

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, November 27, 1996/Agrahayana 6,
1918 (Saka)

(The Lok Sabha met at One Minute Past
Eleven of the Clock)

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Poverty Eradication Plan

*82. JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA :
PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :

Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND
EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government's attention has been drawn towards the news-items published in "Dainik Tribune" dated September 9, 1996 under the caption 'Poverty eradication plan not realistic';

(b) whether the Government have fixed the target for the upliftment of all those poor people living below the poverty line by the year 2005;

(c) if not, the facts thereof and the estimated number of people living below the poverty line at present; and

(d) the year-wise number of such people targetted to be brought above the poverty line?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND
EMPLOYMENT (SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU) :
(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Although the Common Minimum Programme of the Government, inter-alia, States that the anti-poverty programmes will be redesigned to ensure that poverty is abolished by the year 2005. Government have not so far fixed any target for the upliftment of all the poor people living below the poverty line by the year 2005.

(c) The Planning Commission makes estimates of poverty in the country based on quinquennial Consumer Expenditure Surveys of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). According to the revised estimates for 1987-88 201.4 million persons (or 25.49% of the total population) were below the poverty line in the country as a whole. The number of people below the poverty line in rural areas during the same period was 168.2 million (or 28.37% of the total rural population).

(d) The strategy of the 9th Five Year Plan has not yet been finalised and therefore the targets and time span for coverage under IRDP and other programmes

having a bearing on poverty alleviation can only be indicated after the size and strategy of the 9th Plan has been firmed up.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Hon. Speaker Sir, I would like to put my first question to the hon. Prime Minister who attended the Rome Conference alongwith several world dignitaries on the question of hunger, starvation and poverty.

There, a map was displayed in which it was stated that 300 million Indians go to bed hungry everyday and 21 per cent of the Indian people were starved of hunger. These two facts were mentioned there. I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether, as a matter of fact, that Conference held that 30 per cent of the world poverty is shared only by India.

I would also like to know whether Prof. Madhu Dandavate, who is the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission, on 8.8.1996 observed that the earlier information that the poverty line has come to 19 per cent was wrong.

According to the methodology, which they are adopting now, is of the Lakadwala Committee, it is going to be 40 per cent. That is, during the last ten years, from 1978-79 to 1987-88 and from 1987-88 to 1995-96, it had increased from 25 per cent to 40 per cent and the figure which the hon. Minister has given as 19 per cent is not correct.

MR. SPEAKER : I think, you have made your question.

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the latest figure of 1987-88 circulated by the Planning Commission was based on our programmes for implementing in the country. Based on the poverty figures given by the Planning Commission and everything, we are releasing the funds to the States.

Regarding the methodology of the Lakadwala Committee and how it came to a conclusion, everything is looked after by the Planning Commission only. It comes under the Ministry of Planning. Whatever figures that are available with our Ministry are being given.

Regarding the assessment and other things, the National Sample Survey Organisation gives the figures. Our Ministry is concerned with the figures that are supplied to our Ministry. Based on those figures we are allocating the funds for the eradication of poverty and other things.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Sir, the answer to my question has not come. The fact is that the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission had said on the 8th of August this year that the figure of the people below the poverty line in our country is not 19 per cent as earlier mentioned in 1995 by Shri Manmohan Singh and not 25 per cent as earlier given by the Planning Commission; he had said that the formula which was adopted was wrong and the real figure was 40 per cent. I want to know whether it is correct or not.

The answer to my second question has also not been given. My second question was, whether it is a fact that when the hon. Prime Minister attended the Rome Conference, it was said that 30 per cent of the population of hungry people was in India and the map which was shown there showed that 26 per cent of the people sleep without even one time meal a day. I should get an answer to that. The hon. Prime Minister was himself in Rome...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : You can put your second Supplementary Question.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : The hon. Prime Minister represented the country and he must be able to tell us...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Mr. Speaker, Sir, would you allow the Minister of State of the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation to reply to this?

MR. SPEAKER : Well, normally one question cannot be answered by two different Ministers. I am sorry about it.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : The question on people below the poverty line is a very important question and if it is supplemented...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : So, it is very important. If the hon. Member wants further information on it, he can put a separate question.

Regarding the statement made by our hon. Prime Minister in Rome - I was also there along with the Prime Minister - such a statement was not made by the hon. Prime Minister. Basing on the figures...*(Interruptions)*

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : I have not said that the statement was made by the Prime Minister...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Let the Minister complete the reply.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : I have not said that the statement was made by the Prime Minister. I have said about the conclusion of the Rome Conference and not about the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister. Do not misquote me...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : The figures that are available are based on the NSSO of 1987-88. The latest survey of 1993-94 has also been conducted by the NSSO. The figures have not been communicated to all the Ministries. The Planning Commission has not circulated them so far. I do not know about the latest figures and the percentage given by the National Sample Survey Organisation. But based on the figures arrived by the Planning Commission previously - we follow those figures - we are allocating funds for the eradication of poverty. My Ministry is on that job...*(Interruptions)*

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : That is sidetracking the issue. I have asked whether the statement made by

Prof. Madhu Dandavate that 40 per cent of the people are living below the poverty line was correct or not; whether the Finance Ministry admits or contradicts it; if so on what ground...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Lodha, why do you not listen to me?

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, you had been the Labour Minister. You must help...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down. You are not listening to me. This is not the way to behave.

When I am speaking you must have at least some courtesy to listen to me. What is this?

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : The position is that the Minister is giving a figure based on the NSSO Survey of 1987-88, that is the figure which is available with the Ministry.

There has been a latest NSS survey for the year 1993-94. The figures have not been officially released and therefore, the Minister is not in a position to give that figure. Since the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission has some access to some information, it is quite possible that he must have made some statement on the basis of those figures. So I will not blame the Minister for not being able to give the latest figure because he cannot give it. He has to stick to the figures furnished to him by the Planning Commission. But my request is that the latest NSS Survey figures should be released as soon as possible.

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Yes, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : Second supplementary please.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : That was my first question. My second supplementary question is that the hon. Minister has said that even though it is in the Common Minimum Programme, they have not yet been able to formulate any programmes to eradicate poverty and to raise the people's power to purchase things. Now I want to know by what time the Common Minimum Programme would be implemented on this particular point, namely eradication of poverty. We want to know the time limit because already six months have been taken by the new Government and we do not know how long it would last. Let them say that.

MR. SPEAKER : You have made your point.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA) : On the Common Minimum Programme, we have identified the areas which help to eradicate poverty, hunger and unemployment; they are the seven areas for the priority sector which we have identified with the concurrence of all the State Chief Ministers. We have made an additional allocation of Rs.2480 crore. That amount has already been released to all the States. This is based on the guideline that has been fixed by

the Planning Commission about the poverty and other things which have been taken into consideration.

Sir, I would like to make it clear that the Government is equally interested in taking the necessary steps to implement this poverty alleviation programme as a time-bound programme, that is, by 2000 A.D.

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, whether it is a fact that the basis of poverty line has been fixed as the annual income of Rs. 11,000 and consumption of calories from 2000 to 2400. If so, how the prices of wheat has increased from Rs. 500 to 800 per quintal? The prices of rice, pulses and other essential commodities have also increased. In view of the criteria of poverty line, I would like to know as to whether the number of persons living under poverty line will increase as a result thereof? Secondly, hon. Prime Minister has stated that the Government is interested in the upliftment of poor. As per the report of the Standing Committee of Parliament, Rs. 2195 crores were allocated out of which Rs.1579 crore remained unutilised. Whether it is correct...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask the question. What is your final question?

[Translation]

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA : The problem of unemployment will increase if such a huge amount remains unutilized. Specially in villages, where parents think that area of land is fixed and population is increasing and thus people are not getting employment. The funds allocated by the Union Government have not been utilized properly. Whether the Government propose to make sincere efforts for removing this lacunae. Hon. Minister has stated that under the Common Minimum Programme poverty would be eradicated by the year 2005 but so far no target has been fixed. I would like to know as to when the target is to be fixed.

Shri Madhu Dandavate has stated that modified methodology would be adopted in this regard. I would like to know about this modified methodology.

[English]

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned in my answer that in the Common Minimum Programme, poverty alleviation is the main agenda. Based on that, for this year, in this Budget, an amount of Rs. 2,004 crore and odd was earmarked by the Planning Commission, on the basis of population and poverty in the States. They had already earmarked the allocations, etc. under these minimum basic services. This Government is particular about the eradication of poverty.

As far as Rs. 11,000 is concerned, previously we arrived at the conclusion that below Rs. 11,000 is the poverty line. In the Ninth Plan, we want to revise that thing also. So, by 2,005 A.D., we want to eradicate everything. Based on that, the Planning Commission has made arrangements as to how to make plans, etc. Even in the Ninth Five Year Plan, from 1997-98 to 2,002 A.D., only three years are left. Based on that, we are planning as to how many families are there; how to put money in each sector and how to eradicate poverty, etc. It is under process.

As far as the unspent balance is concerned, there is a lot of time. This is the peak season. The previous season was a lean and rainy season. That is why, the State Governments are not spending their money in full. Now, there is a good reason as far as spending of money is concerned. Under this Poverty Alleviation Programme, the opening balance is also more. We have given instructions to the State Governments to spend immediately all the unutilised funds including the opening balance and released funds, etc. All the State Governments are now on that job only.

[Translation]

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, just now, hon. Prime Minister has stated that Central Government has allocated Rs.2450 crore to states for rural employment. I would like to know as to whether the funds allocated for Employment Assurance Scheme have been included in it?

[English]

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Sir, as the hon. Prime Minister has said earlier, we have identified seven basic minimum services. Out of the seven basic minimum services, the option will be given to the State Governments. They can opt for three out of the seven basic minimum services. They can spend the released amount on those three items.

As far as the Employment Assurance Scheme is concerned, it is a good scheme...*(Interruptions)*. It is a wage employment programme. This Government have decided to...*(Interruptions)*. I am giving the answer...*(Interruptions)*.

MR. SPEAKER : Please listen to him.

(Interruptions)

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : I will give the answer. I have the material. As far as the Employment Assurance Scheme is concerned, we want to extend this Scheme throughout the country. Now, this year, we extended this Scheme to 1,128 blocks throughout the country and from 1st April onwards, the remaining left over blocks also will come under the E.A.S. It is a demand-drive programme. There is no limitation for funds. Only whatever money is spent by the State Government, we can release. There is no target. There is no limit for the amount of money we have earmarked.

It is a demand drive programme. We are ready to release whatever amount is required by the State Governments. That is the programme.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that under the Poverty Alleviation Programme, I.R.D.P. scheme is in operation in villages for rural poor. But people could not get the full amount of loan due to corruption. Sometimes they get only Rs.3500 out of the total loan amount of Rs.7000. Women have to face more problems when they want to get loan for starting any work. Mostly women are not ready to bow before corruption. Hon. Minister and hon. Prime Minister are also present here, I would like to know from them as to whether the Government propose to take measures so as to ensure that women could be benefited by it. Women, especially the widows, helpless and abandoned women would get a means of livelihood if a quota for loan for women is fixed in the loan amount disbursed for removing the rural unemployment. I would like to make a submission that in his reply, the hon. Prime Minister should give an assurance that a provision would be made to provide reservation to women under I.R.D.P.

[English]

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the hon. Member has said is true. In all our poverty alleviation programmes, there is a percentage reserved. In IRDP, forty per cent is reserved for women. With regard to wage also, whatever wage a man gets, the same wage a woman also gets. Our monitoring department goes in for examination and everything. I have already given notes and everything regarding my Ministry. If there is any violation in the implementation with regard to women or anything else, you give those specified areas to me where it is not being implemented. We will then send our officers to look into that.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI : It is violated in Madhya Pradesh. I will produce evidence.

[English]

SHRI DATTA MEGHE : It is also violated in Maharashtra.

SHRI KINJARAPPU YERRANNAIDU : Sir, the entire programme money is released to the State Governments. All officers belong to the State Governments because they are the implementing agency. If there is any representation or any complaint received from any Member of Parliament with regard to any violation committed by the State Government officials, we will refer it to the State Government for inquiry and will take necessary action. If the hon. Members have any complaints, they can send them to me. I shall then send it to the State Government concerned for action.

Co-Ordination between SEBs and Private Power Sector

*84. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether setting up of mega power projects based on imported coal is feasible option; and

(b) whether the Government are considering to set up central organisation to co-ordinate with private power projects and State Electricity Boards for proper distribution of power generated in the private power sector; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI) : (a) The issue of viability of mega projects at various locations in the country is under examination in the Central Electricity Authority;

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Mr. Speaker, Sir, there was a report on 2nd September, 1996, according to which the Union Government is reportedly considering the setting up of a National Regulatory Authority for the power sector, reducing the powers of the existing Central Electricity Authority and bringing the private power producers within the ambit of the former. My question was based on this report. But the hon. Minister has stated in his answer that there is no move in this matter. I would like to ask him whether the Government believes that the objectives of faster clearance and creation of an efficient power sector would be served better by strengthening the Central Electricity Authority and making it a truly independent regulatory body. If so, how would the Government strengthen the Central Electricity Authority?

DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI : Sir, the hon. Prime Minister on 16th October announced a lot of incentives in the power scenario and has made some policy announcements. One of the items in the announcement is to form Regulatory Commissions - one at the national level and another at the State level - which will monitor the tariff structure. Accordingly, we sent draft notes to all the Chief Ministers for their approval.

Regarding the role of the CEA, the hon. Member has raised a pertinent question. Now CEA will not look into the cost and tariff and competitive bidding. It will only look into the location of the project and also availability of fuel and availability of transmission network. Their role will be restricted only to these.

SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Sir, my second supplementary is relating to an announcement made by the hon. Prime Minister. I would like to draw the attention of the Prime Minister to that announcement. It