

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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Friday July 29, 1988/Sravana 7, 1910
(Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of
the Clock.*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Voting Age

*41. DR. A.K. PATEL : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have considered the question of reducing the existing minimum voting age of 21 years to 18 years with a view to widen the youth participation in democratic processes in the country;

(b) if so, the decision of Government in the matter; and

(c) which of the democracies abroad are having 18 years as the minimum voting age ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no such proposal at present.

(c) According to the available information, 78 countries are having 18 years as the minimum voting age.

DR. A.K. PATEL : Sir, I find great contradiction in the reply of the hon. Minister. In part (a) he says 'Yes, Sir' whereas in part (b) he says 'There is no such proposal at present.' I am told in many States of our country the age has been reduced for candidates to the local bodies like corporations etc. So, I would like to

know whether Government is going to seriously consider this question ?

SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ : The question of reducing the age of voting has been under consideration in this country right from 1970. Several committees and sub-committees of the Cabinet have gone into this question and at no stage it was decided that the voting age should be reduced. The better wisdom of the Government on several occasions has been not to reduce it.

DR. A.K. PATEL : In about 78 democratic countries of the world the voting age has been reduced but here in our country still the hon. Minister is reluctant. Is it because they fear that the youth of the nation will not vote for them that they are not reducing the age ?

SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ : Sir, I am surprised to listen this. The voting age is prescribed under Article 326 of the Constitution and it has not been amended. In the local bodies several States are doing.

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK : Sir, members of the Opposition parties normally ask this question under a presumption that they think the youth of the country are with them. It is a false notion. In the last 25 years it is seen that the entire youth including those who are in the range of 18-20 are largely working for the Congress.

My question is different. The hon. Minister said that this aspect was considered from time to time. I would like to know what were the considerations which made you to reject this proposal ?

SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ : The voting age is prescribed by the laws of various countries. There are several countries where the voting age has been prescribed as 20, 21, etc. I was not a member of the Cabinet then but my information is that the question is by and large of literacy, namely, to what extent the literacy prevails in a country. These were the considerations in the study that was made. In our country the laws of election are always discussed with the Elec-

tion Commission. In 1982, the Election Commission did not favour such a change. What I understand is that the letter of the Election Commission in 1982 considering the addition of number of the voters and all this was taken into consideration. It was not considered desirable to reduce the age at that time. But as I submitted, these questions are always under consideration.

Regarding the question of youth, we have tremendous confidence in the youth of the country and that has been exhibited right in the Parliament.

SHRI M. RAGHUMA REDDY : How many States are following the minimum voting age of 18 years in the local body elections? Has it come to the notice of the Government of India that Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and some other States are following the minimum age of 18 years? Will the Minister ask the other States to follow the same?

SHRI H.R. BHARDWAJ : Sir, I may submit that under the scheme of the election law, the local body elections is the concern of the State. But if the hon. Member wants the information about in how many States' local bodies, the voting age was less than 20 years, I will get it done.

Losses Incurred by Coffee Board

*43. **SHRI C. SAMBU :** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Coffee Board is incurring huge losses;

(b) if so, the amount of loss incurred during the past three years;

(c) the steps taken to overcome the losses and the results achieved; and

(d) whether the Coffee Board owns any coffee plantations and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI DINESH SINGH) : (a) to (d). A statement is given below.

Statement

(a) to (c). The Coffee Board as a whole is not incurring losses. However, its promotional units have shown excess of expen-

diture over income from time to time as follows :

Year	Difference in Receipts and payments
1985-86	(—) Rs. 2,43,35,954.66
1986-87	(+) Rs. 10,82,319.50
1987-88	(—) Rs. 76,06,104.10

Remedial measures include economy in expenditure and price revision in February, 1988.

(d) No Sir, the Coffee Board does not own any Coffee plantations. It has, however, experimental plots attached to the Research Institutes, Regional Research Stations and Coffee Demonstration Farms spread over approximately 370 hectares.

SHRI C. SAMBU : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any proposal to establish experimental plots attached to the research institute to promote the coffee plantation in Andhra Pradesh.

Is it a fact that the Government of Andhra Pradesh has recommended to the Union Government to promote the coffee plantation particularly at Arku valley in Visakhapatnam?

SHRI DINESH SINGH : We shall be very glad to assist in the promotion of coffee wherever it is possible. I cannot say specifically about the place that the hon. Member has mentioned. But I can assure him that we shall be glad to assist in the coffee plantations wherever they are to be done.

SHRI C. SAMBU : I would like to know from the Minister whether there is any proposal with the Union Government to set up Coffee Board canteens in every district headquarters to provide employment to the poor people, especially women.

SHRI DINESH SINGH : No, Sir; we are not proposing to increase these canteens immediately.

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : According to a recent judgement of the Supreme Court, the Coffee Board has to pay a huge amount to the Government of Karnataka by way of purchase tax.