

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

Wednesday, November 25, 1987/
Agrahayana 4, 1909 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[Mr Speaker in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

National Water Policy

*270 SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state

(a) whether the National Water Policy adopted recently has suggested rationalisation of surface and ground water rates,

(b) if so, whether due regard to the interest of small and marginal farmers has been given in the policy and

(c) if so the salient features of the policy in this matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA (a) to (c) The National Water Policy has recommended that the Water rates for surface water and ground water should be rationalised with due regard to the interests of small and marginal farmers

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI Sir I wanted a specific reply from the Minister, but the replies are always cavalier replies I wanted

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to know certain things and only in one sentence the reply has been given This is the modus operandi of the Government May I know from the hon Minister what prevented him to give me the specific reply about the water resources and the realities in the country? The country is facing in one part drought and in another part floods We have become a bird of prey in the hands of river Brahmaputra Every year in that part devastating floods have taken place and the people are suffering Now I am asking the question Please have patience

MR SPEAKER Should I ask the Minister also to have patience?

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI Sir, it seems as if a running commentary is going on

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD It is prelude to introduction Sir

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI Sir, keeping in view the peculiar situation that we faced in the country some months back when part of the country had abundance of water and floods and the rest of the country was facing drought, may I know from the Government in what way they propose to draw a master plan of the total water resources of the country for its proper and balanced use? Secondly, what steps are the Government taking to see that the tremendous resources of the river Brahmaputra are not wasted and the same are harnessed for the purpose of irrigation and power?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA Sir, the question that the hon Member has tabled is

a very small and specific one 'whether the National Water Policy adopted recently has suggested rationalisation of surface and ground water' There is no mention of floods in it, there is no mention of general water policy, there is no mention of Brahmaputra. If the hon. Member had asked just what he is asking now, I would have given him a long reply. So, it is not my fault that my reply is very specific because a very specific question was asked and I have said what the Policy says

MR. SPEAKER: You should have just telepathic sense.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: We have placed this National Water Policy document on the Table of the House and I will welcome a discussion on this. I am myself thinking of bringing a Resolution to discuss this, in which all matters connected with the water policy and the national perspective in respect thereto can be brought about. But since some points have been raised right now, I would like to say that the problem of drought and floods - floods in one area and drought in another area.. (*Interruptions*)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Did you follow the question?

MR. SPEAKER: You see he is following the oral one

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: This question has been before us for a very long time. The point is that the water at the flood level in certain rivers and in certain areas can be transported to water-deficient areas. We have a national Organisation which is surveying the whole thing and we have divided the survey work in two different aspects - one is what is called Himalayan rivers and the other is peninsular rivers. For the first part of study - he is concentrating on peninsular rivers - we are surveying all the major river basins and sub-basins to arrive at availability of water there and see that by quick link the water can be transported or carried to the peninsular regions in the South where water is deficient. Studies are taking place and it is only after

that we will be in a position to see in what way it could be done

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI: Sir, the National Water Policy has recommended that the water rates for surface and ground water should be rationalised with due regard to the interests of the small and marginal farmers. But nothing is there. Sir, we are very much concerned that in the country, particularly in Saurashtra, for the last three consecutive years there has been no water even for drinking purposes and in my State, that is, Assam, when you don't want water, you get sufficient water from nature and when we want water for the farmers for cultivation, we do not get water.

MR. SPEAKER: You move no-confidence motion against him.

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI: So, Sir, we don't get water and even the farmers do not get water. But there is enough scope for harnessing the water in Brahmaputra river for irrigation and power and in spite of the fact that we could give moral support to the people, nobody is there to look into the grievances of the people. The Brahmaputra Board has been constituted and that Board is headless. It is without Chairman. There is no Chairman to head the Board. In the circumstances in what way the Government is able to execute all these projects, I do not know. It is a topless Board.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: We have given much more attention to the Brahmaputra than probably any other river in the country and Brahmaputra Board which the hon. Member has mentioned, has a Chairman, that is, the Secretary of the North-Eastern Council is the Chairman of the Brahmaputra Board. So, it is not that there is no Chairman.

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI: Who is the Chairman there now?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Secretary, North-Eastern Council is the Chairman of the Brahmaputra Board and the Board is prepar-

ing a master plan in what way the flood difficulties could be minimised and the water could be diverted into the tributaries

SHRI V SOBHANADREESWARA RAO: Sir, the National Water Policy has recommended water rates for surface water and ground water which should be rationalised. Whereas in the case of surface water supplied, the Government itself is investing a huge amount on construction of reservoirs after which they supply water to the farmers. In the case of utilisation of underground water, the farmer himself - apart from the small and marginal farmers - is investing the entire money on tube-well and bore-well. So, in this connection, I would ask the Minister whether Government will consider to encourage utilisation of underground water potential to the maximum extent. Will you give some part of expenditure as subsidy which the farmer has to bear in regard to bore-well or tube-well and also increase the present quantum of subsidy that is being given to the small and marginal farmers, especially in drought prone areas like the Rayalaseema and Mehboobnagar Districts which are constantly affected by drought? Will you increase the quantum of subsidy from 25-33 % to 33-50 %?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA Sir, what type of subsidy is available to an individual farmer who digs the well differs from State to State and it is really true that in some areas, particularly drought-prone areas some subsidy should be given. But again it is for the State Governments to decide what priorities they have in their planning processes. The Rajasthan Government, for example, said that it is already giving Rs 10,000 to the farmer as subsidy for digging a well, as a drought prone area programme and if Andhra Pradesh Government chooses to follow the enlightened Government of Rajasthan, they can do so

SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO: For other farmers

(Interruptions)

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK: Sir, whenever we have a national policy on a given subject and if the Central Government is not fully in charge of that subject, what happens normally is, the State Government machineries which are to implement that national policy do not react favourably or in an equal manner and as a result, the blame of non-implementation of the policy falls on the Central Government. Therefore, I would like to ask in this context that to keep the water resources subject entirely in the hands of the Central Government, have you given any thought of nationalisation of water resources or in the alternative, to make the subject of water resources brought under the Union List? Have any of these things been given thought of?

PROF MADHU DANDEVATE: Why not take over the State?

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA Sir, no such proposal is under the consideration of the Government. Actually, the National Water Policy starts with these words:

"Water is a prime national resource, a basic human need and a precious national asset. Planning and development of water resources need to be governed by national perspective."

So, there are many areas in which policies are laid and this policy has been approved by the National Water Resources Council - the Prime Minister is its Chairman and all Chief Ministers are accommodated, and they have unanimously approved this. So we presume that they would prefer to go by that.

SHRIMATI VYJAYANTHIMALA BALI: Sir, it has been reported that the execution of major and medium irrigation projects is no longer considered viable. Sir, according to the information available, out of 246 big surface irrigation projects undertaken since

1961, only 65 projects have been completed. The rest of them are still under construction. We have poured so much money into these projects, but the benefits have not yet started accruing. Sir, because of the acute scarcity of drinking water in Tamil Nadu in the last one year, lakhs and lakhs of people have to pay heavy cost for the ground water supply. Even the Ground water table has been exhausted in and around Madras City.

Under the circumstances, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether Government has worked out any scheme under National Water Policy to tap underground water in a careful and judicious manner and supply the same not only for irrigation purposes, but also for drinking purposes at a uniform nominal rate.

(Interruptions):

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, drinking water really should have a priority in certain areas, and this is one of the things that has been mentioned in the existing National Water Policy that the requirements of drinking water have to be kept in mind.

As regards the use of ground water resources through wells and other minor irrigation works, they are very important and our policy is to encourage as much as is possible. Even now, Sir, the major contribution towards irrigation comes from minor irrigation and wells and our policy is to have a judicious utilisation of ground water resources. Sir, I would like to point out some problem that is arising in this respect and that is that in some areas there is overdrawal of water from the wells with the result that lot of problems are arising. Salinity has made its appearance and some of the neighbouring wells also are getting dried up. Many years back the Government of India had a model Bill circulated to the State Governments to regulate the use of ground water, but Sir, no State has really undertaken legislation. Some States have passed laws, but they

have not implemented them. So, it has to be done some day that even drawal of water utilisation of ground water has to be regulated in a scientific manner.

SHRI PIYUS TIRAKY: Sir, is there any scheme for the utilisation of the Brahmaputra to join it with Teesta and through Farakka to give more water to Calcutta Port?

SHRIMATI VYJAYANTHIMALA BALI: Why not Krishna?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, I need notice for that.

SHRI G G SWELL: Sir, the question is about rationalisation of surface and ground water. I do not know how do you rationalise surface and ground water. I can understand rationalisation of the use of water.

I do not know what you can do about ground water which is there for better or worse. But I would like to know what are you doing about tremendous run-off of water from our rivers during the monsoons. Are you thinking about harnessing these waters, storing them somewhere, making use of them or you just let it go off merrily to the sea?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, the question is not about rationalisation of surface and ground water. If the Professor has read it carefully, it is the rates of water that should be rationalised.

SHRI G G SWELL: Then what about the run-off?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, about the next question about the run-off, the whole irrigation programme is meant to do and achieve just what the Professor has said, namely, to utilise as much of the water that now goes into the sea. Every dam made, is for that purpose. And every impounding of water results in withholding some water that goes to the sea.

(Interruptions)

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Bhoi, you are asking question after so many days.

[*English*]

Are you fit now ?

DR. KRUPASINDHU BHOI. Completely Sir

Honourable Speaker, Sir, the main question is about the modern water policy and about the modern marginal farmer. About the ground water the Ministry is giving the powers to the National Sensing Satellite Agency, Hyderabad to go and find out the underground ancient formations geologically, and the second thing is whether the stroma titic lime zone has been delineated so that they can delineate the zone of underground water in different parts of the country so that the Ministry can do the needful. I would like to know whether the Minister is aware of the fact that under the DPA Programme, up till last year lift irrigation points were allowed throughout the DPAP area, but this year whether the Government has discontinued that area by which the small and marginal farmers will be left out from the lift irrigation points.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA Sir, we are making use of the remote sensing techniques for detection of ground water and we have a Directorate in the Central Water Commission as well as a Directorate in the Central Ground Water Board which interprets the aerial photographs and satellite imageries and we have been giving advice to the State Governments and we use them for our surveys also as to where the ground water is available. But this will give only an aerial view of the whole thing and it has to be followed up by a lot of other investigation on the spot and other scientific people like geologists also have to be involved. I can assure the House through you, Sir, and the hon. Member that remote sensing is a very important part of the surveys that we undertake for ground water inspection.

[*Interruptions*]

SHRI SOMNATH RATH. I would like to know whether any survey has been conducted throughout the country about different water basins so that these basins can be connected and the water that damages during the floods can be utilised for irrigation.

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Sir, as I said earlier, we have a very well organised and ambitious programme of carrying on the survey of the water availability in the whole country. As I said earlier, we have divided our surveys into two parts; one for the Himalayan rivers and the other for the peninsular rivers. After these surveys are over, we would be able to say how much surplus water is available in the river basin and how it can be transported to the desert-hit areas.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAMASHRAY PRASAD SINGH I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether according to the new water policy, Ganga water would be utilised for irrigation purposes? Is there any scheme under which Ganga water would be utilised for irrigation purposes? Secondly, I would like to know whether any scheme is being formulated to control floods in the rivers?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA There are many old and new schemes for power utilisation of Ganga water. With a view to controlling the fury of floods, we are implementing several schemes and various State Governments are also cooperating in this task. A lot of work is being done in this field.

[*English*]

Facilities to the Freedom Fighters

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Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state

(a) the number of freedom fighters get-