign deep sea fishing vessels;

(e) if so, the details thereof;

(f) whether the Government propose to reconsider the Deep Sea fishing policy with a view to protect the interest of traditional fishermen; and

(g) if so, the details thereof?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI TARUN GOGOI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Expert Committee constituted by the Government in this respect has found that the operation of deep sea fishing vessels has not affected traditional fishermen adversely. However, the Government has decided not to process any more applications for deep sea fishing till the matter is reviewed.

(c) The rationale behind the new deep sea fishing policy is to harvest the unexploited fishery resources in the deep sea areas by transfer of technology, training of crew and for earning valuable foreign exchange.

(d) and (e). Yes, Sir. Representations requesting for cancellation of these licences have been received from associations of traditional fishermen from Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman & Diu etc.

(f) and (g). The Government has decided not to process any more applications for deep sea fishing till the matter is reviewed.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): Mr. Speaker, Sir, in reply to part (b) of the question, hon. Minister has stated that "operation of deep sea fishing vessels has not affected traditional fishermen adversely". But in this House itself, the hon. Minister informed us and had admitted last week only that due to unrestricted increase in the number of mechanised trawlers and increase in the quantity of fish caught by them has resulted in the reduction in the quantity of fish caught by the traditional fishermen. In a statement the hon. Minister has admitted that it has reduced the quantity of fish and adversely affected the plight of traditional fishermen but today he is saying that it has not affected the traditional fishermen at all. I would like to know the reasons of this contradictory statement. You had set up a committee of experts and had stated that the Government has accepted its recommendations. What are the salient features of that report and please state the recommendations which the Government has accepted.

[English]

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: In fact, there is a difference between deep sea fishing and trawler fishing. It is a fact that the increase in the number of mechanised trawlers has affected the plight of the traditional fishermen. It is not because of deep sea fishing. There are two areas. One is coastal area, as we call it and the other is deep sea area which is beyond 12 nautical miles. So, it is a fact that the increase in the number of mechanised boats has affected the traditional fishermen.

Then, as regards the recommendation of the expert committee, I would say that they mention about the regulation of both deep sea fishing and coastal area fishing. They are also insisting on the installation of an instrument in the deep sea vessel so that we can locate as to where the vessel is.

There is an allegation that deep-sea vessels are also encroaching upon the coastal areas.

Besides, they have recommended for training of our crew and for giving incentives for the traditional fishermen's cooperatives so that they can also go into deep sea areas.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): Mr. Speaker, Sir, fishermen and their organisations in Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa, Daman and Diu have obtained the licences from the Government of India for fishing by foreign mechanised trawlers. Multinational companies to which you are referring as foreign companies have also

been given licences. But the Government says that it has given licences to foreign companies for deep sea fishing in collaboration with Indian entrepreneurs and they are engaged in deep sea fishing. I would like to know from the hon. Minister that as to whether Government has taken any action on the representation given by our traditional fishermen who have asked for cancellation of the licences given to foreign companies as it is affecting their livelihood adversely.

[English]

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: I do not deal with the mechanised trawlers. These are dealt with by the State Governments. There are two different trawlers. One is the mechanised trawler. They exploit the fish resources in the coastal areas.

I deal with deep-sea fishing areas also. In fact, I have not given any licence to the foreigners. In fact, I have decided to phase out the foreign vessels. The foreign vessels were introduced in 1978 and 1979. According to the new deep-sea fishing policy, we are encouraging the Indian entrepreneurs to acquire the vessels. In fact, I gradually phased out the foreign vessels. I phased them out in the policy of 1981.

The policy of 1991 allowed the foreign vessels. I cancelled it. The policy framed in 1987 is continuing because of some legal constraints. I am going to phase out that also.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the time of appointing the expert committee, we, the Members of Parliament from coastal areas had made a request that we wanted to express our views before the committee. But unfortunately the committee did not oblige. I would like to know from the hon. Minister that the report of the above mentioned committees which you have accepted in toto will be laid on the Table of the House or not and whether a copy of the report will be made available to MP's belonging to coastal areas, so that they could know and comment on the implementation of recommendations of the committee.

[English]

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: In fact, I am not aware that the expert committee did not allow the MPs to appear before the Committee. Had this been brought to my notice, I would have insisted upon the expert committee to allow them to appear before the committee. I will supply all the copies to you also.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO: Sir, unfortunately, the answer is a little confusing. The fact of the matter is that deep-sea fishing is affecting the traditional fishermen. What the hon. Minister has stated is that deep-sea fishing and the mechanised trawlers are two different things. The mechanised trawlers are affecting the traditional fishermen. This is not true because with the introduction of these outward engines fitted on the country craft, they can go up to 15—28 kilometres inside the sea. It is exactly in this area that the new mechanised ships are also poaching.

So, unfortunately, the traditional fishermen have really been affected by giving licences to the multinationals.

Whether these are multinationals from abroad or from India, the deep-sea fishing is really affecting the fish wealth of the economic zone where the traditional fishermen are fishing.

Will the Minister categorically give an assurance to this House that in view of the opinion expressed by all the Members of this House, no more licences will be given and the licences which have already been given will be reconsidered?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: It is not that the deep-sea policy has affected them.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO: No, no...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: You first listen to me...*(Interruptions)* I am prepared to reply to you. I will give all the figures also. There are two types of crafts. There is a deep traditional craft which is 1:7 lakhs and above in number. About 34848 craft are mechanised. This is the fleet in the coastal area. My own area is having 34 vessels in the deep sea fishing. These vessels catch only two per cent. The mechanised boat catch 65 per cent. 33 per cent is by the traditional fishermen. Only two percent are caught in the deep sea.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO: They are using one single net which has got a diameter of 13 kilometers. This is what they are using. They are taking out the entire fishing fauna from this economic zone. This is a very dangerous thing and the answer is really misleading...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A. CHARLES: We want a discussion. We do not want statistics. Statistics will not satisfy the people of our country. The traditional fishermen are in agony.

MR. SPEAKER: I am not allowing Mr. Charles.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO: Unfortunately, the whole coastal belt and the entire fishermen are restless. The Minister is not taking into account the real problem which is affecting the fishermen.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, you have made the point.

SHRI A. CHARLES: Sir, the problems...

MR. SPEAKER: I am not allowing like this. This is a Question Hour. You know the rules.

SHRI A. CHARLES: Sir, I am asking the the questions.

MR. SPEAKER: You please sit down.

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: Sir, I am equally concerned about the traditional fishermen. In fact, we want to regulate it. But the regulation has to be done by the State Government. It is a mechanised boat which is allowed by the State Government.

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH: Sir, the deep sea fishing is really in deep trouble and it is in the deep trouble because of the policy.

MR. SPEAKER: One thing has to be clear to us: Do we have any control over deep sea fishing?

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH: Sir, I am aware of the limitations. The problem is that the Government is pursuing the policy of liberalisation and openness which has led to this kind of an encroachment. I congratulate the hon.

Minister for his statement that he is trying to freeze out all the licences and he will not permit new licences in this way.

Now, Sir, what I would like to know from the hon. Minister—he is a very good friend—whether the policy which he intends to pursue is cleared by the Ministry, the nodal Ministry which is pursuing this new Economic Policy, the Ministry of Finance, and whether he is getting cooperation from Tytlerji, the Minister of Surface Transport because Tytlerji is the real Minister who can help in this matter.

MR. SPEAKER: No, this is not a question on fishing in the Cabinet working.

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH: Sir, the problem is that in this Government one Minister does not know what is happening in the other Ministry. So, that is the real problem. You also face this problem in this House every day. The problem is whether those people, the traditional fishermen who are using the small boats are going to be rehabilitated by the Government, by the Ministry so that they can earn their livelihood. This is the real problem.

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: The deep sea fishing has nothing to do with the new liberalisation policy. The policy which I am implementing is the policy which was introduced by you. The previous Government was there at that time. It was announced in March, 1991.

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH: We are on the same wavelength.

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: We have not done anything wrong. I appreciate that policy. That policy is encouraging the Indian entrepreneurs to own the vessels. All these are Indian companies. It is the Indian ownership registered in India and we are encouraging the Indian entrepreneurs. I have already decided to phase out the foreign owned vessels.

SHRI A. CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a fact that in the interior coastal belt, the traditional fishermen are facing a lot of problems. I can understand the problem of the hon. Minister. He himself has stated that the Government do not have any monitoring mechanism. So, I am aware of the limitations as far as controlling the deep sea fishing is concerned. May I know from the hon. Minister whether any study has been made by experts regarding the quantity of the catch by the foreign vessels under foreign licences? Have any steps been taken to control them so that the interests of the traditional fishermen which are now being affected are protected? In case it is not possible to prevent the fraudulent way of poaching, will the Government of India take immediate steps to ban all licences?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: In fact, the only way to safeguard the interests of the traditional fishermen is to regulate the mechanised boats. Let the mechanised boats go into deep sea fishing. We are encouraging them to do so and we are willing to provide all the incentives. This is the only way to safeguard the interests of the traditional fishermen. If you don't take up deep sea fishing, there will be more and more poaching. Poaching is already being carried out on a large scale. If we really want to curb

poaching, our Indian companies also should join deep sea fishing. Not only deep sea fishing, I would say that they should take up high sea fishing as well.

SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that there are apprehensions from various quarters that the foreign vessels which have the benefit of satellite images and computer technology are able to have more catch than our Indian vessels, whereby our country may not really get any benefit. If so, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has got any plans to formulate and bring forward a National Fisheries Policy so as to limit the scope of the foreign vessels to take away the fisheries wealth from our exclusive economic zone and to safeguard the interests of the traditional fishermen who are solely dependent on fishing.

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: In fact, I did answer that question. We are trying to phase out the foreign vessels gradually. As I have stated earlier, the 1981 Policy allowed foreign vessels. Same is the case with 1986 Policy to....

SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE: You must be able to take the technology. Isn't it?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: Yes. That is why, we are encouraging joint ventures. In order to obtain the latest technology, we are encouraging our Indian entrepreneurs to have joint ventures with foreign companies. Our Indian companies can take up equity partnership.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR: As far as I understand, the hon. Minister is trying to draw a dividing line between the deep sea and the coastal region. As regards the authorities also, he has been telling that permission for fishing in the deep sea would be granted by the Government of India and permission for coastal region fishing would be given by the concerned State Governments. I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister that the fish fauna originates in the deep sea and then it moves into the coastal region. Because of the permission granted by the Government of India to the multinationals to fish in the deep sea, the traditional fishermen who carry out their fishing operations in the coastal region are being affected. So, in this regard, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he would call for a meeting of all the concerned Ministers from those States which are having coastal region, such as the State of Karnataka which has got a coastal region of 325 km with two lakh fisherman families mainly dependent on fishing. These people are losing their livelihood because of the deep sea fishing. I would like to know whether a meeting will immediately be convened by the Government of India with all the concerned Ministers and immediate steps be taken to cancel the licences granted for deep sea fishing by the Government of India?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: I am ready to call a meeting of all the Ministers concerned. I am also prepared to discuss the matter with all the concerned MPs. At the same time, I

would like to state here that all the catch by deep sea fishing is not consumed within the country.

AN HON. MEMBER: The point is that the entire fauna is being affected.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY: Sir, I would like to know how many deep sea fishing vessels have been given licences during the last two years and how many of them are owned by the Indian companies and how many of them are hired by the Indian companies?

Part (b) of my question is whether the Government have any mechanism to stop encroachment of the vessels, operating in the deep sea, on the coastal region? If there is any mechanism, let us know about the mechanism?

Sir, part (c) of my question is that the Government has said that they have received representations from the fishermen. I would like to know what are their main objections.

MR. SPEAKER: Only you answer (a) and (b), not (c).

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: Sir, we have not given any licence to any multinational or foreign company. We have already stopped that. I have given permission for 148 vessels. But, as on today, 34 vessels are in operation.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY: Sir, I would like to know how many of them are hired and how many of them are Indian?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: Sir, these are operated by Indian owned companies.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY: Sir, I would like to know how many of them are hired and how many of them are owned by both?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: These are all owned by Indian companies.

[Translation]

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir the way in which boats are allowed for deep-fishing.

[English]

They are well equipped and as soon as they get the fish, they process it.

They pack it and send it to the foreign countries. That has affected the Indian market. Thirty per cent of the Indian population eat fish and they are not getting fish in sufficient number and the cost has increased very much. Therefore, my first question is — what are you going to do for the benefit of the Indian consumers for getting fish?

MR. SPEAKER: This is a question about those who catch the fish and not eat the fish.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: How can you eat fish without catching fish?

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: Sir, the second part of my question is, the Minister has stated in the first question that the Expert Committee has on one side said that this does not affect the Indian fishermen, if this does not affect then why have you stopped the process of giving licences?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: Sir, the availability of fish in the domestic market has gone up. In 1981-82 it was 24,00,044. Now, in 1993-94 it is 46,00,091. There has been an increase of 95 per cent in fish production. The availability is more in the market.

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: Is it for the Indian people?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: I am talking of Indian people only.

[Translation]

SHRI SHANKARSINH VAGHELA: Sir, through you I would like to know from the hon. Minister that in view of the unanimous opinion of the whole country and small fishermen that profession of fishing should be kept reserved for traditional fishermen only and whether he is going to make any arrangements that no more permits will be given to other agencies for fishing.

MR. SPEAKER: That has already been stated.

[English]

SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES: Sir, the question is about the fishermen and the small fishermen. Now, by allowing these vessels to fish in deep waters, the benefit directly flows to a different section of people. What we are concerned is about the small fishermen. How will they be helped by the Government to go in for deep sea fishing? What facilities will we be able to provide to them — whether we are willing to give training to the small fishermen and ultimately be able to help them in acquiring the knowledge of deep sea fishing with trawlers? The gap is about one million tonnes of fish. That is not exploited. I would like to know as to how our fishermen will be able to go in for this?

SHRI TARUN GOGOI: In fact we are going to provide some incentives to these fishermen, if they form a cooperative we will give them incentives so that they can go for deep sea fishing.

Malaria Epidemic

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*162. DR. ASIM BALA:

SHRI UDDHAB BARMAN:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state;

(a) whether the Government are aware of the massive resurgence of Malaria in the country;

(b) the total number of Malaria cases reported in the country and the number of deaths as a result thereof during the last three years, State-wise and year-wise and during April-September, 1994;

(c) whether the Union Government have provided any kind of assistance to the State Governments under the National Malaria Eradication Programme during the last one year;

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

(e) whether the Government have reviewed the ban on import of some Malaria drugs;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the concrete steps taken for total eradication of Malaria in the country?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI PABAN SINGH GHATOWAR): (a) to (g) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.