

12.20 hrs.

RE: ONGOING PRACTICE OF CARRYING
NIGHT-SOIL ON HEAD BY THE SCAVENGERS
IN THE COUNTRY

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Rosera) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of shame for this Nation that even after 50 years of Independence the practice of carrying night soil on head still continues inspite of repeated assurances given by Central Government that this practice would be abolished within a specified period of time. Today several new techniques have developed, so the practice of carrying night soil on head must end. We has said in 1991 that this will be abolished in 3 years. This was also committed by welfare Ministry but instead of 3 years, 5 years have elapsed, still this system continues. Today there are 3,900 small townships where this system is still in vogue. The most sad commentary is that this practice continues in those states which have officially abolished it.

I have a case of Karnataka with me, I have a report in this regard. I had gone there. In Karnataka this system was abolished in 1972...(Interruptions)

SHRI SURYA NARAYAN YADAV (Sahasra) : It continues in your Bihar. You speak about what is happening in Bihar....(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Sir, no doubt it continues in Bihar. I am talking of those states which have abolished the practice of carrying the night soil on heads. In Karnataka this practice was abolished in 1972 but this practice continues in Kolar Gold fields, Bharat Gold Mine Ltd. which is 115 years old and 100 kms away from Bangalore. This Gold field has 1200 slum units with a population of 3 lakhs. They are poor people and this practice of carrying night soil on head is still continuing there. As I have said, there are 3900 small townships where this practice is still in vogue. The problem is that the workers engaged in this job are not provided alternative work. During the period of our Government we had allocated Rs.5000 crore for this purpose which has been reduced to Rs.500 crore by the present Government. I would urge upon the Government to abolish this practice from the entire country within a specified period in consultation with the State Governments.

The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi had also said that this practice of carrying night soil on head is a blot on our nation. This practice must be abolished and alternative employment be provided to those engaged in this job. The world has developed several new technologies but here in our country one person is engaged in carrying others' night soil on his head. There can be nothing more shameful for the Nation. This is not a matter of party politics, the concern of a particular State. This system continues in every

State. I will therefore request all the members irrespective of party affiliation to support me in the endeavour of abolishing this practice.

SHRI SURYA NARAYAN YADAV : Sir, it is a very bad practice but it could not be abolished inspite of Government's willingness. Shri Ram Vilas was saying...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Ram Vilas Ji has raised a very important question in a very good manner. Please do not give it a political colour.

SHRI SURYA NARAYAN YADAV : Whatever matter we raise in Parliament is fully understood by the people of the Nation. We have been elected from different districts and are sitting here. If we are sincere we can start a campaign in our respective constituencies to abolish all bad practices prevalent in our society and work for integrating the society. I think only then we will be able to abolish this practice very soon. There is no point in blaming Government time and again. We ourselves should take a vow and resolve to work for the abolition of this system.

MR. SPEAKER : There is no question of blaming anybody.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (Aonla) : It is true there cannot be anything more shameful than carrying by one person on head the soil of other person but this practice is still there in hundreds of municipalities. It is unfortunate that these scavengers carrying night soil on their heads are not getting their wages for as long a period as 18 months and are at the verge of starvation. You take the Lucknow Municipal Corporation or Bareilly Municipal Corporation or any Municipality of any small town. These unfortunate scavengers are engaged in carrying night soil on their heads and inspite of this, the irony is that they are not getting their salaries on time. The scavengers have reached on the verge of starvation.

MR. SPEAKER : It is not this Government.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : It is not this Government but that Government, but when we talk of Uttar Pradesh Government we take it that it is Congress Government, Narsimha Rao Government and Mulayam Singh Government, different faces of the same coin.

MR. SPEAKER : You are again deviating.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : I am not making any aberrations. So far as this problem is concerned, the State Chief Minister, the Prime Minister is responsible for that. This Government is to be blamed. I want my submission to come on record.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : It is a very important issue. Let us deal with it in a proper manner. You should lend support to him.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH : I am making a submission to you because I have received several letters from those people. Today this scavenging staff is on strike and there are heaps of filth everywhere. Although an agreement was reached with them, still they have not received their wages. I want you to direct this Government to make some provision for these scavenging staff.

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum) : The simple point is that it is being carried on one's head even today. I think it is the decision of the Government and there is a law also prohibiting the same. I am surprised to learn that this practice continues in some parts of the country.

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI BUTA SINGH) : It is there in Bengal also.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum) : I know that. The point is, this is an activity which is banned and which we have decided to eliminate from the country. If it is a matter relating to the State Governments, then this House should urge all the State Governments to fix a time-limit within which it will have to be abolished. It is a deplorable or situation to permit human beings to carry such headloads. So, this House should urge all the State Governments without interfering in their internal activities that they should fix a time-limit within which this is going to be abolished. Let us not enter the twenty-first century where people still carry this kind of headloads.

[Translation]

MAJ. GEN. (RETD.) BHUVAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : Sir, I fully support Shri Ram Vilas ji on the issue raised by him and through you want to submit to Defence Ministry that this practice of carrying night soil on head is still invogue in many Cantonment Boards. The Defence Ministry guides the nation in many areas. It is said here time and again that this practice continues because of paucity of funds. Therefore, I want that separate allocation should be made for this purpose, so that this practice is abolished at least in the Cantonment Boards under the Defence Ministry.

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV (Azamgarh) : It is true that if there is any blot on the Nation, it is this practice of carrying night soil of one person on head by another person. This issue has been raised in this House several times. Hon. Buta Singh is sitting here. He had raised this issue with great emotion. We had expectations when he headed scavenging staff commission. We hope that this Commission will be able to abolish this practice under a time bound programme. I don't mean a ten year time bound programme, but we expected that the country will get rid of this practice in a year or two. It

is not an impossible task. As Khanduri ji has said, this practice continued in Cantonments also. It is in practice in Nainital which is a tourist centre. This continues there also. We are greatly pained that this continues even today. The scavenging people are the poorest people. They are not accorded priority in the matter of housing, permanent service and education of their children.

Sir, I think a very important and vital question has been raised here. I shall appeal to the House that it should resolve and the Government should make a statement that this problem will be accorded priority, national priority and the practice will be abolished once for all within a specified period of time so that there is no occasion to raise this issue again in this House.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Madhubani) : Mr. Speaker, I support what my friend said. I would only say that Bihar is not far behind in the practice of carrying night soil on head. There also, the scavenging staff is not getting its wages for the last one and a half years. It is a matter of regret.

Sir, all the Members of Parliament are getting Rs.1 crore per year under MPs Area development schemes for their respective constituencies. I would suggest that all of us should make voluntary declaration that 10 per cent of this amount, that is Rs. 10 lakh, will be spent on managing Public Sanitary System so as to make it easy for State Government to achieve this target. It will also give weightage to our voice. I urge all the Members of Parliament to accept the suggestion unanimously.

SHRI RAM PRASAD SINGH (Bikram Ganj) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a very important issue and it is discussed in this House from time to time and everytime we take some decisions and vows but they are never implemented. Therefore, I would suggest that carrying night soil on head should be declared a cognizable offence. Such a law should be enacted here and the practice should be treated as cognizable offence.

Sir, this is not the question of a particular State. This practice is continuing in Central Jails, in old cities. I would request that the Central Government in collaboration with State Governments, should construct Sulabh Sauchayalas on large scale in towns and villages to put an end to this practice of carrying night soil on head.

SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI (Bijnore) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also a member of National Commission for Safai Karmacharis. I am thankful to you for giving me time to speak on this issue. I had spoken on this subject in this House on 31st also when I presented a draft report before this House on the problems faced by the scavenging staff throughout the country. They are not getting their salaries. They are in a dilemma whether or not to continue to work. They have their Provident Fund, money and they do not know where the amount is deposited. They don't have any bank balance.

Sir, they are very much perturbed. I toured the entire country. The leaders of my party compelled me to accept the membership of this Commission. Sir, an honourable member from Bengal was speaking here. I have seen that the situation there is very bad but situation is worse in Bihar. When I visited Bihar I found that the scavengers colony was stinking and the filth discharged from temporary latrines was flowing in front of their homes. They are living in the same houses. Their plight is very pitiable.

Sir, the Commission was constituted on 12th August.

MR. SPEAKER : We will also ask you as to why the Commission has not worked.

SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI : Sir, the Commission has not been given powers. I would like to suggest that the tenure of this Commission should be extended and it should be given more powers because this Parliament's tenure will expire in 1996 and the Commission will also automatically wind up. While giving this Commission the teeth like any other Commission, the services of scavenging staff should be put under Central administration.

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat) : Sir, there has been a Commission appointed for the *Safai Karamcharis*. As a Member of this House, I have received some letters from the Commission. They say that proper arrangements have not been made as yet for the proper functioning of the Commission. Therefore, I would request the Government to provide facilities to them so that they can expedite their work and also take into account the question that has been referred to them. I think the Central Government has also got the responsibility. The Central Government should also prepare a Central Project and ask the State Government to extend financial assistance to implement the project so that this shameful and obnoxious system is abolished within a fixed time-table. Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI A. CHARLES (Trivandrum) : Sir, I think the whole House is unanimous in regard to any proposal for stopping this obnoxious way of removal of night soil by human beings. If my information is correct - I may be corrected if I am wrong - when the *Safai Karamcharis* Bill was passed, a categorical assurance was given to the House that the removal of night soil by human beings would be stopped. This House was listening to that. I am surprised to learn now that this is still continuing. I request that the Government of India should also coordinate with all the State Governments. A message should go saying that at least by the end of this year, this should be stopped.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Sir, this problem should be viewed with seriousness in those States where this practice of carrying night soil on heads has not been abolished. The Chief Ministers of the

States should be called and this problem should be reviewed on priority basis. The Central Government should on its part issue directions for a time bound programme in this regard.

[English]

PROF. SAVITHRI LAKSHMANAN (Mukundapuram) : Sir, here is a suggestion from an hon. Member that at least 10 per cent of the fund from the MPs' Local Area Development Scheme may be spent on the construction of public latrines and like that. I do welcome the suggestion. As a Member of Parliament, I had given instructions to the local authorities to spend more than Rs. 8 lakhs from the MPs' Local Area Development Scheme last year. It received a warm welcome from the beneficiaries as far as I know. So, it is better to suggest that at least 10 per cent of the fund from the MPs' Local Area Development Scheme may be spent on this Scheme. We could utilise that CRSP (Central Rural Family Programme) Scheme...*(Interruptions)*

AN HON. MEMBER : Sir, this House is unanimous over this issue...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Buta Singh has done a lot. Let him not speak now. It is not necessary.

[Translation]

SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA (Ferozabad) : Sir, it is a matter of shame that practice of carrying night soil on head still continues even after so many years of independence. The scavenging staff has not been paid salaries for 6-18 months. The Central Government cannot succeed in this matter by passing the buck on State Governments. As suggested by honourable Members, the Central Government should call a meeting of State Chief Ministers and direct them to abolish this practice forthwith.

Sir, it is a matter of shame that the scavenging staff is not getting salary while crores of rupees being misappropriated in various scandals.

MR. SPEAKER : It is the Municipality which has to pay this money.

SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA : Sir, the Central Government should take an initiative in this matter.

MR. SPEAKER : You speak anything you like. This is not relevant.

[English]

SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA (Kolar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan has mentioned about the night soil being carried by the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes people. In Kolar District, the Government have already taken steps to avoid that. We have already written a letter to the Chief Minister. The State Government have already taken steps in this regard. My friends have said that they have released Rs. 10 lakhs from the MP's quota to take necessary steps in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER : I think, a good point has been raised by Shri Ram Vilas Paswan and supported by many learned Members on which Buta Singhji has always been speaking and trying to do his best. One suggestion has been made by one of the Members saying that let the MPs' funds be used also to some extent, for this purpose. It is a good suggestion. It can be accepted by all of us. The MPs may, in groups, meet their Chief Ministers also and request them to do something in this respect.

The House would like to know what kind of action plans have been made in this respect and what level of success has been achieved. A comprehensive statement in this respect may be made by the Government before the House is adjourned *sine die*.

SHRI A. CHARLES : I am happy to say that in Kerala, this practice has been stopped years back. So there is no problem in Kerala.

MR. SPEAKER : There are problems.

SHRI BUTA SINGH : Sir, I have a very humble suggestion to make. You were very kind enough to give your direction to the House and to the Government.

MR. SPEAKER : I have just expressed my views and not the direction, please.

SHRI BUTA SINGH : I have a very humble submission to make that since the nation is celebrating the 125 birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, let the nation make a commitment to the Father of the Nation that at least his birth place Porbandar will be cleared of this practice in this year, whether it is the State Government or the Central Government or whatever project will have to be launched, let us declare to the rest of the world that we have discontinued this practice at least from the birth place of the Father of the Nation.

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Mr. Speaker, I wanted to speak with reference to...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : So much has been said on this subject and what more would you say in this context. You speak on the issue for which you have given notice of.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Sir, what I wanted to say is that the Government announces concessions on excise duty while presenting annual budget but the benefit of these concession do not percolate to consumers. As a result, the industrialist takes the advantage thereof. The goods are sold on the old printed rates. When you bring it to the notice of the Government, they say that they cannot take any action against industrialists because of loop holes in the law. Therefore, Sir, I, request the Government to ensure that the benefit of concessions given in excise duty since 1993-94 percolates to consumers. The law must include such a provision and stringent action should be taken against defaulting industrialists.

DR. VASANT NIWRUTTI PAWAR (Nasik) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, just now the problem has been discussed partly, I will just go further to mention about the Central Rural Sanitation Programme which has been implemented in the rural areas to give sanitary facilities to the rural population.

I came across the Sixteenth Report of the Standing Committee on Urban and Rural Development and it is horrible to see the situation. As per the 1991 census, only about 2.5 per cent of the population has been provided with the rural sanitation latrines. Ladies in the villages cannot go out for the latrine after the sunrise; they have to go out before the sunrise or after the sunset, and that has created many problems, health problems. There is an unhygienic condition and the diseases are spreading because filth is thrown only on the streets. So, I think this is a problem in the rural areas. We have to provide maximum latrines in the rural areas. The Committee has observed that the outlay was about Rs.380 crore, but in four years, only 50 per cent of the outlay has been spent. Now I do not know how the Government is going to spend the remaining 50 per cent of the amount. The Committee has recommended that about Rs.300 crore should be sanctioned for 1995-96. But, there is no response from the Government. So, I urge that this Central Rural Sanitation Programme should be implemented in a more holistic manner to benefit all the rural population. There has to be a time-bound programme say for 5 to 10 years, so that all the population will get the hygienic latrines. There has to be an integrated approach to improve the hygienic conditions in the rural areas. The sanitary unit has been taken as a block. Instead of that, the sanitary unit should be taken as a village and in every village there should be a provision for the latrines. The awareness campaign has to be implemented on a war-footing and adequate funds must be provided for.

The System of Standing Committees is a good tradition you have started but the reports which are being tabled in the House is not being taken into account and the action taken by the concerned Department is not coming to the Parliament. So, I request you, Sir, to give a direction to the Government to implement this programme and to pay more attention to this programme. The Central Rural Sanitation Programme is the most important Centrally-sponsored programme ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Anbarasu, you are entering into a very delicate area. If you have definite information, you should speak about that. Otherwise, you should refrain from speaking because it is a matter between the two countries friendly relationship.

(Interruptions)

SHRI R. ANBARASU (Madras Central) : I will not say anything which will affect...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Are you sure that your information is correct?

SHRI R. ANBARASU : Yes, I am sure, Sir.