

their application to the debate on the Railway Protection Force (Amendment) Bill, 1991 (substitution of new long Title for Long Title, etc.) by Shri Basudeb Acharia which has been adjourned today to the next day allotted for Private Members' Bills to be suspended to enable without Ballot as the first item therein."

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is:

"That provisions of sub-rule (1) of rule 30 and the proviso to rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha in their application to the debate on the Railway Protection Force (Amendment) Bill, 1991 (substitution of new long Title for Long Title, etc.) by Shri Basudeb Acharia which has been adjourned today to the next day allotted for Private Members' Bills to be suspended to enable the Bill to be set down in the List of Business without Ballot as the first item therein."

The Motion was adopted.

15.47 hrs.

AGRICULTURAL WORKS (MINIMUM WAGES AND WELFARE)

Bill by Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh-
CONTD.

[English]

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN (Kishanganj) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would first like to facilities Shri Chandubhai Deshmukh for introducing this Bill which we are discussing today and extend my support to the Bill in principle.

Most of the agricultural labourers whom we call *Khet mazdoors* most of them are landless and if some of them do possess a small piece of land that is not adequate to provide them with the livelihood. In fact, for most of the year they work on somebody

else' land'; for most part of the year they are jobless; they are under employed and unemployed. For most part of the year the *khet mazdoors* live below the poverty line and belong to the lowest strata of our society. Most of them are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They are the real proletariat of our country. In fact, many of them live most or part of their life virtually in bondage. They are truly speaking the *dridra narain* of whom Gandhiji spoke and for whom and in whose interest Gandhiji provided us with a *mantra* which all Prime Ministers and Finance Ministers ought to follow when they are doing anything for the welfare of the people. These *khet majdoors* are the nameless and faceless Indians who are still asking us a question what has Independence brought for them. And that was Gandhiji's lalishman charisma, as you recall he said that whenever the administration is faced with a dilemma- an honest dilemma, not a motivated dilemma - whether what they are going to decide or what they are going to do for the country is really going to be useful? Will it stand the test of history and the test of time? This Gandhiji advised Nehru at that time and that advice should be borne in mind by all Ministers even today that ask yourselves a question whether what I am going to do is going to bring a ray of light and a ray of hope to these nameless and faceless Indians....(Interruptions)

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV (Azangarh) : Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring to the notice of the House that I have just received a report of a serious bomb explosion in Bombay in Air India building and the Stock Exchange building, and more than a dozen people have already been killed and a hostile crowd has surrounded those buildings and those areas. I think this is something very serious and before the House adjourns today, I shall be grateful if you could ask the Home Minister to make a statement and apprise the House with the latest situation because the House would like to know in what situation this has happened and what is the latest situation there. This is what my request is. Kindly convey it to the Government and ask the Home Minister to make a statement before

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the House rises today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please take note of it.

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV: But something should stand up and say that he will go and bring it to the notice of the Government. It is a serious matter, not just listen and just do not respond to it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, make an enquiry please.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MANMOHAN SINGH): Sir, I shall inform the hon. Home Minister that such an issue has been raised in the House and I shall convey to him the feelings of the hon. Member.

SHRI SYED SHAHABUDDIN: So, Sir, these agricultural workers who are the real proletariat of the country, who are the *didra narin* in Gandhiji's words, who are the faceless and nameless Indians, for whom the Government machinery should function and should perform, they are still the silent spectators of our glorious march towards development, towards utopia. They constitute a question mark before the nation. As a poet put it.

• "Wah eik shakhsa jo bajahir
khamosh tha
Liya huwe thaa hazarron sawal
chehre par".

He is a question personified. He does not have the political strength to ask us the question, to free put us those questions, on us to demand a reply, to agitate, to struggle for a better life. He is still underfed, the *shoshit*, the *dalit*, the oppressed, the exploited element of our society, for whom nobody speaks.

The Kerala Government deserves our felicitations that they brought him out of obscurity and he has now become a subject matter of the Bill presented by Mr. Deshmukh. I also join in expressing the

hope that the Central Government shall apply its mind to this question of welfare of the agricultural workers and come up with a more comprehensive Bill before the House. But today we are thankful to Mr. Deshmukh for giving us this opportunity for discussing this problem.

This Bill is to regulate the employment of agricultural workers and to provide certain benefits to them, including provident fund and pension. We fully agree with the object of this Bill. But I must say that the machinery that is envisaged in the Bill in clause 3, appears to be rather cumbersome. If every agricultural worker were to run to a government office to obtain an employment card or an employment quota, that would virtually make it impossible for him to function. From bondage to the local bosses. We would go into bondage under the bureaucrats. He would fall into the bureaucrats' net. I think we need a more decentralised system for regulating the employment of the agricultural workers at the village level. What he needs basically is an identity card and a system where a part of his daily remuneration can be contributed towards the provident fund or pension scheme and to which he becomes entitled when he advances in age and is no longer in a position to earn his livelihood so that he can then depend upon his provident fund and his pension. Therefore, this concept of authority, in my view, needs to be decentralised and procedure simplified so that the entire system like our minimum wages system, does not become another Inspector *raj*. Also, an authority of this nature cannot really do justice to the migratory labour who go from one State to another. Therefore, I would suggest to Mr. Deshmukh to work out some scheme which would be simpler and to which the illiterate *khet mazdoor* can easily take recourse to.

The second point that I would like to make here is the concept of the minimum wages. We have a Minimum Wages Act. Every State is supposed to prescribe a minimum wage and to revise it periodically. Of course, the revision is not done as

periodically as it ought to be done. But what is needed now is a national minimum wage in order to bring this private wage system in level with the official salary system. I think a national minimum wage can be envisaged and can be conceptualised in terms of what the Finance Commission has recommended for Group 'D' employees as the scale of pay. Take the minimum of the scale. That is what I would suggest to the hon. Labour Minister. Take the minimum of the scale that is prescribed by the Finance Commission for a Group 'D' or a Class-IV job. Add to it the various benefits that you have and you come roughly with a figure of something like Rs. 1,500 per month. That Rs. 1,500 per month would mean a Rs. 50 per day. That minimum wage is, I believe, the minimum that is required for a family today to keep its body and soul together. Therefore, I would plead that instead of laying down a specific figure in the Bill, as Mr. Deshmukh has done in clause 6 of the Bill, we ought to substitute that by this concept that the daily wage should be at least equal to the minimum daily equivalent of the total emoluments paid to the lowest-grade government employee. That will have a double advantage. It will not only free the State from the responsibility of revising the minimum wages from year to year or from place to place, it would also have a tremendous impact on the social situation in our agricultural milieu. You are aware, Sir, of the traditional rivalry or the traditional conflicts of interests between the *kisan* and the *khet mazdoor*. That controversy and that conflict must be resolved in mutual interest....(Interruptions). I am talking of the *zamindar*, the mair who holds *zamin* attracts his own land.

As you know, Sir, we have been pursuing this question of a remunerative price for agricultural produce for many many years.

15.59 hrs.

[SHRIMATI MAILINI BHATTACHARAYA
in the Chair]

These few concepts can be married together. The National Commission on

Agricultural Costs, which fixes the support price for agricultural commodities, takes into consideration the cost of the labour input. But the cost of the labour input taken by the Commission varies from State to State according to their survey. I feel that in computing the cost of agricultural produce, where the labour quantum is known and can be quantified, that should be evaluated on the basis of this minimum national wage. That will mean a higher cost of production and, therefore, more remunerative price for the agricultural farmer. That would also build up the pressure that the *kisan* or the land owner, the cultivator, has to pay at least that minimum wage to the *khet mazdoor* if he has to employ him. Many a time he works with his own labour and the labour of his family but whenever he has to employ an outsider, then at least he would pay him the minimum national wage. As for his own labour and his family, he would get a much higher equivalent and a better emoluments and, therefore, a more remunerative price for his produce.

16.00 hrs.

And therefore, Sir, I take this opportunity to plead in this House for the determination of a national minimum wage equivalent to the minimum payable to a Government employee of Class IV or Grade D. That should become the basis for the computation of agricultural costs and that should be applicable to all the *khet mazdoors* whose services are hired and whose labour is hired by a cultivator to help him in his agricultural production and therefore, over a period of time that will allow the development of a more smooth relationship between the *kisan* and the *khet mazdoor* in the countryside, the social situation and the economic situation both in the countryside would improve.

Sir, these are the two ideas first about the simplification of a procedure. A decentralisation of the procedure regulatory system should be there so that an agricultural worker can be identified, the days he has worked and the income that he has gained can be brought on record and that card can form the basis of his contribution

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which can be collected at a lower level and which can help him in crediting his contribution to his Provident Fund and secondly, there is the idea of minimum national wage which should be applicable to all khet mazdoors throughout the country. Sir, with these two suggestions I support the Bill moved by Mr. Deshmukh and I also plead with the Government that based on the discussion that we are having here today, the hon. Labour Minister who, I know, is very sympathetic to the cause of the unorganised labour, not only to the cause of the organised labour, will certainly come forward with a more comprehensive Bill before the House in order to tackle this problem and to make freedom and independence real for this sector of Indian humanity which has not yet known what independence means to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister, Shri Rajesh Pilot has some information to convey to the House from Bombay. I request Shri Rajesh Pilot to give that information.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER BOMB BLASTS IN BOMBAY

16.00 hrs.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): With profound grief, let me share this information with the House.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): Sir, it is a very serious situation. I feel shocked with the information received.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: It is a very unfortunate incident we have at nearly 7 to 8 places. The mode of operation has been like this. They parked the car with the bombs and they all blasted from one hour to one-and-a-half hours between one O'

Clock to 2.30 p.m. or 2.45 p.m. at nearly 7 to 8 places. I just talked to the hon. Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He said that specially at the place nearest to the Stock Exchange casualties have been there; they are ascertaining the number. He said 15 to 20 bodies have been taken out from there, but the number of injured has gone up to roughly 100 plus.

Madam, we are getting the information from the State Government, we are in touch with them, but the situation is under control and the State Government is totally in control of the situation. I think I will share with you whatever information I have received from the Chief Minister on phone.

PROF. PREM DHUMAL (Hamirpur): What about casualties?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: That is what I said. It is at nearly 7-8 places at one go. It was at the Stock Exchange where the casualties have been slightly maximum. He told me that 15 to 20 casualties are already there. I think in the next coming hour or half-an-hour we may be able to give further information, which will be more authentic, to the House.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): Before the House rises, he should make a statement about this as far as possible.

[Translation]

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): Madam Chairman, it seems that you know little about the incident. This incident is not confined to Bombay alone. I have got information that this morning a bomb blast took place first in the Deccan Express which runs between Pune and Bombay. I have no information about the number of casualties in the blast. But I have authentic information that the death toll was 5. Our Secretary from Bombay saw the spot there and informed me that he has seen 25 dead bodies in the Air India Building. As you referred to the blasts in the Bombay Stock Exchange Premises, the blast took place in the Branches of Bank of Baroda and Bank of