

15.39 hrs.

Title: Shri Pravin Rashtrapal called the attention of the Minister of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation and Minister of Rural Development regarding non-payment of Minimum wages under Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojna.

MR.DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We can now take up Calling Attention. Shri Madhusudan Mistry-not present. Shri Pravin Rashtrapal.

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL (PATAN): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation and Minister of Rural Development to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Situation arising out of Non-payment of minimum wages to the labourers engaged by various State Government under Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojna and the steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the *Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana* (SGRY) was launched from 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2001 after merging the erstwhile ongoing Programmes of Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and the *Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana* (JGSY). The EAS and JGSY, however, continued to be implemented as part of the SGRY upto 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2002 with the increased allocation of funds and fresh allocation of foodgrains. The SGRY became fully operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2002 and being implemented throughout the country except Delhi and Union Territory of Chandigarh.

The Programme is implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. The cash component of the programme is shared between the Centre and the States in the ratio of 75:25 whereas foodgrains are provided to the States free of cost by the Centre. The cost of transportation of foodgrains from the FCI godown to the work-site/PDS and its distribution is the responsibility of the State/UT Governments. In the case of Union Territories, the Centre provides the entire (100%) funds under the Scheme.

The main objectives of the Programme are to provide additional wage employment in all rural areas and thereby provide food security to the rural poor. Wages under the Programme are paid partly in foodgrains and partly in cash. The SGRY has also a Special Component under which additional foodgrains are supplied to Calamity Affected States free of cost. The cash component has to be met from other Schemes.

The Minimum Wages are fixed by each State Government under the State Act. The Minimum Wages vary from State to State and from District to District within the State depending upon price index for the commodities required to maintain the subsistence level of livelihood. Under the SGRY/Special Component, for wages, the provisions are as follows:

- Minimum wages are required to be paid by the State Governments under the SGRY both for skilled and unskilled labourers. The wages are paid partly in kind and partly in cash. Minimum 5 kgs. of foodgrains and to the maximum of 75% of the wages can be paid in kind and balance subject to minimum of 25% in cash.
- Equal wages should be paid to both men and women workers under the Programme.
- Payment of wages should be made on a fixed day in a week preferably a day before the local market day.
- In case the Executive Agencies do not pay the wages for a category of employment at the rate notified for the relevant schedule of employment under the Minimum Wage Act, the DRDAs/Zila Parishads should withhold further release of funds to the concerned Implementing Agencies and inform the appropriate authority for taking suitable action against the erring officials against the Minimum Wage Act.
- If Central Government finds that the provision of minimum wages under the SGRY are being violated by a DRDA/Zila Parishad, the Centre can also withhold the further release of funds under the Programme to the concerned districts.

As reported by the State Governments, there is no difference between the minimum wages and the wages being paid under the SGRY. In the State of Gujarat, State Government has fixed Rs. 50.00 as wages to be paid for works under the SGRY. Out of Rs. 50.00, Rs. 25.00 are paid in cash and 5 kgs. of Wheat. Wheat is valued at Rs. 5.00 per kg. which is the BPL rate. In the drought-affected districts, the State Government is paying for scarcity relief works @ 3 kgs. of wheat and Rs. 36 as cash. However, the wheat is valued at Rs. 2.00 per kg. In order to ensure that the rates are uniform in the case of the SGRY, in Drought Affected Areas, same wages are paid for both SGRY and for scarcity relief works.

The issue of Wages under SGRY has been taken up by the Ministry of Rural Development with the State Government of Gujarat. The State Government has been asked to restore parity of Wages for the works to be taken up under the SGRY and the Special Component at the earliest possible. A letter to this effect has also been sent to the Principal Secretary (RD) Gujarat. The State has assured that the anomaly which is the result of past

practices will be resolved within 10 days and the wage structure will be reworked to ensure that the minimum wage of Rs. 60/- per day is worked out as well as 5 kgs. of foodgrains is issued. The Government of India is committed to ensure the payment of Minimum Wages to the rural poor for the works undertaken under the SGRY and the Special Component.

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL : Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, thank you very much. You will kindly appreciate that this is a very serious issue concerning not only the State of Gujarat but many States where drought is there.

I am extremely sorry to go on record that as far as drought is concerned, it was declared in the month of August-September in various States, but in the case of Gujarat it was delayed politically on account of elections in the month of December and the drought in Gujarat was declared as late as February. Whether there is rain or no rain, the relief work will be closed in the month of June, latest by 20<sup>th</sup> of June.

I want to inform the hon. Minister on the issue on which he has replied. He has already admitted in his reply to a Starred Question asked by me on 10<sup>th</sup> April in Lok Sabha, wherein he has stated that the minimum rate of wage in Gujarat is Rs.60; in Rajasthan it is Rs.60; in Andhra Pradesh, it is Rs.80, in Bihar, it is Rs.58.64; and in UP, it is Rs.58. But in the same reply, the hon. Minister has admitted that it is in Gujarat only where as against Rs.60 as minimum wage, only Rs.42.50 is paid by the State Government, in violation of the Minimum Wages Act.

The Minister has further stated that the two rates are differing only in the case of Gujarat. According to the State Government, lower wage rates in the drought affected districts are fixed by the Collectors in order to provide wage employment for maximum number of people for maximum workdays while providing relief work.

The question before this august House is, can a Government exploit rural poor, who are working under SGRY and relief work at the time of drought. The hon. Minister has today informed this House that the State Government has promised him to take remedial action within ten days. But from which date these ten days will be counted has not been made clear.

As far as I am concerned, my colleague Shri Madhusudan Mistry and I had written letters to the hon. Minister of Rural Development, to the hon. Minister of Labour, and to the Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat for taking appropriate action against the Collectors of Patan, Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Surendrar Nagar and of various other districts where minimum wage is not paid according to the State's own law. I am extremely sorry that no action is taken till date.

In that view, one of the answers of the hon. Minister is that funds will be stopped to that State if it does not implement the law. That will be again a punishment to the poor workers. Why does he not take action against the Collectors who are not implementing the State and Central laws?

In that respect, I want to ask the hon. Minister, what action the Central Government will take against the concerned Minister, against the concerned Collectors of various districts in Gujarat who are not implementing the Minimum Wages Act in the State of Gujarat.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: As per the Calling Attention Rule 197 as many as five Members can be listed, but only three are listed here and from that the first and third Members, whose names are listed, are not present. As an exception, if one or two more Members want any clarificatory questions, that also I will explore and then the hon. Minister may reply. Generally, it is not done. But as only one Member is there, therefore, I am giving him a chance as an exception. It should not be taken as a precedent.

SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN (SIVAGANGA): Thank you, Deputy-Speaker Sir. Actually the RLEGP and NREP were successfully implemented during the Congress period. They gave employment to the local people. They were given minimum wages. They were also getting the foodgrains when the market price was very high. But, when this particular Programme is being implemented now by the State Governments, especially at the local level, only the contractors are benefited, not the landless people or the people who are depending on these wages. I want to know whether the Government will stress that the contract system should not be applied, it should be given only to the *panchayats* and *panchayats* should implement it. Whosoever are coming forward to register their names for getting work under these Programmes, will they be given the benefit of minimum wages, employment and also cheap foodgrains?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. A.K. Premajam. There should be just one clarificatory question.

PROF. A.K. PREMAJAM (BADAGARA): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

Sir, the *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana*, which had been there in existence under some other name, is actually meant for ensuring employment and also food for the very poor in the country, namely, BPL families. But, of late, it

is found that contractors with all gadgets, which can finish work quickly, are engaged in this process of implementing the Programmes under *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana*. That is actually very adversely affecting the BPL families. My specific question is this. I would like to know whether this has come to the notice of the Government. If so, will the Government take immediate measures to stop this practice and ensure that employment and food security go to the deserving BPL families? Thank you, Sir.

डॉ. महेन्द्र सिंह पाल (नैनीताल) : गुजरात ही नहीं, अन्य प्रदेशों में भी इस योजना के अंतर्गत न्यूनतम मजदूरी लोगों को नहीं दी जा रही है। यही नहीं, दस दिन भी उनको काम नहीं दिया जाता, जबकि कम से कम 15 दिन काम मिलना चाहिए। मैं मंत्री जी प्रार्थना करूंगा कि इस योजना के अंतर्गत बी.पी.एल. के लोग जो कार्य करते हैं, उनको न्यूनतम मजदूरी अवश्य मिलनी चाहिए। इसके साथ ही मैं यह भी कहना चाहूंगा कि वे इस बात का भी प्रोविजन कराएं और देखें कि सभी राज्यों में न्यूनतम मजदूरी दी जा रही है या नहीं, क्योंकि एक्ट के तहत उनको न्यूनतम मजदूरी दी जानी चाहिए और कम से कम 10 से 20 दिन तक काम मिलना चाहिए।

**उपाध्यक्ष महोदय** : सवाल मिनीमम वेजेज के बारे में ही है।

**श्री हरीभाऊ शंकर महाले (मालेगांव)** : पैसे के बदले अनाज योजना एक अच्छी योजना है। लेकिन इस योजना के अंतर्गत इतना खराब अनाज मिलता है कि उसको जानवर भी नहीं खाता। इस वजह से लोग मजदूरी करने नहीं आते। इसलिए इसमें सुधार करने की जरूरत है।

**श्री अकबर अली खांदोकर (सेरमपुर)** : बंगाल में भी इस योजना के अंतर्गत काम चल रहा है। लेकिन वहां लोगों को बढ़िया अनाज नहीं मिलता, क्योंकि वह दुकानों पर चला जाता है। दिल्ली से जो चावल बंगाल इस योजना के अंतर्गत जाता है, वह बी.बी.एल. के लोगों को नहीं मिलता। इसलिए मैं मंत्री जी से अनुरोध करता हूँ कि वे इसकी सी.बी.आई. या अन्य किसी एजेंसी से जांच कराएं कि वहां दिल्ली से जो चावल जाता है, उसका कितना उपयोग हुआ और क्या वह वास्तव में सही लोगों को मिलता है या नहीं? अगर ऐसा नहीं होगा तो बंगाल की गरीब जनता को भारी मुश्किल होगी।

**प्रो. एस.पी.सिंह बघेल (जलेसर)** : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, कई जगहों पर तो मजदूरों की बजाय मशीनों से काम कराया जाता है।

**SHRI ANANTH KUMAR: Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I share the concern of my dear colleague Shri Pravin Rashtrapal and other senior Members of this House regarding the minimum wages.**

**In regard to the State of Gujarat, our Ministry has already written a letter to the Secretary, Rural Development and I also personally spoke to the hon. Chief Minister of Gujarat. They have replied back that the anomaly would be corrected within the next ten days. I think, that will satisfy Shri Pravin Rashtrapal as well as the House. Such anomalies existed in the States of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh also but now they have been corrected.**

**Secondly, one of the hon. Members raised the question that** अनाज जानवर भी नहीं खा सकते हैं, यह तथ्य नहीं है। Why? It is because whatever foodgrains are released by the Food Corporation of India, they are released after verification from the State Government. It is the responsibility of the State Government to take the foodgrains and to give the wage component, that means the cash component. The *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana* is slated to give only 10 wage days of employment per month. Therefore, it is not possible to give 15 wage days. If 10 wage days are not being given in Madhya Pradesh, the matter should be taken up with the State Government of Madhya Pradesh.

This has been one of the very good programmes in the country which is being implemented and most of the BPL families are getting succour because of the *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana*.