

speed up this project and extend it upto Coimbatore at the earliest.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN : By this year, Jolarpet to Erode railway line will be completed; and from Erode to Ernakulam will be taken up in the future.

[*Translation*]

SHRI KALKA DAS : Since important questions on the subject could not be asked, half-an-hour discussion may please be allowed on this question.

[*English*]

REDUCTION IN PRICES OF DIESEL AND KEROSENE

*42. **SHRI S.B. SINGH:**

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES :

Will the Minister of **PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS** be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government contemplate to reduce the prices of diesel and kerosene;

(b) if so, the time by which prices are likely to be reduced; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND) : (a) to (c) Any change in the prices of petroleum products is considered by the Government, keeping in view supplies, growth in demand and other socio-economic factors.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, I would like to make a point about the reply itself. The reply is no reply to the question that I have asked. My question is very categorical. Whether the Government contemplates to reduce the prices but you are saying, "Any change in the prices..." So. I would like to have your direction on this matter, because it is not only Question No. 4 that is the issue I am raising. I want the Government to be very specific in its reply. I would like to have your direction on this.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your supplementary and extract the direction and the reply.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: The direction has to come from you, not from the Government.

MR. SPEAKER : Speakers do not give directions as to how the Ministers should reply to questions. It is not for the Speaker to say as to how the reply should be given.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : You have to protect the rights of the House.

MR. SPEAKER : That is why, the supplementary is there.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : I have asked a question. I have to elicit the correct reply. The Minister is not giving a correct reply.

MR. SPEAKER : As a good parliamentarian you know how to get the reply. You will get it.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : I would like to make an observation.

I am really amazed at the cynicism and the double-speak of the Government.

I have with me the manifesto of the Congress Party with the picture of the late departed leader of the Congress Party.

AN HON. MEMBER : Is it necessary to point it out ?

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Yes. It is necessary to point it out every time the question of prices comes up in this House. I intend to do it. You may keep sitting or you may walk out if you are fed up. I am not going to make an appeal. (*Interruptions*) I am prepared to make a categorical statement.

Sir, the manifesto says, "The promises in this manifesto will be implemented in a period of five years. However, the Congress will mean business from DAY ONE." That is in capital letters. . . (*Interruptions*) Listen: It is very necessary. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : You do not take the responsibility of the Speaker.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Please read your manifesto first.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAJNATH SONKAR SHASTRI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, How many Petroleum Ministers are here ?

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : Both of them are capable of putting the right questions and giving the right answers.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : It is necessary. My question is based on certain assurances. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Please, do not do like that.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, my question is that there was an assurance given to the people of India before the election and the assurance was, "However, the Congress will mean business from DAY ONE. It will take up each pledge for implementation in right earnest according to a definite time-frame as detailed below : We pledge that the Congress Government will in the first hundred days arrest the rise price rise in essential commodities and in particular roll back prices to levels of 10th July 1990 in the case of diesel and kerosene."

Now my question is, does the Minister say that this assurance that is given in the manifesto is valid or has the Government decided to dump this assurance because as a party while going before the people, it had one face and as a Government in this House it has another face ?

SHRI CHITTA BASU : Everything is correct.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I am extremely happy that the Hon. Member Shri George Fernandes is compelled to refer to our party manifesto, and it also shows how greatly he appreciates our pioneer, and our party. We are grateful to our departed leader Shri Rajiv Gandhi under

whose guidance and skill this manifesto was prepared and we stand by the commitments which are laid down in the manifesto. All our efforts will be in the direction to achieve the objectives as indicated in our party manifesto . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : Sir, the Question Hour is intended to secure specific replies from the Government. I think, the Hon. Member is very correct when he has pointedly asked whether the Government contemplate reducing the prices of diesel and kerosene. The answer is strange. Even the reply in regard to the supplementary question is evasive. It is here that the Chair does come in and the Minister must be directed to be very specific in his replies.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I have specifically replied to the supplementary question that he had asked . . . (*Interruptions*) May I say what I had said in my main answer ? . . . (*Interruptions*) Any change in the prices of petroleum products is considered by the Government keeping in view supplies, growth in demand and other socio-economic factors. All these will be taken into consideration while fixing the prices of diesel and kerosene especially and the Government will come forth with a proposal in the statement of the Budget when it is presented . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Mr. Speaker, Sir, you must protect the interests of the House . . . (*Interruptions*) Now I would like to ask another supplementary question. Does the Government justify the Gulf surcharge

which was imposed by the predecessor Government ? And if it does justify it, will it atleast apologise to the electorate for having told untruth to them ?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : Sir, he is asking a question with reference to the Gulf surcharge. No doubt the Gulf surcharge was imposed. Under what circumstances it was imposed ? The previous Government knows about it; the whole nation knows about it. Fiscal measures are announced at the time of presenting the Budget. I do not want to take the time of the House in indulging myself into the aspect of fiscal arrangements . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Sir, my question was very specific. The Minister is in the Government today. The predecessor Government took the decision in regard to Gulf surcharge in certain socio-economic and so on and so on situation. Does the Minister believe that it was justified ? It was a very specific question. If the Minister does not have a reply, it means that he just does not know what he is talking about . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I request the Hon. Minister to wait till the Budget is presented to the House . . . (*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : Sir, this particular question has been admitted knowing that the Budget is to be presented. Therefore, to every supplementary question on this question for the Hon. Minister to say "wait until the Budget is presented" is really insulting the collectivity of this House. Sir, are you suggesting

that we should accept whatever the Minister says in this regard? I would like to lend my support to my friend Mr. George Fernandes. The Gulf surcharge was imposed in a specific condition when temporarily the international oil prices had shot up to 40 dollars per barrel. Now the oil prices had slumped to around 22 dollars. There is really no justification for the continuity of Gulf surcharge when the international prices had slumped from 40 dollars to 22 dollars. My friend Mr. George Fernandes had asked a simple question. . . (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : This question was already put by him. Please ask a different question.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : In the light of the changed situation, will the Government now drop the Gulf surcharge so that the prices automatically come to normal?

MR. SPEAKER : This question was already asked by him.

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : can only say that it is a suggestion for action.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RATILAL VARMA : Mr Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to say that the farmers are not able to get diesel because its rate has gone up. They have to buy it in black market to meet their requirement. I want to know when does the Minister propose to reduce the price of diesel in order to provide relief to the farmers.

[*English*]

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : All our efforts will be to help the farmers.

SHRI NANI BHATTACHARYA : In clear terms the Congress Party pledged before the country that within 100 days diesel and kerosene prices would be reduced. There is no answer to that question. Is the Government going to reduce the prices of kerosene and diesel within 100 days?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : The Hon. Member himself has answered my question by referring to 100 days.

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH : What is the percentage of central taxes plus Gulf surcharge in the price structure of per litre of diesel and kerosene?

SHRI B. SHANKARANAND : I need a separate notice for that.

Maximisation of Power Generation

*43. SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD :

SHRI M. V. CHANDRA-SHEKARA MURTHY :

Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have recently discussed with the State Electricity Boards various steps to maximise power generation ;

(b) whether there have been some differences over the role of the National Power Distribution Corporation and whether the same have since been sorted out ;