

14.06 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Six Minutes past*

*Fourteen of the Clock.*

(Mr. Deputy-Speaker *in the Chair*)

**DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY GRANTS (GENERAL), 2004-2005**

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We will now take up item No. 14 relating to Supplementary Demands for Grants (General).

*Motion moved:*

"That the respective supplementary sums not exceeding the amounts on Revenue Account and Capital Account shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31<sup>st</sup> day of March, 2005, in respect of the following demands entered in the second column thereof – Demand Nos. 1, 3, 5 to 7, 12 to 15, 18, 20 and 21, 30, 32, 34, 36, 40, 42, 44, 47 to 50, 56 to 59, 61, 65 and 66, 68 to 70, 72 and 73, 80, 82 to 93, 95 to 100 and 104."

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Kharabela Swain may initiate the discussion.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (BALASORE): Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, I rise to formally oppose the Supplementary Demands for Grants (General).

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (PANDHARPUR): Why? ...(*Interruptions*)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आदवले जी, अ्मी तो ब्बेठे न्हीं, अ्मी तो काम शुरु न्हीं हुआ और आपने डिस्टर्ब करना शुरु कर दिया।

...(व्यवधान)

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : I say 'formally' because we still keep this Government in probation. The Government is barely seven months old and is under trial. I do not have any intention of questioning the efficiency or the motives of the hon. Finance Minister or, so to say, the hon. Prime Minister who is the father of economic liberalisation in India. Both the hon. Finance Minister and the hon. Prime Minister are well-meaning people and are trying their best. So, while dealing with the Supplementary Demands for Grants, I shall only focus on the points where, I think, things have gone wrong.

The hon. Finance Minister, in his mid-year review, has painted a quite rosy picture of the state of economy. There has been greater growth in agriculture, industry and in the services in the first quarter of this fiscal year. Buffer stock is 2.2 million tonnes more than the normal. In the balance of payments case, there is a surplus in the Current Account and the Capital Account. External debt has not risen. It remains at 112.6 billion dollars. Long-term debt has declined by 1.1 billion dollars. But short-term loan rose by 1.2 million dollars. This is one of the points which I would like to definitely point out to the hon. Finance Minister because he knows the details. The major problem arises when the short-term loan increases. The Indian rupee has appreciated now. Electricity grew by 8.7 per cent and electricity shortage came down from 6.4 per cent to 6 per cent.

The number of mobile phones has increased by 81 per cent; the number of families covered under *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* has increased from 1.5 crores to 2 crores; tax collection is buoyant; collection of tax arrears in respect of corporate income tax and personal income tax is more; expenditure has reduced; plan expenditure has increased by Rs. 638 crore; fiscal deficit is lower and revenue deficit is also lower by Rs. 5,473 crore. This kind of rosy picture has been painted. It is very natural because these are the dynamics of the last year's 8.2 per cent growth. It is very natural that these things have not happened because of this Government, although I agree that this Government has taken very good steps within the last seven months. But these are also the dynamics of the last years 8.2 per

cent growth rate.

Whenever there are any problems, the hon. Finance Minister has come out with solutions to them. He has explained as to why certain things have not happened. To start with, as far as the revenue collection is concerned, he has said that in the first half, in certain cases, it has come down. He has said that generally in the second half of the year of the fiscal it picks up. We accept it. We are waiting for that. He has said that because of the delay in passing of the Finance Bill, money did not flow into the coffer of the Government. We also agree with that. He has said that he would start a pilot project to restore the water bodies in the beginning of the next year. He has already set up an Investment Commission, which will bring in and facilitate FDI flow into India. He has said that he would tone up the tax administration. During the next year's Budget, he said, he would give priority for completing the projects. He has also said that he would try to fix the revenue deficit at 2.5 per cent. He has constituted two Task Forces last August to expedite collection.

The reason as to why I said that the Government is under trial is because we want to wait for one year. We will just wait. After the completion of one year, the results will show whether he has achieved what he has said. We will also be there during the next year's Budget presentation. At that time, we will come up with our views. The entire country will see whether he has achieved his targets.

Now, let me come to one of the other major points. I am not referring to the hon. Members of the Congress Party. I am referring to the hon. Members of the Left; hon. Members of the RJD and the hon. Members of the Samajwadi Party, who during the tenure of Twelfth and Thirteenth Lok Sabhas, rushed to the Well of the House, at the drop of the hat, to see to it that the House did not run. All the time they tried to accuse the NDA Government, saying that the NDA Government was *kisan virodhi*, *garib virodhi*, etc. In this connection, I will just read out two or three points from the Mid-Year Review. Actually, I will just come out with two or three points on the Mid-Year Review that has been presented by the hon. Finance Minister.

Now, I will come to the Minimum Support Price. All the time, all these parties accused the NDA Government of being *kisan virodhi*. They said that the farmers are not able to sell their paddy and that the NDA Government was not paying even a single pie more to the farmers. Let us come to that point. Let us see what does the Mid-Year Review of this Government, which they support, say on this point. It says that it should restrict further increase in the MSP of principal cereals.

What are the principal cereals? They are paddy and wheat. It says:

"Restrict the temptation of introducing Minimum Support Price (MSP) for new products..."

They do not want to extend it to any other product also.

"...and restrict the temptation of increasing Minimum Support Price (MSP) on existing products exorbitantly..."

They do not want to increase it now also.

"...and not to undermine the competitiveness of India as an agricultural exporter..."

Now, they say:

"Minimum Support Price (MSP) on paddy in excess of C-2 cost..."

That means, all the costs in cash and kind. They say that after all the costs are calculated, the Government is paying Rs.29 more to the farmers per quintal for paddy and Rs.125 per quintal on wheat.

Lastly, the Mid-Term Review says:

"Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been kept at a modest level for the last three years."

He has agreed with what we did. He says, "there is need to continue". This means, it should not increase. Then, if the Government that you are supporting is doing the same thing, then why did you accuse us? We also followed the same principle.

Now, let me come to the point with regard to subsidy on kerosene. On the point of subsidy on kerosene, the Mid-Term Review says:

"Reviews of the subsidy on domestic fuel, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and kerosene have clearly established that despite their attractiveness through subsidisation and being cleaner fuels, they have not had significant impact in weaning rural households from dependence on biomass. Ninety per cent of the rural households and thirty-three per cent of the urban households continue to use free biomass as fuel."

This Review ultimately says:

"Such untargeted subsidy violate the canons of equity. The income transfer is primarily to the non-poor and not to the destitute and the poorest of the poor."

They say that they will not increase the subsidy on kerosene and LPG. That is what is contained in this Mid-Term Review. What did we do? Then, why did you accuse us? What for are you supporting this Government when they are also following our principles?

Now, let us come to the point of investment. The Leftist will simply jump at the issue of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). They say "no FDI". देश को बर्बाद कर दिया, बेच दिया। देश को बेच दिया। The Leftist used to say this all the time. With regard to investment - in the Mid-Term Review - they say that 'the Government alone, even after fiscal consolidation and elimination of revenue deficit, will not be able to generate the required resources needed for adequate investment to support substantial annual growth of 7-8 per cent. Hence, there is a need to increase the involvement of the private sector'. The Government says that they want to involve the private sector in order to attract foreign investment.

Again, I am coming to the same point. I do not oppose them on this point. I agree that whatever they have done is good. This is for the interest of this country. I agree with this. But, merely saying that देश को बर्बाद कर दिया, बेच दिया is not good. When we followed our policy, we were called "traitors". Now you are also following the same policy and you are showing red signal outside and the green signal inside. This is one of the most hypocritic behaviour by the Left with regard to this Government.

Sir, now I come to another point. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: No running commentary, please.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : Now, the Government says that hon. Prime Minister had declared about this. The hon. Finance Minister has also declared this thing.

They want to strengthen, deepen and broaden the reforms. They agree with these economic reforms. And still they want to deepen it, strengthen it and broaden it. My point is this: how?

When the Government came into power, the hon. Finance Minister in his Budget Speech made a commitment that he wanted reforms, but he wanted reforms with a human face. If I go through the progress of selective reform measures announced in the Union Budget, most of the things, Mr. Minister, you talk about, are these things. You talk about the pension sector reforms, introduction of VAT, setting up a Task Force for the Cooperative Banking System, drawing up a National Water Resources Development Scheme, launching a nation-wide water harvesting scheme, circulation of a model law for creating a common market for agricultural produce in the country; dereserving some 85 items from the list of items reserved for exclusive manufacture by the small scale sector; enhancing the FDI ceiling in various sectors and introduction of a new 'Senior Citizens Savings Scheme' offering an interest rate of nine per cent per annum. Are they not simply the same things which we introduced? Sir, of course, with a new name, they might have done it. But they still say that they want to do it with a human face. What is the human face?

Broadly, I have identified four factors which they wanted to introduce with a human face. One is doubling of the agriculture credit to the farmers within the next three years. As a Member of the Standing Committee on Finance, I have gone around the country. I have found certain things. Actually, the hon. Finance Minister is very sincere. He has tried to impress upon the bankers to double the credit within three years. He has already achieved a significant measure of success in this regard. I agree to these things. But, during the last seven months, 1860 farmers had committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh alone. A book has been published by Shri Yerrannaidu in this regard. So, by just providing the agriculture subsidy, if they think of checking and controlling the suicides, why could they not do it in the last seven months? During the time of Shri Chandrababu Naidu – against whom a lot of allegations were made by the Congress Party, against whom the Congress Party fought the elections on the basic issue of providing free electricity, free water and so many other things - by promising these things, the Congress Party came to power. But still why had 1860 farmers committed suicide during the last seven months only? It is not that the credit was not available. The credit was available – not from the Government sector but it was available from outside.

The major thing is this. Why did the farmers commit suicide? Because their produce was not being sold in the

market with a good price. They did not get a good price for their produce. That is the major problem. That is the major bottleneck. No credit was available. So, this is one of the factors of human face! I do not think that this is going to make much of a difference.

The second is the Employment Guarantee Programme. They said: "We will provide hundred days work to one person from each family in the country every year." This is the human face! The Bill is yet to come. Seven months have passed. Every year, for the implementation of that programme, it will require Rs.40,000 crore. Naturally, any Government should project from where to get the money. Naturally, this Government must be bothered about that. Now, we hear that the Cabinet Committee has cleared the Bill and it would be introduced in this Session itself. Let them come forward with the Bill.

I would like to know as to when the Bill would be brought forward. If a person wants a job and the Government is not capable of providing him with a job, can he go to the Court and sue the Government? I would like to know that if the Government does not provide a job to somebody, whether the State Government would give him an allowance. Let us come to know as to how many States come forward to provide it. In today's Newspaper, 'The Asian Age' – I just went through it – the CPM has started attacking the Government that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission has diluted this Act. From the very beginning, they have started attacking it. So, I would like to know as to when the Bill would be brought forward. That is why, I say that we have to wait till the end of this year. Let us know as to how the human face will come about.

The third question is about the reservation in the private sector. That is one human face, which is projected by this Government. Nowadays, we are not hearing about this. There is a lot of opposition from the industrial sector. I do not know as to how far the Government has progressed in this regard. I would like to know from the Government whether they are bringing in any Bill in regard to this.

The last point is this. They took a lot of pride – being very ably propelled by the hon. Members from the Left – that the process of disinvestment should be stopped. Sir, it has been stopped. Let me tell you as to how the Media has reviewed about it. It has said much about the disinvestment in the industrial sector. Now, they say that the high growth rate cannot be achieved and maintained unless the level of investment in the economy increases significantly. The enhancement of investment will depend upon the augmentation of investible resources, and creating a climate that encourages private initiative. I would just like to refer it to the hon. Members from the Left. They want private initiative. They say that the Government alone, even after the fiscal consolidation and the elimination of revenue deficit, will not be able to generate the required resources needed for adequate investment to support the sustainable annual growth of seven per cent to eight per cent. Hence, there is a need to increase involvement of the private sector and also to attract the foreign investment. Sir, if the hon. Finance Minister is really sincere and if he really understands and believes that it is the private sector alone which can usher in the economic growth in this country, then why did he stop the process of disinvestment? Why did he do it? It is not a human face.

Sir, during the last 25 years, Rs.30,000 crore package has been given for the revival of the public sector units. Can the hon. Finance Minister say that a single – I say 'a single' – public sector undertaking which is revived. Now, they say that they have constituted the Board of Reconstruction for Public Sector Enterprises.

**उपाध्यक्ष महोदय:** मुझे तीन बजे प्राइवेट मैम्बर्स बिल लेने हैं। मैं चाहता हूँ कि उससे पहले एक-दो मैम्बर्स बोल लें तो अच्छा होगा। अब आप कनक्लूड करिए।

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : Sir, I am the first speaker. You just give me five or six minutes. Within five or six minutes, I will conclude.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Okay, you may continue.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN : Now, they say that they have set up the Board for Reconstruction of Public Sector Enterprises. It is good. But who set up the Disinvestment Commission. Did we do that? It was set up when the United Front Government was in power and the present Finance Minister was the Finance Minister in that Government also. They just changed the name now. We only followed the recommendations of the Disinvestment Commission. The NDA Government did that. Now, they just changed it. Why have they changed it?

Sir, an amount of Rs. 2,79,000 crore is invested in public sector undertakings and it is going to give us a return of only 3.5 per cent. So, how much money is going down the drain? Just to satisfy the trade unions, when they say that there should not be any process of disinvestment, I strongly oppose it. When the Government shows its intention through the Mid-Year Review and say that it is the private sector which can augment the economy of this country, then why should they go only by the sayings of the Left Parties?

There are two or three mistakes that I would just like to point out. One is with regard to inflation. When the hon. Finance Minister replied to the debate on price rise in the House, he said that there are several reasons for the inflation. He said that it is due to the increase in the price of petroleum products, erratic monsoon, truckers' strike

and rise in the price of metal, and because of all these factors, inflation has skyrocketed to more than seven per cent. But I would like to ask a question to the hon. Finance Minister. Did he mean to say that nothing happened during the six-year rule of the NDA? Did Orissa super cyclone not take place? Did Gujarat earthquake not happen? Did the worst drought of the Century not take place? Did the East Asian financial crisis not take place? Was there no flood in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Orissa? Did the United States of America not impose sanctions on us? In spite of all that, the NDA Government retained inflation at the rate of 4.5 per cent and within seven months, it has skyrocketed to seven per cent. Now, the Reserve Bank of India has revised its prediction with regard to inflation. They had suggested in May that it would be 5.5 per cent. Now they say that it would be more than 6.5 per cent.

I would like to point out one more thing. In the Mid-Year Review, it has been very strongly mentioned about augmenting infrastructure. When you go through this Mid-Year Review, you will find that the Government admits that only 56 per cent of the work in the Golden Quadrilateral Project has been completed. You go to any place in India and you will find that during the last seven months, the process of construction of the four-lane National Highway Project has slowed down considerably. Sometimes, we think that probably it has been stopped altogether. From the beginning of this project, we knew that it would be completed by the end of 2004, but now only 56 per cent of the work has been completed.

Now, I will come to the river-linking project. The hon. Members from Tamil Nadu all the time say that it is an excellent project. The initiator, the harbinger of this project is sitting here. Now, simply it has been given a go-by. Then how do they say that they are really interested in augmenting infrastructure in this country? The fiscal deficit can also go up.

They have admitted it here that because of Sampoorna Gram Rozgar Yojana, Food-for-Work Programme and for all these things, it may still go on. So the fiscal deficit may go up.

There is an over-ambitious, unrealistic projection of tax collection. It cannot be collected. You go through it. Even 50 per cent have not been collected. Even if he says that it will pick up in the second part of this year, we still do not believe in that. But we will wait. We wish him good luck. If he collects it, it is very good.

Finally, I will make some suggestions. These are the points of weaknesses, which I have mentioned. During the Question Hour, I had put a question with regard to DRTs, which the hon. Finance Minister kindly answered saying that they do not have the infrastructure to collect the dues. He has already said that he is going to empower some of the people as the Recovery Officers. I thank him very much for that.

Another point with regard to DRTs is that they take up the case on first-cum-first serve basis. But my appeal to him is that they should take up the high-value cases first. He should do something in this regard that the DRTs should take up the high value cases first and then the cases which are not of much value can be taken up.

Now, I come to the Mid-day Meal Scheme. They say that it is a great scheme. But what sort of a scheme is it where the cost of one meal is Rs.1.20? Everybody knows that there was a case of food poisoning just two-three days ago and many of the children fell ill after taking this meal in Delhi. So, my appeal to the hon. Finance Minister is that it should be targeted. I would request him not to give it to everybody.

In my constituency, in many of the schools, the children do not eat it. It is only sold in the black market by the Village Committee, and by selling it they do some other things with that money. In most of the schools, a teacher is engaged in cooking also. Except teaching, he is doing everything else, like cooking, going to Block Office to collect his salary, engaged in preparation of ration cards, engaged in the Census work and all sorts of other works. Now, the added work to his list is cooking for the children. That is what a teacher is doing there. He is simply not teaching, but doing everything else.

Another suggestion is that the Customs Department should be allowed to appoint its own lawyers to deal with these cases. The Law Ministry, at Delhi, is recommending some lawyers whose quality are poor. As a member of the Standing Committee, I came to know that the Government or the Finance Ministry has to give them some power to appoint their own lawyers so that they will be able to fight their cases effectively.

Now, the posts of inspectors, technical assistants, etc. in the Income Tax Department, who are the eyes and ears of the Department, who can collect more and more revenue, are lying vacant. So many posts are vacant and the hon. Finance Minister should see to it that these posts are filled up quickly.

The rate of interest that is charged from the SHGs is very high. It should be reduced. The LIC should be corporatised. They should reconsider the selection of BPL families. They should send some outside agency to do

the job. It should be a one-time job and every year they need not send a teacher, who will simply write down the names of everybody and that is all.

In my constituency, 84 per cent of the population has been labelled as BPL. This is a total fraud. I would request the hon. Finance Minister to see to it. Actually, the number of poor that we have projected is not that much.

What is this investment climate that we are just making? Take the example of Bangalore and Mumbai. Because of lack of infrastructure, the outsourcing job is not going to come. They simply want to run away from that place. I went to Bangalore. It has become so crowded. The roads have become so crowded and all sorts of difficulties are there. So, I appeal to the hon. Finance Minister to look into it.

Lastly, I will read three-four sentences with regard to Orissa. The coal royalty should be revised because Orissa is losing a lot of money just because of that.

On interest on loan payment, it should be given a moratorium. Paradip Petro Refinery should be completed quickly. Burla Engineering college should be elevated to the status of an IIT. Jharsuguda should be developed as an airport because so many steel plants are coming up in Orissa. Jaleswar-Chandeneswar road in my constituency, which is now under construction under the CRF, should be completed. It should be given more money so that it could be completed quickly. It is one of the worst roads. Central assistance should be given for the development of Udaipur and Chandipur-on-sea for tourism purpose. Babahalpur in the district of Balasore should be developed as export promotion port and Balaramgadi should be developed as a model fishing harbour.

Last but not least, I would like to appeal to you, on behalf of all the Members of this House, that the amount of MPLADS should be increased from Rs. 2 crore to Rs. 3 crore. ...*(Interruptions)* Your Members are raising their hands. In spite of all motivated campaigns against this, this is the best-managed Scheme in India because all the Members are interested in it. They take personal interest in it. So, I would appeal to you – we are also going to the Prime Minister and to the Speaker – to increase it. I am not asking about Rs. 5 crore, I am just saying that it should be increased from Rs. 2 crore to Rs. 3 crore. It is because, MPLADS Committee have recommended it. You increase it at least for the Members of Lok Sabha.

With these words, I conclude. ....*(Interruptions)*

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY (DHENKANAL): It should be totally scrapped....*(Interruptions)*

**उपाध्यक्ष महोदय :** डिस्टर्ब मत करें। वे आपके काम की बात कर रहे हैं।

...*(Interruptions)*

**उपाध्यक्ष महोदय :** हमारे पास 3 बजे तक टाइम है।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE): He has spoken for 45 minutes. He has spoken a lot....*(Interruptions)*

**उपाध्यक्ष महोदय :** डिस्कशन तो कंटीन्यू रखेंगे, लेकिन 3 बजे में प्राइवेट मैम्बर्स बिल लेना चाहता हूँ।

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, I rise to support the Demands for Grants. As we know the regular Budget was placed on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2004, and this is the first batch of 56 Supplementary Grants.

According to Hannah More, sound economy is a sound understanding brought into action. It is a calculation realised. It is the doctrine of proportion reduced to practice. It is foreseeing exigency and providing against it. It is expecting exigencies and being prepared for it....*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please do not disturb the House.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : ...*(Interruptions)* by the dynamic and eminent economist of India. The Finance Minister has been pursuing very consistently the commitment that we have made to the people of India under National Common Minimum Programme. We cannot create any rosy picture on our own because economy of this country is reflected in our lives. Therefore, it is not a rosy picture, rather it is a real picture that has been already reflected in Mid-Term-Review.

Sir, the Government is vigorously pursuing the reform agenda. The Government has put special emphasis on the investment in agriculture sector and rural economy. We have introduced a next generation tax reform by widening the tax base. The Government is promoting the integrated development perspective specially in areas of water, oil,

transport, energy, and infrastructure. Sir, in co-operation with the State Governments, the Union Government has taken special initiative for a single national market by introducing the Value Added Tax throughout the country.

This Government desires to dismantle agriculture control. If we peep into the Mid-Year Review, we will find that the Supplementary Demands for Grants have been placed in the background of increase in oil market volatility. That cannot be denied.

Sir, the Finance Minister has already candidly admitted that due to the spiraling prices of oil market, which were earlier expected to be managed, there has been a slippage. He has admitted that post-Budget duty concessions and other expenditure commitments have become the reasons that we cannot reach the ambitious revenue and fiscal targets. On the other hand, the revenues which are supposed to be derived from other taxes, such as education cess, service tax, and security exchange tax, are yet to pore into the coffer, are yet to pore into our exchequer. However, the Fiscal Responsibilities and Budget Management Act is in vogue. So, we have to abide by the laid down norms and prescriptions under FRBM Act, where it is found that only 0.5 per cent annual percentage reduction of revenue has been met.

Sir, the earlier Government had ignored the most vital sector of our country, that is, the agricultural sector. Agricultural sector had been sacrificed at the altar of secondary and tertiary sectors. In the name of industrial development, the primary sector was paid scant attention resulting in a policy gap which this Government is striving hard to correct itself.

As per the Budget proposals, seven objectives have been identified. The first objective is to maintain a growth rate of seven to eight per cent per year for a sustained period. As per the Central Statistical Organisation, this expectation has not yet been fulfilled because the rainfall was not normal. Sir, 13 divisions of our country have experienced deficient rainfall.

The second utmost vital thing is that there is shooting up of crude oil price in the international market. The second objective, as was placed in the Budget this year, is for providing universal access to quality basic education and health. This is the most ambitious plan that the Government has conceived because as per the United Nations Development Programme, out of 177 countries, we have ranked

127. It is much below than in the year 2001. But the reason cited is that we are lagging behind in education. That is why this is the first time that an education cess has been imposed.

The third objective is for generating gainful employment in agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors, and promoting investment. A new deal for agriculture has already been announced by the hon. Finance Minister. It has been committed that within three years, agricultural growth will be doubled. Also, the agricultural credit has been increased by more than Rs.1,00,000 crore.

Furthermore, as we have observed, in the year 1950-51, the agricultural share of our GDP was to the tune of 61 per cent which has now been reduced to 24.2 per cent. However, dependence of Indian population on agriculture has been marginally reduced. In the year 1950-51, it was 77 per cent, now it has been brought down to 67 per cent only. That is why, we cannot ignore the importance of agricultural sector in view of the fact that India has the highest potentiality in the growth of agriculture.

It is because we are second in the world in terms of wheat and rice production. Ten per cent of world's vegetables and fruits are being produced by our farmers. Therefore, the Government has been vigorously pursuing the National Agricultural Policy which was framed to increase the growth of our agriculture to the tune of 4 per cent per year. But in order to materialise the growth of agriculture, we have to explore new ideas in other sub-sectors, such as horticulture, pisci- culture, live-stocks, etc. Already various Task Forces have been constituted to make further progress in other agricultural sub-sectors.

Sir, the fourth objective, as was expressed in the Budget, is to assure hundred days' employment to the breadwinner in each family at the minimum wage. Sir, before a child is born, somebody was acquiescing against that child. Still the legal implication of National Employment Guarantee Act is being examined and considered by various experts. The UPA Government is only 7 months' old and ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY: A baby.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: No running commentary please.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Right. Before a baby is born, people start asking whether it is a male or a female child. But we must appreciate this Government that in view of the deteriorating situation in our rural India – where penury and poverty have been striking hard, where starvation deaths have become the order of the day – the

Government has identified 150 districts where "Food for Work" programme is going to be introduced. Naturally, it is a first step towards meeting the commitment of assuring hundred days' employment to the breadwinner in each family at the minimum wage.

The fifth objective is focusing on agricultural infrastructure, the sixth objective is to accelerate fiscal consolidation and reform, and the seventh objective is to ensuring higher and more efficient fiscal devolution. Sir, as I have earlier stated, this year, the 7 to 8 per cent growth has not been achieved.

As per the Central Statistical Organisation, we have achieved a GDP growth rate in the range of six to 6.5 per cent for the year 2004-05.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Hon. Member, please take your seat. You can continue later. We have to take up Private Members' Business now.

---