

# LOK SABHA DEBATES

## LOK SABHA

Wednesday, August 13, 1997/Shravana 22,  
1919 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at  
Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI CHIKHALIA (Junagadh) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want to know, about the action being taken in respect of the Bill providing reservations to women...(Interruptions)

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA (Pali) : Hon'ble Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is nothing which can be called administration in Bihar. This thing has been raised in High Court there. That is why President rule should be imposed in Bihar...(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : This is question hour, not zero hour.

SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI CHIKHALIA : I agree this is not a zero hour...(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Whatever you want to say, say in zero hour.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Hon'ble Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a notice has been given for the suspension of zero hour...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I have called Shri Nawal Kishore Rai.

[Translation]

Whatever you want to say, say in zero hour.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, High Court have said...

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Shri Lodha, you are a senior Member. This is question Hour. You raise it in the Zero Hour.

JUSTICE GUMAN MAL LODHA : I have given a notice for suspending the proceedings of the House for discussing the recommendation of the Patna High Court for imposition of President's Rule in Bihar under Article 356 of the constitution of account of failure of constitutional machinery there.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please let the hon. member ask his question.

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

11.02 hrs.

[Translation]

### Restructuring of Planning Commission

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\*301. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI :  
SHRI NITISH KUMAR :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Plan panel to swing in tune to market economy" appearing in Observer dated July 19, 1997;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to restructure the Planning Commission in the changed economic scenario;

(c) if so, the details of the draft proposal; and

(d) the time by which this proposal is likely to be implemented?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRIMATI RATNAMALA D. SAVANOR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No restructuring of the Planning Commission is being contemplated. The role of the Planning Commission continues to remain the same as given in the Resolution of the Cabinet Secretariat dated 15th March, 1950 setting up the Planning Commission. The process of formulation and implementation of the Ninth Plan will take into account the existing economic scenario and the spirit of Cooperative Federalism as articulated in the Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan. The internal arrangements of the Planning Commission are from time to time reviewed by the Commission to make the administrative functioning of the Commission more effective.

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not satisfied with the reply that hon'ble Minister has given in response to my question. It is evident from the programmes that have been prepared since first plan till date that the Planning Commission is working systematically as an advisor but did not have the hold on the monitoring of the schemes. That is why many such schemes are still pending since the first plan. For example the two schemes in the Irrigation Department according to the Government report which should have been completed much earlier are still pending. In reply it has been stated that the Planning Commission was constituted on a resolution of Cabinet Secretariat on 15.3.1950.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon'ble Prime Minister is present here and we would like to express our gratitude to the Government and the Prime Minister for taking many friendly and revolutionary steps such as providing the foodgrain at half the price for the welfare of the poor through the Common Minimum Programme of United Front Government. But I would like to ask whether he would provide statutory status to the Planning Commission and would consider to constitute a body and thereby make such a fresh provision which would enable the officers of Planning Commission to keep an eye on the monitoring and execution of all the schemes formulated so that the schemes at Planning Commission could be formulated in a democratic manner and implemented within its timeframe.

SHRIMATI RATNAMALA D. SAVANOOR : Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no question to provide constitutional status to the schemes because in that case they will lose their flexibility. I will read out some reasons for this.

[English]

The issue of making the Planning Commission a statutory body has been examined at length in various stages and it was decided not to give statutory powers to the Planning Commission due to the following reasons :

1. The Planning Commission in its present form has been performing functions for more than four decades, without any practical difficulty.
2. Due to the federal character of the Indian polity, a certain degree of flexibility is needed in dealing with the status, which may be lost if the Planning Commission is given a constitutional status.
3. The Planning Commission also plays an important role in the policy formulations of the Government.
4. Secretary, Planning Commission and the Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission attend several meetings and express views on behalf of the Planning Commission, which may or may not be accepted.
5. The Commission is also generally consulted by various Central Ministries on major issues or public policy.
6. It is felt that the Planning Commission will not be able to play this role if it is given a constitutional status and its advice binding on the concerned Central Ministries.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, whatever hon'ble Minister has explained, I have

discussed it earlier also and we are aware of the functioning of the Planning Commission, the schemes taken up earlier for the execution are still not completed and their cost goes on multiplying. Even then if the Government does not intend to reconstitute the Planning Commission I would like to know what will be the fate of the Projects such as Project Baghmati of Bihar which was initially started at the cost of Rs. 32 crores and on which till now Rs. 200 crores have been spent and it is still pending. Then there is Adaware group Project which was initially started at the cost of Rs. 5 crores. Till now Rs. 200 crores have been spent on it and it is still pending. It had done no good to the farmers and the rural people. Will the Government make some improvement in it. That's why I seek reconstitution of the Planning Commission where professionals having specialized qualification should be included as member so that it could become competent and could be able to complete the scheme formulated there within their time frame. Till now, experienced and specialised professionals had certainly been the members of the Planning Commission but it lacked Industrial experts, agricultural experts and other specialists. Would you please include the specialists with better understanding of agriculture and the people of village in the Planning Commission. We want to know this from you.

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : The hon. Member has examined at length the implementation dimensions. The Planning Commission does not implement programmes, it is involved in the allocation of resources, transfer of resources, identification of the projects. Ultimately, implementation is done by the State Governments in the State sector and in the Central sector, it is done by the Central Government and Central Ministries.

So far as a particular or specific issue is concerned, I am quite willing to look into it. If the hon. Member let me know what he is aiming at, I would be happy to get the details.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have raised this question because there was a news-item in 'The Observer', namely, "Plan panel to swing in tune to market economy." It was published on 19th July. I have asked this question on the basis of this news-item. The Government have negated it, but it was very clearly written in that news-item.

[English]

"It has, therefore, been suggested in an internal ten-page note that the Commission should be called upon to shed its irrelevant activities and so on."

[Translation]

This is quite long. If this type of news regarding restructuring of the Planning Commission to make it relevant to the market economy, are published in the news papers, it's but natural that many questions would be raised against it, the Government has very clearly stated that there is no such thing under consideration. But it requires negation, If the newspapers publish this type of news, the Planning Commission or the Government should negate them, otherwise it raises many apprehensions and questions like we severing Planned economy and leaving the whole economy to the market? The Government should have done so just now the Prime Minister gave an appropriate reply and from the Government. I would like to know one thing that he said that the Planning Commission will do its work, but he could not review the aspect of implementation in the same manner. Although, you have the role of reviewing all the centrally sponsored schemes or the schemes of central sectors, you review them. I don't want to comment on it.

I would like to state that we are marching towards decentralisation. We believe in decentralisation which includes decentralisation of power as well as economic structure. In such a situation schemes should be chalked out on large scale at district, state as well as grass-root levels. What is the Government's attitude in this regard? Today, our planners talk of micro planning while sitting in Planning Commission or in the Ministries of Union Government Micro Planning is done at higher level and that too sitting in 'Yojana Bhawan' or in Ministry. I just cite one example of watershed project. One should know as to how a watershed can be useful in any particular area.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Nitishji, please ask the question.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am citing an example but without giving background in this regard, he would not be able to respond. Therefore, I need your protection. I am coming to the question directly. Thus, such a tendency has developed that detailed planning of micro level is done while sitting here. Whether the Government contemplate to start planning process at grassroot level after abandoning this tendency and whether half or one third amount earmarked for Planning is likely to be allocated to District Planning and Development Agencies existing to plan the schemes as per the requirements of the district and implement them at district level. Whether the Government contemplate to march in this direction? I would also like to know the approach of the Government regarding co-operative federalism during 9th Five Year Plan?

[English]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I am thankful to my hon. friend because he has the background and a great deal of knowledge, particularly while managing the Ministry of Agriculture. Also he had initiated a discussion here in the past on this very subject.

The points that he has made are well taken. As the hon. Member would have seen in the Approach Paper to the Ninth Plan, a great deal of emphasis has been laid on micro planning. That is why, we are not only transferring resources but also transferring planning to the Panchayati Raj level. That is why, I have fully met his point of view.

At the same time, since this Approach Paper has been discussed here, I think that is a very good forum for my hon. friend to give us more ideas on this. One thing, I can tell you that the Planning Commission and myself — we are always open — are open to new ideas.

The main approach, the main thrust of the Ninth Plan is decentralisation. Also by decentralisation, I do not mean only decentralisation of resources. It also means, decentralisation of micro planning because, after all, a person in a village or in a Panchayat knows better whether he wants a school or a well. This is something which he should decide. That is what we have been saying and the Ninth Plan, particularly its Approach Paper emphasises this dimension.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNABEN DEVRAJ BHAI CHIKHALIA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I through you, would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister since he has stated that planning is done by the Planning Commission and State Governments implement it. He has also stated in reply that the Planning Commission has undertaken certain important experiments in the States like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka regarding Panchayati Raj, the development of women and children in rural areas etc. But it seems to me that so far as the benefits are concerned the women and the children are not getting the desired benefits. Whether the Government have come to know about it? I want that the Planning Commission should formulate plan with the objective that helpless women and children may get its benefit. It is my question.

[English]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I endorse the anxiety of my hon. friend. It means, in effect, our emphasis should be more on the plight of the women and the girl child. As a matter of fact, my hon. friend might have noticed, we are now working on actual plan about the fate and future of the girl child. I am one of those who firmly believe in this. Unless the lot and

the plight of the women in this country is improved, the country will not move forward. That is why I am now emphasising on the girl child a great deal. In the Plan also, we are keeping this in focus.

Also we might keep in mind that ultimately the overwhelming population of India lives in the villages. That is where the plight of the girl child and the women has to be improved considerably more than what it is today.

As she might notice that the Plan Approach Paper, if she kindly have a look at it, emphasizes this thing. But in this context, I repeat what I have told my hon. friend earlier, that is, if she has some specific ideas also she is most welcome to give them to me and I will be happy to look at them.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister about the Planning Commission, whether there is restructuring or not, definitely there is a requirement to have a second look at it.

I represent Barmer which is one of the most backward regions. There is a provision to allocate separate funds for some programmes like Border Area Development Programme, Desert Area Development Programme, etc. Sir, certain funds are allocated directly to the State Governments and certain funds are allocated through the Ministry of Home Affairs for programmes like the Border Area Development Programme. But most of the funds are not being spent as per the guidelines.

I have been fighting for it for the last one year and I have written letters to the Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission and the Minister concerned but the bureaucracy, whether it is at Delhi or at Jaipur, is so powerful that whatever they want they do it. I have given a suggestion that elected representatives should be there in these committees, but nothing has happened so far. I give you an instance that last year most of the funds which were supposed to be spent within the 50 km. range of border district of Barmer were being spent in Jaipur.

I would also like to draw the attention of the hon. Prime Minister that the funds which are allocated are very meagre for these underdeveloped and desert districts.

I would like to know whether the Prime Minister ensure that these funds are spent on those programmes wherever these are supposed to be spent as per the guidelines of the Planning Commission. Secondly...

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Only one supplementary is allowed.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Members of Parliament and Assemblies should be nominated in the Steering Committees or the Empowered Committees

which are there at Delhi and Jaipur. Why can they not be made members of those committees? I have been fighting for this for the last one year but nobody bothers to listen to me in the Ministry.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Well, I regret if that is his experience. I would only say this thing to my hon. friend that the point that he has made is well taken. This is a good point the local representatives, be they in Panchayati Raj institutions or be they in any administration, are the people who should really be associated with the micro level planning, as I have said just now. I have taken note of this point.

In the specific case of Barmer. I may not be able to reply just now but I have taken note of it and I will look into this and write back to him.

SHRI JAG MOHAN : Sir, is the hon. Prime Minister aware that the time and cost overrun of centrally infrastructural projects, as given in the *Economic Survey* as reported in the Ministry of Programme Implementation report, has caused a burden of Rs. 31,000 crore extra?

Sir, if the non-infrastructural projects are included, the cost and time overrun will cause extra burden of Rs. 45,000 crore on the people. What is the type of planning that we are having which does not take into consideration the capacity of various organisations to whom the work is entrusted? Why is so much time, so much of energy, and so much of resources being wasted, of which we have a great deal of shortage? What is the use of midterm appraisal of the Plan, if so much of time and cost overrun have to be borne by the nation?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, I share the anxiety and the comment that my hon. friend has made. He has been in Governments longer than I have been and I think, he has been on the implementing side more than I have been.

SHRI JAG MOHAN : But not a single project has been recommended by me.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : He has been in the Government for quite a long time not as a politician but as an administrator.

Anyhow, the issue basically is that he is absolutely right that this is a big burden on our economy; cost overrun, the delays, the bureaucratic delays particularly, and that is the anxiety of the entire nation. I share that concern because if we are able to save on that, our plans would go much higher. One of the things that we have thought of is that if we decentralise it more and if we let it go to local levels more perhaps this would be implemented more speedily. I entirely agree with my hon. friend that this is something which we have to look into it.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Thank you very much. My claim to this question arises from the fact that I was associated with the real planning exercise

while drafting the Second Five Year Plan and also very recently I sat with the District Planning Committee and the Block level Planning Committee.

I have two kinds of questions. One is that despite the statement why it cannot be made a statutory or a constitutional body, the problem is that we had two midterm appraisals guided by political approach. Politics is important for planning because the objectives have to be laid down. An expert body is necessary to see consistency among the contradictory objectives and try to find out a path. This can only be done if an independent authority, apart from the Government, is established. That independence can either be assured in terms of the Constitution or in terms of a statutory body. To that question, I want an answer; whether or not such independence is a necessary condition for further development.

Now, I come to part (b) of my question. I was raising this question in all the Standing Committee meetings that cooperative planning is in an absurd situation. My ideas about planning had been shattered after I sat with the District Planning Committee. They do not have any staff. There are no whole-timers in the District Planning Committee. There are not even whole-timers in the State Planning Boards. I do not say that they should plan everything. The short-term needs should be reflected at those levels and the long-term ones should be at the Centre. For the Centre, this is independence. For the local needs, short-term needs, is the Planning Commission or the Government prepared to provide funds to establish whole-time cadre for District Planning and the Block level Planning?

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : So far as part (a) of the question is concerned, *viz.* whether this should be a statutory body or not or the Planning Commission should continue as it is, I would like to say that it was examined at length by the Sarkaria Commission also, and this House had also discussed it. The consensus in the Parliament was that the present system was better. I am not saying that this is better or not but I am only saying that Parliament had expressed it so; Parliament, in both the Houses, had said that the Sarkaria Commission's Report was to be accepted. Once it is accepted, it has obvious implications. That is one point.

The second point that you have said is that there is a need for bureaucratic support at the rural and at the city level *viz.* particularly at the district level. Well, there is a suggestion, which I can look into. My only apprehension is that — off the cuff just now — that we may not again start using most of the funds for salaries and allowances and, therefore, there may be a problem. I for one feel — this is again just an off the cuff remark — that particularly when you decentralise the resources and the policy-making, as my friend, Shri Nitish Kumar has just now suggested, on the micro-level, probably, it is much easier because a person sitting in the Panchayat does not need the bureaucratic support, he knows whether he wants a well or not...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE : Thousands of suggestions have come but there is no one at the district level to collate them.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : I am willing to look into the validity of this suggestion. The only thing that I would like to guard is that the money is not lost again in this.

[*Translation*]

DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, after independence of the country several schemes were formulated for the progress and development of the country and we started claiming that we have made progress and development but the interests of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Five Year Plans have not been protected and the allocation which should have been made could not be made. Moreover, it has not been implemented practically. Therefore, I, through you, would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he contemplates to give representation to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Planning Commission for protecting their interests.

[*English*]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, the question is not whether a particular tribe or a caste is represented in it or not. The main issue is, I do not whether it is...(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Planning Commission has been constituted.

[*English*]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : My hon. friend, the Minister is from that community itself. She is from the Scheduled Caste. Is there any other member also?...(*Interruptions*) Shri Hashim is from the minority community. This composition is kept in mind. The main point that has to be kept in mind is whether the funds are allocated for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities or not.

I think I can say this with a degree of satisfaction. Therefore, while we want to achieve more, while we want a transformation of their status more speedily, it is not lack of will but it is lack of social resources and very often at the implementation level, the type of funds that we should receive, sometimes, does not get received.

SHRI E. AHAMED : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the Government have been declaring that the planning will be decentralised at the grassroot level but so far it has not been like that. But at the very same time, in Kerala, the Government have now evolved a new grassroot level planning, known as the 'People's Planning' taking into Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat into consideration and preparing the plan according to their norms and their perception. That is a very popular scheme and that is even an innovative idea. Even the Deputy-Chairman of the Planning Commission, Prof. Madhu Dandavate

has complimented the Government of Kerala. But there is a total participation of all sections of the people at the district, State and grassroot levels. All sections of society have taken part in it. I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the Government of India will also make this plan which has been now prepared by the Kerala Government to be a model to the other States. I would also like to know whether the schemes and the projects that we have prepared now at the grassroot level will be supported and helped by the Government of India or not.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL : Sir, I appreciate the efforts that the Kerala Government is making and I want to compliment them. I think that is the experience in the planning processes that some States are more dynamic than the others. That is why, we find some sort of a development vacuum that is growing that more dynamic States are able to utilise the funds more effectively or even to involve the people more courageously thereby - I think it is not only Kerala but some other States are also doing that - achieving good results. I appreciate it and there is a need to...(Interruptions)

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the Prime Minister should address the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Question No. 302, Shri Rameshwar Patidar.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : For this Question, we have taken about 27 minutes.

[Translation]

Do you want to ask some other Question or not?

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI E. AHAMED : Sir, in his reply, there is a sense of achievement...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Question is important and everyone wants to ask. Therefore, have a Half-an-Hour discussion on it.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I have moved on the next Question. Shri Rameshwar Patidar please.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please take your seats.

[Translation]

Only one Question has consumed half-an-hour's time.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN : Sir, Question Hour should be defined as an hour where only one question will take one hour.

[Translation]

SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK : Is Half-an-hour discussion held or not...(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : That discussion takes place.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I take one Member from each section.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I also ask the people. Everybody cannot be called.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There are still some parties which could not ask any Question.

[English]

### Satellite Communication

\*302. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Indian Space Research Organisation has carried out several Pilot programmes to demonstrate the use of satellite communications for education and training;

(b) if so, the details of the programmes launched so far; and

(c) the result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN) : (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

### Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) ISRO in co-operation with many other educational and developmental agencies has organised a Training and Development Communication Channel using one transponder on the INSAT System. A number of demonstrations were organised to familiarise the users with the network.