

I urge upon the Government to draw up plans for movement of procured foodgrains in FCI godowns and create additional storage space, so that there is no distress sales by farmers.

(vi) Need to Provide Compensation to the Cotton Growers of Ferozepur and Faridkot Districts in Punjab Whose Crops Have Been Hit by 'Leaf Curl' Disease

SHRI JAGMEET SINGH BRAR (Faridkot): Sir, it is learnt that agriculture experts of the Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana have come to know by an on-the-spot inspection of cotton crops in Ferozepur and Faridkot districts of Punjab that an epidemic disease which is called 'Leaf Curl' has broken out, which has no remedy except to destroy the crop by burying the infected plants in the earth. The Government should come forward to rescue the farmers of these districts by compensating them, as the farmers will have to bear the heavy losses due to this epidemic disease.

I, therefore, request the Central Government to immediately look into the matter and provide adequate relief to the farmers of these districts.

12.46 hrs.

RESOLUTION RE: APPROVAL OF NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY—Contd.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Now we shall take up the next item – further discussion on National Housing Policy.

Shri Krishna was on his legs. He can start now.

AN HON. MEMBER: What!

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Krishna was on his legs.

SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDIQUE (Jorhat): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, resuming the debate from where I left yesterday, I reiterate that the National Housing Policy, with all its objectives, right strategies and pious wishes, when set against a bleak and grim housing scenario, is no solace in the face of overwhelmingly inimical ground realities. Not that there is something wrong or deficient with the National Housing Policy. But it has the untold stories of its past failures and the present state of helplessness.

Being one of the basic necessities, next to food and clothing, and closely linked to socio-economic development, housing is one of the few targets that we have set for the year 2001, but most elusive and, I am afraid, will remain a far cry from attainment of the target till a couple of decades next century.

The Resolution on Global Shelter Strategy adopted by the United Nations in November, 1988 calls upon the different State Governments to formulate a National Housing Policy to achieve the goal of "a roof over every head by the year 2000". This target is now too high to be achieved by many developing countries and India is no exception to that. There is no doubt that it is mainly because of the population boom which always upset our planning perspective in the last three decades. And, at the same time, it is our failure to assess the population situation properly that now a situation has arisen where

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there are far too many heads to be roofed – a situation probably not visualised in the U.N. Resolution. In order to meet the demand, India would now require forty-one million dwelling units in the year 2001, against fifteen million units at present. It is estimated that in the next seven years, Rs. 1,800 billion have to be spent on the housing stock. In the face of such a massive requirement and the huge financial involvement, I am afraid, the most incorrigible optimist will lose heart. Yet, with political will and determination, the situation has to be met. Better late than never. At least there must be a breakthrough. The whole problem needs to be sieved through a series of action plans, covering a number of years. I say: begin with the slums. Our priorities are the vulnerable sections, whether in the urban sector or in the rural sector. It appears that the National Housing Policy envisages a major shift in the Government's role to act more as facilitator than as a provider.

But there must be some exception in certain cases. And if there are exceptions, let them be in the case of slums. The Government must intervene and take over the slums in a bid for upgradation. Conditions in slums in India are known to the whole world. There is no need of glossing over the issue. The world did not wait to be informed by one Dominique Lapierre about the conditions of Indian slums. There is, however, no point in taking exception to his "City of Joy" being filmed. The whole world knows the conditions of Indian slums. This book only poses a challenge to human conscience, at least our conscience; the nation's conscience. Why I am insisting on Government's taking over the slums for upgradation and re-creating conditions fit for human living is because it is the

vested interest that rules the slums. Besides there is, what is called, if you kindly permit me to use the word – I do not know whether it is parliamentary or not – *dadagiri*. This is the first condition of implementing the National Housing Policy. Government must put its foot down on the slums and re-build and re-create better conditions by organising basic services like drinking water, sanitation and communal hygiene etc. One definite advantage we have. Here is a settled group of humans—does no matter legally or illegally – who have at least a roof over their head. It is an identified group. So we can straightway go ahead giving occupancy rights and upgradation work. Illegal housing colonies need to be put in the same category. Once under Government control, I have no objection to the Government's position of being only the facilitator and not a provider. But without these determined acts, Government will not be in a position even to be the facilitator themselves in the teeth of resistance offered by the vested interests that are backed by the mafia gangs.

Then, in respect of action plan, the second strategy that claims attention is how to make land available to the poor. The land is a scarce commodity and has gone beyond the reach of the common man. But the poor and the houseless must not be left to the mercy of the market economy. As it stands today, the Land Acquisition Act neither passes the land quickly to the States nor does it ensure timely payment of compensation. So, a second thought at the efficacy of the land Acquisition Act is imperative. We should bear in mind that the major input in the housing and infrastructure development is the availability of land and the land component that constitutes 75 per cent of cost of our houses and apartments. Therefore, without efficient

functioning of land market, housing development cannot be expected to serve the needs of the poor. And who are these poor? They are mostly the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and those who are just synonymous with poverty.

It is, however, encouraging to take note of a few specific measures proposed in the Policy in the interest of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and rural poor. This includes prevention of alienation of homestead on tribal land, special attention to the needs of the S.C. and S.T. and other disadvantaged groups and avoidance of unnecessary displacement of rural settlement due to development projects.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Handique, the time is very short. Each Member will get 8 or 10 minutes. Otherwise it will be difficult to complete.

SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDIQUE: Sir, please give me a few more minutes.

Then comes the second factor which is the Rent Control Act. It has been a major irritant and hurdle in the development of new rental housing.

12.55 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

It acts as a disincentive for investment in housing. A house rented out is as good as lost to the owner. The rent once fixed ends up something as immutable and one had to go through the long ordeal of court proceedings to get some relief. So, it is in this context that the National Commission on Urbanisation has recommended changes in the rent control legislation in such a manner that the interests of the landlords and their

tenants would stand balanced. In this connection, I must admit that the 77th Amendment of 1994 providing for State level Rent Tribunals to adjudicate all the disputes relating to rent and regulation of tenancies, is indeed an advancement from the earlier position.

Sir, then comes the question of privatisation and to what extent we use the private sector in the housing sector. Cooperation is required between the Government and the private sector to increase the availability of houses and also make them affordable by easy loan facilities. The demand-supply gap in housing shows that in rural, urban and metropolitan areas housing units for economically weaker sections and low income groups are in short supply. It is also noted that the hardest hit by the spiralling cost of construction is the lower middle class and the weaker sections while the sections with higher purchasing power have better access to loan and other forms of financing. Thus, there is an urgent need for not just housing alone, but shelter at an affordable cost. So effective house financing to meet such a situation is possible only when the private sector responds. The private sector feels restricted by a number of Government policies and sanctioning procedures.

There is a suggestion that housing and real estate business be recognised and accorded the status of an industry so that the loans at concessional rates and other incentives available to the industrial sector can be utilised by them. But at the same time, the private sector must behave itself. Guided urban development envisages that the private sector can be influenced to provide developed plots for low income housing. This has been offered as an inducement to develop land affected by Urban Rent

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Control Act and zoning regulation. Besides, the style of functioning of the Public Housing Agency has been in gross violation of the objectives and the strategies of the National Housing Policy. Instead of taking up the role of a motivator and facilitator as advocated by the policy, the Public Housing Agency has been functioning as a provider, promoter and builder. In many cases, we have seen that the slum dwellers who are given the tenements and lands at a low price are tempted and pressurised to sell them away and squat elsewhere on any available marginal land.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Handique, do you need more time?

SHRI BIJOY KRISHNA HANDIQUE:
Yes, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: you can continue after the recess.

I am happy to announce that an agreement among the leaders of the parties to overcome the impasse in the House has been arrived at. I shall read out the details of the agreement at 2.30 p.m. I request the members of the Opposition Parties to be present in the House at 2.30 p.m. and the Members of the Ruling Party also to be present in the House to welcome their colleagues sitting on the Opposition benches.

(Interruptions)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Mavelikara):
Mr. Speaker Sir, we are all very happy about the agreement. We congratulate the Government and the hon. Speaker who have taken steps to reach this agreement. We have been missing our friends on the other side all these days.

We are very happy that the Government has taken such a positive step. We also thank the hon. Speaker who has played the role of a mediator.

SHRI INDER JIT (Darjeeling): Sir, I think it is a glory indeed to our democracy.

MR. SPEAKER: I think we will welcome our friends, our colleagues from this side in a very fitting manner.

SHRI R. ANBARASU (Madras Central): Sir, shall we garland them?

MR. SPEAKER: You can do that outside.

*The House stands adjourned to meet
again at 2.30 p.m.*

13.00 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for
Lunch till Thirty Minutes past
Fourteen of the Clock.*

14.30 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after
Lunch at Thirty Minutes past Fourteen
of the Clock.*

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY SPEAKER

Submission of a revised and modified Action Taken report on the recommendations of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on irregularities in Securities and Banking Transactions

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, the Members of all Parties - the Opposition