

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

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*Thursday, August 14, 1986/Sravana 23,
1908 (Saka)*

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

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Free mid-day meals in schools

*408 SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have issued any directions to the States regarding the introduction of free mid-day meals in their primary schools;

(b) if so, the names of those States which have introduced the programme of mid-day meals for students in the primary schools from the academic session 1985-86; and

(c) the number of students brought under this scheme ?

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE (SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI) :

(a) No, Sir. However, several State Governments have taken up such a programme of different dimensions from time to time.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

[*English*]

SHRI N. DENNIS : The claim that the scheme has made much impact in increasing the enrolment and reducing drop-outs in schools is disputed by certain sections. It is pointed out that children are more interested in meals than learning. And also funds are misused and thus, children get poor food. May I know from the Hon. Minister whether any assessment has been made regarding all these aspects and what are the details ? In there any plan to monitor the machinery for better implementation ?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO) : Sir, this programme is a multi-faceted programme and it has several benefits. One is that in many cases it has been seen that particularly with girls, enrolment figures have improved and retention figures have also improved. With boys, it seems to be a marginal case. But even so, the health status and the nutrition status of these children is definitely improved and once that happens, their learning capacity also is automatically improved in many cases. Of course, there may be cases where it will never be improved, whatever you do. But barring those cases, in a majority of cases, it is found that a well-fed child, a better-fed child can imbibe education and learning better and that is a definite advantage. So, it has several advantages, although, as the Hon. Member has pointed out, whatever studies have been undertaken so far, have not clearly come out with any definitive findings. There seems to be some grey areas in the sense that the studies themselves have not covered a wider field and, therefore, it is not possible to say 'yes', nor is it possible to say 'no', to all the results claimed although some advantages are self-evident.

So, on the health side, on the nutrition side and on general improvement of his capability to learn, there can hardly be any doubt.

SHRI N. DENNIS : Sir, as pointed out by the Hon. Minister, the scheme has a good impact in the improvement of health, educational and intellectual standards on the beneficiaries who suffer from malnutrition and under-nutrition. Keeping this in view, in the 7th Plan, the outlay has been increased to Rs. 1731.73 crores in the place of Rs 397 crores in the 6th Plan. May I know whether the Hon. Minister has any plan or programme to make this scheme a national scheme at the national level or at least are there any proposals to introduce this scheme in the backward States or backward districts, as a first step ?

Is there any proposal for reorganisation by linking this scheme with health services horticulture in schools, safe drinking water and so on ?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : Sir, as Hon. Members know, this programme has had a chequered career all over India. States have been introducing it in their own way according to their own financial resources and other convenience. From time to time it has been continued and discontinued except in Tamilnadu where it has been continued and still continues. In Andhra Pradesh it was there for a long time. Later on it was given up, was started in 1983 again and again it was given up. But the State Government's position is that they have discontinued it temporarily. Now, we do not know whether it has been continued. We did not get any information to the effect that it has been restarted. Therefore, we have to conclude that it continues to be temporarily suspended. In other States also it has been like that.

The CARE programme has come up with some help but that programme is tapering off. Therefore, all this expenditure is going to fall on the State Governments and the Central Government if the Central Government decides to assist.

In 1984 a nation—wide programme was envisaged at the instance of the then Prime Minister and some calculations were made. The scheme was examined and it was estimated that about Rs. 4000 crores would be needed for the entire Seventh Five Year Plan period if it is the intention to cover all the children. Now, it went up to several authorities and finally the Planning Commission examined it and said that this needs to be looked into again in view of the resource constraints of the Seventh Five Year Plan. So there is not much hope for this programme to be taken up on any large scale or on an all India scale in the Seventh Five Year Plan. We are still trying in the Action Programme to see what can be done. But in the action programme there are so many other items which we are going to take up.

So I would feel that this is a good programme. It has run into difficulties because of implementational drawbacks. Those things would have to be got over if the programme is to succeed. We all have some experience in our own villages about this programme and there is hardly anything that I can add to the experience of the Hon. Members. But we all know that these difficulties have been there. So, if we decide to take it up on an all-India basis, it will have to be again a partnership between the States and the Centre, but in this Plan, I frankly do not see any possibilities.

SHRI RAM SINGH YADAV : The coverage of children in Rajasthan is only 35 per cent. Even there the female coverage is only 11 to 14 per cent. Keeping in view the lowest percentage in Rajasthan barring Jammu & Kashmir, I want to know whether the Central Government will subsidise this programme in the State of Rajasthan and also try to cover children of the age group of 6 to 14 so that the number of children covered may increase in the schools.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : As I have submitted, the programmes have been taken up by the State Governments from time to time and as I have described it, it has not been a continuous programme in all the States. But in the case of any one particular State, it is difficult to say that.

we are going to subsidise that State. But if there is a programme on an all India basis according to a given pattern decided upon, naturally, in that, we may make a little gradation—States which are very backward and those which are not so backward. That could possibly be done. But we cannot single out one State for assistance while the other States are left out. That kind of approach would not be proper.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU : Recently the World Bank Chairman has praised the scheme which is being implemented in Tamilnadu—that is the nutritious meals scheme. He has not only praised it but he has come forward to say that we are not only giving nutritious food to the children but we are also inculcating the habit of learning in the Schools. That is very important. Even for the State expenditure also, not even one per cent of the State's revenue is being spent, for this scheme. That is what he says. The Hon. Minister has told that we needed Rs. 4000 crores...

MR. SPEAKER : That formula should be circulated to all the States.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU : The World Bank Chairman says like that. In Tamilnadu, we are feeding the school-going children, numbering about 83 lakhs, every day. It is even praised by almost all the States. Some of the States have also said that they wanted to follow the very same scheme. The Hon. Minister also stated that there are some difficulties and bottlenecks actually in implementing it. But we are successfully implementing the scheme in Tamilnadu for the last 5 years. I would like to know whether this scheme would be introduced in almost all the States in the country.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : I have already answered that part.

MR. SPEAKER : He has already answered to that part of the question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : What else does he want ?

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI : After the National Education Policy was announced, there are great expectations from the poorest of the poor in this country that their children will get education and will be fed. Government of India acts on the scheme, as you know, a few years back, under the food for work programme in the villages where huge quantity of surplus food was to be re-distributed, to the poor.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : Is it the Janata Government ?

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI : Whichever Government it may be. Why you are asking that ? It is not that during Indiraji's time it was introduced. At that time, you were not in the House.

Sir, I would like to know from the Hon. Minister categorically and very clearly. The answer the Hon. Minister gives today—I do not know what is the reaction of others, I am not satisfied. This is not the answer. The answer is very clear to the country that to fight illiteracy and empty stomach, the solution of the Planning Commission will not do justice. Will the Minister, in consultation with the Prime Minister, form immediately a Committee to give a report at the end of this year ? Mr. Kolandaivelu has rightly stated about following the Tamilnadu Pattern—and from the next Annual Budget, a provision will be introduced to make it mandatory to every Government to implement it. This should be first priority of the Education Ministry to feed the children. There cannot be any other priority for the Education Ministry excepting this programme. So, will he form a Committee involving the State Governments and announce during the next session—Budget Session—in this House that the school-going children in this country will not be used, even after 40 years of independence... *(Interruptions)*. Whatever it may be. Because you have enough food. You don't need huge resources. I have also collected the sample survey. It is not a fact. I run five primary schools without any help. We can give food. Why cannot you do it ?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : I have submitted to the House the position as it exists now. An expenditure of

Rs. 4000 crores was estimated and it was found that, as the matters stand at present, it is not possible to find Rs. 4000 crores in the next three or four years. Therefore in that form in which it was worked out...
(Interruptions)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : In Tamilnadu, without spending money, millions of children get benefited.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : If without spending money and spending less than one percent, all the children could be fed. That magic wand we shall certainly get from Tamilnadu or wherever it is available. We will certainly do it.

SHRI ANIL BASU : Are you casting aspersion on Tamilnadu ?

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO : I am not. There must be something very great in feeding all the children, spending less than one per cent. They must have done it, in many ways. Those ingenious ways would have to be really emulated by others. There is no doubt about it. I am not casting aspersions. I am only adding to the praise which Shri Kolandaivelu has been looking for all round. We will certainly look into that.

About the supplementary raised, I would like to say that the very fact that, at the instance of the then Prime Minister a programme, a massive programme, country-wide, was to be taken up, it was considered, it was examined, shows that we are all for it. The only point is how do we get over the constraints. Now, one thing we can do...*(Interruptions)*. You will get your chance to put a supplementary. Let me explain the position of the Government. One thing we can do is, when we are really formulating the next Plan, we could take a hard look at the whole thing and whatever the constraint, we could say that this gets the priority which we have said in the case of primary school buildings, for instance, we have said it. Otherwise, it would not have been possible to give primary school buildings to the whole country. Now it is going to be possible within a foreseeable future depending on the NREP and RLEGP

funds. That is being worked out. In the same way, on this programme also some decision has to be taken.

Now, what has been suggested by the Hon. Member in whether we should get in touch with all the State Governments. We are already in touch with all the State Governments; we are constantly in touch with them. We would certainly make this as one of the points of consultation and see what they can do and what we should do. All these things, we will go into. What I said was, as matters stand at this moment, it is not possible to say that only for this one programme we can find Rs. 4,000 crores. We may find some money. We are going to get extra money. But all that money cannot be put only into this programme. There are several other programmes—'Operation Blackboard' for instance—, so many other programmes, which we have taken up. Therefore, it may not be possible to come to this extent in the financing of this programme. But the Hon. Member's suggestion is right; I take that. On this programme also we will have full consultation with the State Governments as we are having in all other programmes, and whatever is possible, we will work out even in the Seventh Plan on some pilot scale or some selective scale. For instance, under the World Food Programme—I want to add to the information which I have already given—we are working out a programme where there will be no discrimination between a boy and a girl, there will be no discrimination between one income and another. If you go to a school and say, "I am going to feed those children whose parents have got an income of only Rs. 300 and I am not going to feed the others", then it becomes a discrimination. So, all these would have to be gone into.

[Translation]

Kakori Overbridge on Lucknow-New Delhi railway line

409. **SHRI JAGANNATH PRASAD :** Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the date on which construction work of Kakori overbridge on Lucknow-New Delhi railway line was started;