

## LOK SABHA DEBATES

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### LOK SABHA

Thursday, April 26, 1990/Vaisakha 6, 1912  
(Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

### ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

#### **Harmful effects of Pesticides on Human Body**

\*615. SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the reports that pesticides applied to plants and crops have harmful effects on the human body as they percolate in the foodgrains/food articles; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government is keen that, as far as possible, less persistent and easily biodegradable insecticides are used in pest control to minimise the risks due to pesticides residues in articles of consumption and

environment.

The Government is advocating Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as the main thrust of Plant Protection strategy. This strategy envisages incorporation of cultural, mechanical and biological techniques for pests and diseases management. Adoption of this strategy leads to judicious and need based application of pesticides.

The Government has also undertaken review of the uses in India of pesticides banned or restricted elsewhere in the world.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Sir, after all this work having been done by the hon. Minister and his Department, about ten days ago—just about ten days ago—to mention an example in Bastar district of Uttar Pradesh in Rajpur village about 200 people died in one dinner, as a result of pesticide poisoning of wheat flour. This is just one dramatic incidence. But *India Today* for instance, among other magazines has highlighted the danger which is there in every day food by the citizens. It had recently mentioned this in an article. It expresses the opinion of every section, citizen and expert on this subject. I will quote the lead article appeared in *India Today* 'Poison in your food':

"Repeated surveys have shown that Indians are daily eating food laced with some of the highest amounts of toxic pesticide residues found in the world. In the process, they are exposed to the risk of heart disease, brain, kidney and liver damage and even cancer.

Even more frightening, studies indicate that right from the day our babies

begin to suckle they are taking in pesticides deposited in breast milk. And some readymade baby foods too are similarly contaminated. We are not only slowly poisoning ourselves but jeopardising our future generations too..."

Has the Government received a representation for the formulation of a National Pest Control Policy? If so, from whom they have received the representation; which individual and which organisation? When will the National Policy on Pest Control be formulated and tabled on the floor of the House by the hon. Minister?

[*Translation*]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, studies in respect of several aspects of adverse effect of pesticides on human body have been conducted and are being conducted in our country. In human body digestive system is the first to be affected followed by blood cells. It also percolates in the milk of the breast feeding mothers. The pesticides have these three adverse effects. There are also some statistics available with regard to adverse effect of excessive use of pesticides on different commodities all over the world. Different institutions have also conducted studies in this regard in our country also and the conclusion at which they have arrived about the harmful effects of pesticides shows that it is not that harmful. It is the look out of the Ministry to keep constant vigil, conduct tests from time to time and also conduct studies in this regard. In fact, it has been the concerted effort of the Ministry to see that such pesticides are not put to any use at all.

MR. SPEAKER: Mirdha Ji, he has pointed out that some people have died in the villages also. I am doing your job.

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: As regards the Basti incident, this Department is not aware of the kind of pesticides that were used.

[*English*]

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: My question was very pointed, whether you have received or the Government has received a representation for a National Pest Control Policy. If so, from whom you have received and when will you formulate the policy? That was my question.

MR. SPEAKER: He has not received it.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Then, I have to give a notice of privilege because I have received a copy of the representation.

Now, I will put my second question. The hon. Minister has in the last part of his written reply said that there are many pesticides which are banned or restricted. He also said that the Government is undertaking a review of their uses in India. Now, no such review is necessary because the World Health Organisation has identified these pesticides, which the developed countries have banned in their own countries; they are exporting to third world countries in a form of neo-colonialist. What then Government is going to do to ban the import of these pesticides such as DDT, BHC and other pesticides, which are dangerous to health, identified by World Health Organisation, and forbidden in the developed countries. What are you going to do?

[*Translation*]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: The pesticides which have been banned in different countries of the world are not being used in our country. We have evolved our own policy in this regard. Such pesticides, the use of which has been restricted in the world, have also been restricted in our country. Only permissible pesticides are being used. The Ministry takes every care to educate the farmers and provide them extension service about the proper use of these pesticides by mixing them mechanically and biologically in conformity with the norms prescribed in this regard.

[English]

**SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO:** My question has not been answered. I seek your protection. My question is: Why DDT and BHC are not banned here when they are banned all over the developed world and all over the socialist world?

[Translation]

**SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA:** Great care is being taken in the use of D.D.T. and B.H.C. and it is not possible to ban their use now. These pesticides are useful in many ways and these are being used with great care.

**SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have received information about many tragic incidents which were caused due to content of pesticides and insecticides in edible items. One such incident took place in Basti which came to our notice. The hon. Member just now said that 300 people died in Basti due to this. But I would like to tell him that only 64 people died and 74 people were admitted in the hospital. Yesterday 100 out of 300 people taking part in a marriage feast fell ill due to food poisoning and now they are in hospital. This type of incidents have all along been taking place in Gujarat, Karnataka and Rajasthan. Just now, the hon. Minister has said that he is reviewing the matter as to which poisonous substance proved fatal and then only he would be able to do anything in this regard. In this connection, I would like to tell him that a Committee called the Banerjee Committee was constituted in 1988. The said Committee had made some recommendations. Would the hon. Minister please let me know as to how many recommendations of the above Committee have been implemented by the Government and what has been their effect? If the recommendations have not so far been implemented, the reasons therefor?

**SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, pesticides are used to save the standing crops from the insects. Insecticides

etc. are used to save grains in houses from some insects. These are also used in F.C.I. godowns. So far as the incident that took place in Basti is concerned, it cannot be true that some people died while spraying pesticides on standing crops to save them from insects. There can be no death by pesticides under such circumstances. Until and unless a thorough probe is made about the causes of this type of deaths that took place at different places, it will not be possible on my part to say that such and such number of people died of food poisoning etc. There can be no such problem by the pesticides. I am also not prepared to accept that due to use of pesticides, the food we eat could be come so poisonous that it could cause death of its consumer.

**SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI:** The hon. Minister did not say anything about the Banerjee Committee.

**SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA:** The Banerjee Committee has done a very good job. The Government has been benefited by the information collected by the committee and it has made good use of it. This Committee is still working. The Government will consider their recommendations when received.

**SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN TIWARI:** Have they not finalised their recommendations?

**SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA:** We have constituted yet another Committee which would constantly look into all these things. Whatever action is deemed fit will be taken. The Government utilises the information being collected by them.

[English]

**SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, normally we have seen Ministers holding certain portfolios or in charge of certain Departments, answering on behalf of a Minister who belongs to another Department. That is understandable. With the permission of the Speaker it is done. But here, unfortunately, it is not being done on behalf.

If one looks at the paper supplied to us, at least the answer to the question, it says 'the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies'... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I have already seen it and I will get it examined.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: It is not that I have anything against Mirdhaji, Sir... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You have raised a point and I will get it examined.

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: Sir, there is a specific question which I would like to ask Mirdhaji. There is a very deadly toxic pesticide which goes by the name of 'cell phos'. It is like tablets and is normally supposed to be used in large godowns where wheat is stored. But it is sold as almost tablets to farmers and off the shelf and it is used often for suicide. I understand that an analysis in India shows that there have been eight thousand cases of persons who committed suicide using the cell phos pesticide, which is a deadly toxic material. I wonder what is the reason for which the Government has not banned this. I would like to know whether in respect of the Basti poisoning which took place, the forensic report has come or not. We understand that it is an organo phosphorus set up, but I would like to know the details because there it is very clear that the food was poisoned by pesticides. We would like to know what was the type of pesticide and whether the Government would ban that particular pesticide.

[*Translation*]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, he gave the name of an insecticide which is generally used in godowns to protect the foodgrains from insects. Sometimes, the farmers take this insecticide for their private use. There is also an insecticide to kill rats, viz. zinc oxide, which is used in godowns to protect foodgrains. These insecticides are also being used in and F.C.I. godowns. There are qualified technical per-

sonnel who handle these poisonous objects. But no such technical personnel is available to private users. They learn the technique and put them in use by applying their own intelligence.

[*English*]

SHRI P.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: For suicide, they take it as tablet.

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: People take it as tablets to commit suicide.

SHRINATHU RAM MIRDHA: Anybody could consume poison in any form he likes and commit suicide. Even less effective poisons could cause harm to its user. The insecticide, the name of which was mentioned by the hon. Member is being used by technical personnel in order to protect the foodgrains and save them from insects. The farmers who store paddy and wheat in large quantities, also make use of this insecticide. They learn the technique from technically qualified personnel. If somebody does not learn the technique properly and uses pesticides without proper guidance, he will have to face the consequences.

[*English*]

SHRIP.R. KUMARAMANGALAM: Why can't you give it on prescription.

[*Translation*]

SHRINATHU RAM MIRDHA: As I have already said, it is not possible to give it on prescription in each and every case. Who will give a prescription? When somebody approaches a shopkeeper selling these articles, the same shopkeeper gives some basic idea about the use of the pesticide.

SHRI RAGHAVJI: The hon. Minister said in his reply that there are a number of pesticides and insecticides which have been either banned or their use has been restricted in foreign countries. The Govern-

ment is thinking as to what should be done in respect of the above pesticides and insecticides in our country. For last several years a number of pesticides and insecticides have been banned in foreign countries but they are being imported into our country and payment is being made in foreign exchange for these imports. As such I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what are those pesticides and insecticides which have been banned in foreign countries and when such a ban is likely to be imposed on them on our country?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have got the detailed information about the drugs which are permitted under the Law and we are using only those drugs. The Government have imposed restrictions on the use of such drugs even in our country, which do not suit us and which have been banned in the foreign countries. So we do not use these drugs. At present these drugs are permitted under section-93 of the Law. We will use only the permitted brands of pesticides and will not use the restricted ones. As per the information available with me, there are two lists of restricted drugs in our country. The lists are quite big, if you want I may read them out otherwise I will lay them on the Table of the House.

[English]

SHRIMATI UMA GAJAPATHI RAJU: Sir, I would like to point out that this Government are only a Government of Committees. They have effected some bans on certain drugs which are not actually implemented. The World Health Organisation has banned certain drugs, certain pesticides. But the Government of India are saying that they are considering the ban. When the W.H.O. has already said that drugs 'A', 'B' and 'C' are banned, why should the Government of India delay the ban? This is what I want to know. Sir, I also want to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that B.V.O. chemical agent which is used in soft drinks was banned

by our Government a year ago with a grace period of one year. Now, after having banned these things, why do the Government of India delay the effective implementation of the ban, whether it is soft drinks, whether it is pesticides. The WHO says that these things should not be used, why should the Government of India use them? It is insensitive to our health and well-being and exploitation of the developing countries. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the beginning itself the hon. Members has given a political tinge to this issue, when she stated that this Government are a Government of Committees. Unless she delivers such speeches, she feels somewhat uncomfortable. She has also stated that a ban had been imposed on the use of some drugs but the present Government have now permitted it. I would like to say that it is absolutely wrong.

SHRIMATI SUBHASHINIALI (Kanpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that just a few days back, about two hundred people died in Basti District..... (Interruptions) Their death has been attributed to the residue content of some pesticides in the wheat they had consumed. It resulted in the absorption of poison in their system and consequential death of these persons. It means that the pesticides that are being imported in our country are becoming the health hazard for the people of this country. I would like to know from the Hon'ble Minister whether the Government propose to formulate a policy in respect of pesticides. While formulating such a policy, medical, scientific and agricultural experts should be consulted and involved and multi-national corporations should not be allowed to operate here and kill the people of our country by treating them as guinea pigs.

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Members have delivered good speeches. In reply to their speeches, I would like to make a short speech..... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please give your reply. [English]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: I am giving reply to the speeches.

MR. SPEAKER: Leave the speech part.

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: She has not asked any question in her speech. She has made a mention of an incident that had taken place in Basti District. The Ministry of Agriculture has no proof to substantiate it that any such pesticide was sprayed on the wheat crop at the time when it was still growing in the fields. So far as the pesticides to which she has referred... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: He will get the information and furnish the same later on. (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: This is a disgraceful answer. Everybody says, every newspaper says that they have died, but you say that they have not died. It is most unfortunate. (Interruptions)

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Sir, it is a serious matter. There should be Half-an-hour discussion on this. The Minister's answer has created so many new questions. So, there should be Half-an-hour discussion on this. (Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: Let him not answer it today. Let him inquire and find out and answer later on. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Have you understood the crux of the question? Is the Government going to formulate a policy regarding pesticides which are being sold in the open market and which any body can purchase? (Interruptions)

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR: As Mr. Chatterjee has suggested, the Minister should hold an inquiry. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: So far as the point of these mishaps is concerned, these have not taken place just on account of the presence of pesticides in the foodgrains. That is the information we have got. However if there is some fault on the part of the Government, we will rectify it. But so far we have not received any such report. (Interruptions)

SHRIMATI SUBHASHINIALI: The focal point of my question was whether the Government proposed to consider the formulation of a National Pesticide Policy?

SHRI NATHU RAM MIRDHA: The Government have been formulating such a policy and also constantly reviewing it and even in future the Government will continue to review this policy? (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Next question, Shri Pandeya!

[Translation]

#### Implementation of National Oilseeds Development Programme

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\*616. DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA:  
SHRI CHHABIRAM ARGAL:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Oilseeds Development Programme is being implemented by various State Governments with the help of Union Development;

(b) if so, the measures taken by Union