

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, June 3, 1998/ Jyaistha 13, 1920 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

translation]

Condition of Farmers

*102. DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA:
SHRI RAMANAND SINGH :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have prepared any specific programme to improve the condition of farmers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which the said programme is likely to be made effective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir,

(b) and (c) Government is implementing a number of crop-specific production programmes covering cereals, pulses and oilseeds, horticulture, sugarcane, jute and cotton. These programmes provide input and other support measures to the farmers. New initiatives are proposed to be undertaken to exploit ground and surface water potentialities of the high potential low-productivity areas in the country to exploit in full the production potential of these regions. A Technology Mission on Cotton will be launched and efforts at watershed development accelerated on the basis of the 25 year perspective plan prepared by the Planning Commission. Schemes for the revitalisation of the cooperatives and the rural credit structure are on the anvil. For accelerating the completion of on-going irrigation projects an accelerated irrigation benefits programme has been launched. The Rural Infrastructure Development Fund under NABARD, employment and income generating schemes, and the subsidised supply of inputs like fertilizers, high-yielding variety seeds, water and power besides the remunerative price support system are aimed at improving the productivity and thus the economic lot of farmers. All these programmes as well as efforts aimed at doubling food production in the country in the next 10 years would make

the country hunger-free and improve the condition of farmers all round.

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in reply to my question, the hon. Minister has mentioned various schemes of irrigation, power supply, financial loans and other schemes launched for the welfare of farmers. I would like to draw the attention of the Government towards an important problem which has not been taken up.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, farmers suffer huge losses due to natural calamities, be it hailstorm, heavy rains, scanty rain, drought flood or loss caused by insects. In the existing laws there is no provision to provide compensation for the losses suffered by farmers due to damage of crops by these natural calamities. Farmers do not get any compensation for their crops and this leads to deterioration in their financial condition and they are compelled to fall in debt trap. There is no provision in legislation to write off this debt and thus farmers have to face hard times. Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to know from the hon. Minister of Agriculture whether he proposes to enact any legislation for providing compensation to farmers for losses suffered by them due to damage to crops by natural calamities ?

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not that there is no provision for compensation for losses suffered due to natural calamities. Tenth Finance Commission had made two types of recommendations for it. National Development Council accepted these recommendations and constituted Natural Calamities Relief Fund for the period of 1995 to 2000 and a National Calamities Relief Fund. Natural Calamities Relief Fund has been set up for providing compensation to farmers whose crops are damaged due to natural calamities. State Governments are responsible for payment of this compensation. The Government of India provide 75 per cent subscription to this relief fund and remaining 25 per cent is paid by State Governments. State Governments make arrangements for providing compensation. In certain circumstances when State Governments are unable to provide compensation due to resources crunch then they inform the central government accordingly. *prima facie* the government finds that state government is unable to meet the contingency with its own resources, then a study team is sent which submits its report to the National Development Council. The Committee of National Development Council which consists of five Chief Ministers and three Cabinet Ministers as its members, takes decision on it as per the fixed guidelines, principles and rules and allocation of funds is made accordingly for providing compensation.

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in Multai region of Madhya Pradesh 27 farmers were killed during firing by police on farmers, who staged demonstration to seek compensation for losses suffered due to natural calamities. In the same way many farmers of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra had committed suicide. I do not feel that farmers were given any relief or aid under the above mentioned schemes.

My second question is about the various schemes of providing loan, credit policy scheme and irrigation projects

launched by the government as has been mentioned by the hon. Minister. In Madhya Pradesh lands of almost 1.5 lakh farmers have been auctioned by the Land Development Corporation and several irrigation projects are lying pending and thus fields could not be irrigated. I would like to say that several such schemes are formulated but these could not be implemented. I would like to know whether the government has any plan for immediate implementation of such schemes.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question asked by the hon. member relates to the Department of Water Resources. However, most of the projects relating to water resources are implemented by the State Governments. I would like to say that in the current budget allocation has been increased by 58 per cent for the Extended Irrigation Benefit Scheme. This will result in additional facilities for irrigation. It has been emphasized that irrigation projects in final stage should be completed at the earliest so that additional arrangements for irrigation could be made in next two three years. The Central Government follows it and central loan assistance is provided under this scheme.

SHRI RAMANAND SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the reply given by the hon. Minister it has been mentioned that the government propose to make optimum utilization of ground and surface water in the regions of low productivity with higher potential. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has identified the areas of low productivity with higher potential and whether Bhind, Satna, Reewa, Seadhi, Shahdol, Panna, Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh areas of Madhya Pradesh come under it or not?

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. member is quite correct when he says that mostly poor people live in those areas which lack proper irrigation facility and are, therefore, areas of low productivity. The Government has formulated a National Watershed Development Project for the areas depending on rainfall. A project has been formulated for the areas which lack water resources including perennial rivers, where canals cannot be dug or are non-existent and where rainfall is also scanty. I would like to inform that Planning Commission has formulated a 25 year project which will cost Rs. 75800 crore and it will be implemented during the next Five Year Plan. This will bring additional 64.3 million hectares of land under Irrigation. In the current budget Rs. 677 crore have been allocated for it. The areas, mentioned by the hon. Member fall under the area of low productivity and these projects would be implemented there.

SHRI RAMANAND SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have another supplementary question related with it (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Ramanand Singh, please sit down.

..... (Interruptions)

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR
Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the hon. Prime Minister was kind enough when he came to Dhulia in his first election meeting to announce that he will look into the problems of the farmers and go in for agricultural insurance scheme also.

I do not know as to what has happened to that scheme I would like to know from the hon. Minister, since he is saying that he is taking steps to improve the conditions of the farmer, whether the Maharashtra Government's Scheme of Monopoly Cotton Scheme would be extended for five years.

The conditions of the farmer depend upon the soil conditions. I would like to know whether you are going to make efforts to analyse the soil conditions of different parts of the country using the new technology that is available, so that the farmer knows as to what kind of fertilizer to be used and in what quantum it is to be used.

SHRI SOMPAL : So far as the insurance scheme is concerned, there is already one scheme in operation which is known as the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme. But, recently we have taken a decision to come out with another scheme which will be known as Modified Crop Insurance Scheme wherein we have seen to it that there will be no limit to the amount insured. The earlier scheme had a limit of Rs. 10,000 and it was applicable to only small and marginal farmers. This insurance will cover all the crops and all the farmers. They will have two components; one will be the loanee component. Under this it will be made compulsory to have insurance to any amount which a farmer has taken as loan. This second will be voluntary; even those farmers who have not taken loan also come under this scheme. For this Rs. 100 crore has already been earmarked in this Budget. We will come out with a proper legislative framework as well as institutional set up and the damage assessment system in due course and soon it will be made operational.

Coming to the second part of the hon. Member's question about soil testing facilities, I do confess that soil testing facilities are not adequate in rural areas and this scheme has to be updated with adequate number of soil testing facilities and the latest techniques should be there. Our Krishi Vigyan Kendras, various universities, State Institutions and the research centres are doing their job, but it is not adequate and it must be updated as well as sufficient number of testing facilities should be provided.

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR : He has not replied to my question about the Cotton Monopoly Scheme. It is a very important question.

SHRI SOMPAL : Maharashtra is the only State where this scheme is in operation.

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR : I would like to know whether you would grant extension.

SHRI SOMPAL : Immediately I cannot say; I will send the information.

[Translation]

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are many questions but I would like to draw the attention of Hon'ble Minister towards one small issue. There was one scheme for sprinkler and drip irrigation. For that purpose, 50 to 75% grant was being allocated during my tenure. When Deve Gowdaji came to power, he announced that 75% grant to ordinary farmer and 90% grant to farmers belonging to Scheduled Castes would be given. But later on, it was found that grant was not being given and even if it was given, it was very less. In some places, they give Rs. 5000 per acre and in some place they give Rs. 7000 per acre. They do not give the remaining amount. This scheme will be more beneficial only in the area where there is no irrigation facility and where you want to produce more. There is no other method as good as this is to eradicate poverty and to save water. The Prime Minister is present here. Thank god, he has come. 'Kufr tuta Khuda- Khuda Karke.' That day when you did not come, I felt hurt. Will the hon. Minister tell us the time by which that scheme will be implemented because in this budget there is no mention of this scheme? No allocation has been made and hence consequences will be fatal.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the subsidy scheme under which advanced techniques of irrigation were used for optimum use of water and to increase production still exists and grants are being given to the farmers under this scheme. Right now, I do not have the figures regarding the percentage of grants.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Can you give us information as to how much grant is being given, and when and in what form the grant will be released?

SHRI SOMPAL : Even today 70% of subsidy to general farmers and 90% to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women farmers is being given.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I am saying that grant was not given.

SHRI SOMPAL : Rs. 15,000 per hectare is being given for this purpose.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : No limit was fixed for land, howsoever little may be the size of land holding because it is a matter of country's interest. Therefore, I want you to give reply after considering this point. Hon'ble Prime Minister, it is the best scheme about which we are referring to.

SHRI SOMPAL : I will send this information to you as to how much grant is being given.

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VARMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Minister has in his reply stated that farmers will be provided with all facilities through different schemes within the next ten years. Besides, efforts have been made to improve their condition and to ensure all round development. Now rainy season has started but there are many dry regions in Gujarat where farmers have to face difficulty every time.

There is lack of resources in Gujarat. In every village there is one pond. If the pond is deepened then it is filled with water during rainy season and the villagers can use that water for irrigation and for drinking purpose throughout the year. The number of JCB Machines in Gujarat is very small. I would like to tell you, for example, that in one Tehsil two machines are working and the farmers in such areas are very happy. If JCB machines are provided there in every village for two or three days, the farmer can deepen the pond with his labour. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he would make any effort to provide JCB Machines to Gujarat government from the Central Government.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Hon'ble Member has raised a very important issue. The area which wholly depend upon rainwater and the area where there is less rainfall, there is no other way out except collecting rainwater in surface and underground water resources. I have mentioned about the project prepared by the Planning Commission and it is to be implemented in Five Year Plan and its estimated cost is Rs.75,800 crores. Under this project, Water Shed Management Technique was adopted to collect and recharge water in ponds, lakes and other natural sources. The government considers this programme as part of the project and propose to revive it. The Central Government will provide assistance for it. The Central Government is providing hundred per cent contribution for this project to the State Government.

I have already informed the House that the revised estimate for the year 1997-98 was Rs. 517 crores which has been increased to Rs. 677 Crores this time.

[English]

SHRI BIR SINGH MAHATO : Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot of programmes are being taken up for improving the conditions of farmers. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government would like to constitute a Parliamentary Committee consisting of hon. Members with agricultural background from both the Houses to assess the effectiveness of these programmes and to assess how much money goes towards the benefit of the farmers

[Translation]

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to inform the Hon'ble Member through you that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture is already working in this direction. If the Hon'ble Member is interested, he can get himself nominated in this committee through his party and attend its meeting.

This Committee is already working in this regard and is accomplishing a very important task. I have been associated with it.

SHRI SURENDRA SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Minister in his reply has stated that under the 25 years perspective plan formulated by the Planning

Commission, efforts will be made to produce better quality of cotton and other crops. The second thing which he has stated is that Government is going to initiate the schemes to strengthen the co-operative societies and rural credit system.

[English]

The agricultural growth rate has reached a stagnation point. It is because there is a decline in soil fertility due to water-logging, salinity and over-use of pesticides. I would like to know what steps are being taken by the Government to stop this decline.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, if you pay attention towards it, you will see that if a factory owner does not repay the loan worth crores of rupees taken from the banks, his loan is written off. However, if a farmer takes loan from the bank or from any other organisation..... (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask the supplementary question. You are not supposed to make a speech.

SHRI SURENDRA SINGH : Yes, I am only asking the supplementary question.

[Translation]

If a farmer does not repay the loan taken from Bank or from a co-operative society, he is sent to jail. Whether the Hon'ble Minister would like to state that if there is any plan under consideration of the Government to consider the factory owner at par with farmer and likewise he should also be sent to the jail. This will resolve the injustice done to the farmers.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Hon'ble Shri Surendra Singh has raised many question. The last question which he has asked is about the recovery of loans. I would like to remind the Hon'ble Member through you that the Hon'ble Finance Minister has stated in this Budget Speech that farmers will not be arrested for non-recovery of loans from them. Necessary directions are going to be issued in this regard to Reserve Bank, all nationalised banks and other loan sanctioning Institutions. Efforts are being made to simplify the process of lending and recovery of loans. Arrangements are being made for the settlement of loans so that farmers may not be harassed. This Government has already announced this policy and we will implement it.

SHRI SURENDRA SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, a complete reply to my question has not been given. The main reason behind the mass suicide by the farmers in South India was their incapability to repay the loan taken from the banks or from the cooperative societies..... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No, Shri Surendra, please sit down. You can not ask the question like this.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I belong to the Jaisalmer and Barmer area of Western Rajasthan. You may be aware of the fact that on an average during eight out of ten years drought conditions prevail there. There are no means of irrigation in that area. The water level of the wells and underground water is going down. Difficulties are being faced by those who have made investment there. We have noticed that 55% people live below poverty line there, whereas national average is 34%. I would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister through you that whether there is any package or any scheme for the poor and famine stricken peasants of Western Rajasthan so that they could be benefitted (Interruptions) The Hon'ble Prime Minister had also gone there. I had written him earlier also that on the lines of hilly areas and North-east, vast desert regions should also be given some concessions..... (Interruptions) It concerns the farmers.

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask supplementary question.

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am asking the supplementary question. There is no source of water there, only recently a canal has been dug upto Rajasthan. I would like to know whether any package is being provided to these farmers or not? If you cannot do that, then at least give them the same concessions which have been given to the hilly areas of North-east region. It will help them to maintain means of living. As on today, about 55-56% of the farmers have migrated to various other places like Ganga Nagar, Haryana and Gujarat..... (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please conclude.

[Translation]

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a very important Question. We seldom get the opportunity to speak. (Interruptions) There is no one to look after Western Rajasthan. The area is in the grip of poverty. All the leaders work for the hilly areas and north-eastern regions but nobody cares about this desert area..... (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI P.M. SAYEED : Sir, we have spent almost 25 minutes on this question. We have to take up the next question which is also a very important question (Interruptions)

[Translation]

COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : I would like the Hon'ble Prime Minister to give a considered reply. Recently nuclear tests have been conducted in Pokhran. In 1974 also, nuclear test was conducted there. I would like to say that something should be done for the development of this area (Interruptions)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Lucknow Package is there.

PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Member has raised a question with regard to an area which is the most neglected area of Rajasthan. It is a desert area. I do agree with him that we have not launched any special scheme for the development of this area as we have done for some other areas. He has given a very good suggestion. It will be taken into consideration and action will be taken in this regard (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Q. No. 103, Shri Mukul Wasnik

.... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I have already allowed eight hon. Members to put their supplementaries. The next question is also more or less on the same subject. Shri Mukul Wasnik.

..... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seats. A discussion under Rule 193 is also going on, on the same subject, even then I have allowed eight hon. Members to put their supplementaries. Please understand the position and take your seats.

..... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seats.

..... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down first .

[English]

Anti Poverty Programme

*103. SHRI MUKUL WASNIK : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the number of people living below poverty line ;

(b) whether the Government have conducted any study to assess the effectiveness of the on going anti-poverty programmes ; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) As per the latest available information 320.37 million persons are estimated to live below the poverty line in 1993-94. This is 35.97% of the total population.

(b) and (c) The Government reviews the implementation of rural poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes, namely the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), and the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) from time to time in the Central Level Coordination Committee (CLCC), State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) and at the district level by the Governing Body of the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs). These programmes are also reviewed through regular progress reports from the states on key indicators and through an intensive regimen of field inspections by officers of the centre, state and implementing agencies. Periodic review meetings with State Secretaries incharge of Rural Development and Conferences of Project Directors of DRDAs are also held to review the progress in the implementation of these schemes. Monitoring and Vigilance Committees have been set up at the State, district and block levels in which elected representatives of the people have been associated to monitor the implementation of these schemes.

Furthermore, to assess the overall impact of various poverty alleviation programmes, in relation to their specific objectives, the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment undertakes periodic concurrent evaluations of their major schemes through independent recognised institutions/organisations.

Some of the positive points listed among the main findings of the latest Concurrent Evaluation Report on IRDP (September 1992- August 1993) were that : (a) While 15.96% families assisted crossed the poverty line of Rs. 11,000 per annum, the additional annual income of more than Rs. 2,000 was generated to a large percentage (57.34%) of families. The Annual income from the assets was more than Rs.6,000 in 29% cases (b) 95% of the beneficiaries felt that the type of assets provided to them were according to their choice. A large number of beneficiaries also found the assets to be of a good quality. The areas of concern reported were : (a) a very poor linkage of IRDP with Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM) and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA); and that (b) In 45% cases the settlement of claim preferred by the beneficiaries for perished assets remained unsettled.

Similarly some of the positive points revealed in the Concurrent Evaluation of JRY (1993-94) were that (a) Construction of rural link roads received the highest priority by the Village Panchayats at the all India level. Besides linking villages to other parts of the country, rural roads created more employment opportunities for the rural poor. (b) In almost all the States/UTs barring Punjab, the average wage paid per manday to the unskilled workers were more or less equal to the minimum wages prescribed under the Act. (c) In 86.87% of JRY works, Muster rolls were