

LOK SABHA

Thursday, November 27, 1980/Agra-
haryana 6, 1902 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTIONS

**Steps to eradicate Blindness and to
cure cataract**

*141. SHRIMATI KRISHNA SAHI. Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 40,000 children go blind every year in India before the age of six;

(b) whether it is a fact that every year 5 lakhs cataract patients join an already staggering backlog of 50 lakhs sufferers in the country;

(c) whether it is a fact that every third blind person in the world is an Indian; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken to eradicate blindness and to cure the disease?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR): (a) There is no such authentic data.

(b) Yes, Sir. It is so estimated.

(c) No definite data in regard to the total blind population in the world is available. According to a recent estimate made by the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, there are about 28-42 million blind people in the world out of which India is estimated to have 9 million.

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(d) Government of India have taken the following steps to eradicate blindness and to cure the disease;

(i) A National Health Programme has been launched countrywide since 1976 for prevention of visual impairment and control of blindness.

(ii) For prevention of mal-nutritional blindness due to Vitamin 'A' deficiency amongst children, a programme for administering Vitamin 'A' to the pre-school children through PHC net work has been introduced.

श्रीमति कृष्णा साही : मंत्री महोदय ने अपने जवाब में कहा है कि सरकार के पास इस बारे में कोई आर्थेटिक डेटा नहीं है। आप और मंत्री महोदय इस बात से सहमत होंगे कि हमारे यहां बच्चे अधिक संख्या में अंधे होते हैं और आधुनिक युग में एक समुन्नत देश के लिए यह एक अभिशाप है। इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए क्या सरकार के पास कोई ऐसी योजना है, जिसके अन्तर्गत बच्चों को विटामिन ए तथा डी और न्यूट्रीशन दी जाती है, यदि हां, तो इस योजना के अन्तर्गत कितने बच्चों को किन किन राज्यों में दी जाती है ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: The hon. Member has raised very important questions. Government of India is giving very important impetus to these very programmes. In order to eliminate blinding mal-nutrition which is the major cause of child blindness, a programme called the prophylax against blindness of children due to vitamin deficiency has been taken up by our Ministry. Under this programme we are trying to cover 25% of the entire population of age group between 1 to 5. The agents will be our PHC and sub-Centre level.

The hon. Member has asked how far we have achieved this programme? The cover under this programme has increased from 3.89 million children in 1977-78 to 14.95 during 1979-80. We are taking every precaution to cover at least 25% population every year of this age group between 1 to 5 within Sixth Five Year Plan.

श्रीमती कृष्णा साहू : चूँकि सरकार के पास इस बारे में कोई मशीनरी नहीं है, इस लिए मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है कि कोई आर्थेटिक डेटा उपलब्ध नहीं है। इसी तरह (बी) के उत्तर में कहा गया है कि इट इज सो एस्टोमेटिड। मैं जानना चाहती हूँ कि (1) जो लास्ट सैन्सस आपरेशनज कन्डक्ट हुए थे, क्या उनमें इसके बारे में कोई लेखा-जोखा लिया गया था या नहीं कि कितने बच्चे ग्रंथे हो जाते हैं, और (2) आँखों के अस्पतालों को समुन्नत करने के लिए सरकार के पास कोई योजना है या नहीं, यदि है, तो उसपर कितनी धनराशि खर्च करने जा रहे हैं।

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: So far as the first part of the question is concerned, I have already said we have no definite data but there are some studies on it. The first one is the Royal Common Wealth Society. In our country the Indian Council of Medical Research during 1970-72 have also gone through seven centres—Srinagar, Delhi, Varanasi, Cuttack, Indore, Ahmedabad and Madurai. According to that estimate it is also very rough estimate, I have said 9 million blind people are there in our country.

The hon. Member asked me—what are the programmes to combat this disease? I have already said that the National Health Programme has been launched in the country during 1977-78 for prevention of impairment and control of blindness. The salient features are like this. I can just mention a few of them. The first is wide dissemination of available information regarding eye camp by means of all mass media programmes and secondly to augment ophthalmic service so that relief could be given to the maximum number of these people in the shortest possible time to establish permanent infra-structure for

community oriented eye health care. We have also programme for the current year. Shall I read it out?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can place it on the Table of the House.

श्रीमती कृष्णा साहू : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आपकी प्रोटेक्शन चाहती हूँ। मैंने पूछा है कि आँखों के अस्पतालों को समुन्नत करने के लिए क्या योजना है। मंत्री महोदय ने उसका उत्तर नहीं दिया है।

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: The following services are proposed to be developed in the country during 1980-81

We will provide 45 mobile units. They will go to the rural areas and through them we will cure and attend more persons. We are going to strengthen public health centres—1600 in nos.; we are strengthening district hospitals—about 200 in nos. There is a paucity of funds and, within the funds available, we are doing everything in this regard. There is going to be upgradation of Ophthalmic Departments in Medical Colleges—13 in nos.; development of Regional institute of Ophthalmology—6 in nos. We are taking many measures.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This is in addition to what the respective State Government are doing.

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: Yes, Sir.

श्री डी० पी० यादव : उपाध्यक्ष जी, योजना बनाना, वर्किंग ग्रुप को तैयार करना, उससे योजना लेना—सरकार के बहुधंधी कामों में एक धंधा यह भी है, हम भी इसको करते थे और आप भी कर रहे हैं लेकिन मैं मंत्री जी से स्पष्ट तौर पर पूछना चाहता हूँ कि आपकी पोलिटिकल डिटेमिनेशन कितनी है कि बच्चों को ग्रंथ रोग से मुक्ति मिल सके? आपके पास मशीनरी

क्या है जिससे अंधापन दूर हो सके और आपके पास कितनी राशि है ? केवल आइडिया से काम नहीं चलेगा, आपके पास क्या राशि है, क्या डिट-मिनेशन है और क्या मशीनरी है—इस पर प्रकाश डालिए ।

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : I have already mentioned the various measures that we are taking in answer to the first question. We are giving all importance to the child health care programme. We are trying in a modest way to cover at least 25 per cent of children in the age group of 1 to 5 years. About 250 lakh children—age group 1—5 years—annually, we are trying to cover that much. There is a target laid down in the Sixth Plan and we are determined to achieve this target. In this regard, we have to take the help of State Governments. Our PHCs are there; our other hospitals are there. Through them, we have to cover this programme. Sometimes, the State Governments fail in that. We have no other alternative. We have to depend upon the State Governments to a large extent.

SHRI XAVIER ARAKKAL : Since the Health Minister is here, in this context I want to ask one thing. Today's newspapers have reported that junior doctors are going to go on strike again. May I know from the hon. Minister what has happened since the settlement was made, how far it has been implemented and whether there is any genuine case made out in this threat of junior doctors to go on strike again ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : The only thing I can say is that we cannot completely prevent the possibility of strikes in future.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : The question relates to eradication of blindness. In this context, I want to know whether it is a fact or not that forced, tortured, blindness has been inflicted upon 40 under-trial prisoners in Bhagalpur jail. Is it not a fact that the Speaker has called for a report and, if so, have the Government submitted the report to the Speaker so that the House can discuss it ? This is a savage Government and this is the kind of savagery that is taking place, nothing else.

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : This has nothing to do with the main Question.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : Why not ? How can he say that ? I want an answer to that. He must answer; he is bound to answer.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Has the Minister got anything to say ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : I have nothing to say.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : You direct him to answer my question. This is going on day in and day out. They are keeping mum over it. He must answer my question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : It is your right to put a question and it is his right to answer, I cannot intervene. I cannot direct him to answer.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : Is it a fact or not that the Speaker has called for a report, whether they have submitted the report and whether it will be discussed in the House ? He must answer that.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Shri Shiv Kumar Singh.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : He has not answered my question.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He is blind to that. Now, Shri Shiv Kumar Singh.

श्री शिव कुमार सिंह ठाकुर : माननीय उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि लायन्स रोटरी जैसी समाज सेवी संस्थायें हर साल हिन्दुस्तान में अपने सभी क्लबों में आखों का आपरेशन और परीक्षण करती हैं, तो क्या केन्द्रीय शासन के सामने ऐसी कोई योजना विचाराधीन है, जिससे कि इन क्लबों को वह आर्थिक सहयोग दे सके ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : Yes, Sir. There is a provision for that. If a voluntary organisation asks for financial help in this regard under this programme for blindness, Government gives a grant of Rs. 60 per cataract operation performed by any voluntary organisation. So, if any voluntary organisa-

tion needs the financial help in this regard they are given by Government. The hon. Member referred to Lion's Club and some such organisation. If they come to us for help in this regard, we shall help them.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I shall call one from left, right and another from the Centre. If I deviate from that, please correct me. The Leftists will never be left out. Don't worry. Shri Rajda.

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA; Sir, we are eliciting information from the hon. Minister as far as steps that Government is taking with regard to blindness that is prevailing in this country and the extent to which it is prevailing etc. Blindness has many facets and intencities. Blindness is also caused by intensive power in this country. I do not know whether Government has got any means to overcome the blindness from power.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : They are politically blind!

SHRI RATANSINH RAJDA : I won't say that they are politically blind. But power has got something to do with blindness.

That apart, the hon. Minister is aware that there are several associations for the blind. Now, they have been clamouring for Government help since the last many years. Their main complaint is that Government is turning a deaf ear to all their demands so far. Will the hon. Minister tell us what help or assistance is being given to all those associations for the blind ?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND) : Those who were blind by power went away within three years. The hon. Member has been blind to the main question. The main question deals with blindness of children. He is asking about the help to the association for the blind people. This has nothing to do with the Health Ministry. This concerns the Social Welfare Ministry.

श्री शिव प्रसाद साहू : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देता हूँ, उन्होंने जो बच्चों के संबंध में आंकड़े पेश किए हैं। इस संबंध में सरकारी काम जो भी हो रहे हैं, लेकिन हिमाचल प्रदेश, बिहार और उड़ीसा के पहाड़ी क्षेत्रों में कुछ

भी काम नहीं हो रहा है, बल्कि अंधों की संख्या दिन प्रति दिन बढ़ती जा रही है। इसलिए मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि पहाड़ों में बसने वाले आदिवासी और हरिजनों के लिए क्या कोई स्पेशल प्रोग्राम हमारी सरकार या हमारे मंत्री जी सोच रहे हैं या केवल शहरों की बात ही सोच रहे हैं ?

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR: Sir, I have already stated that there have been several constraints due to which this programme has not got into full swing. We have to go to the State authorities for implementation and we have been trying to tighten it up.

Reconsideration of New Passport Rules

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†142. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY :
SHRI P. K. KODIYAN :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian nationals abroad have urged the Government to reconsider the new passport rules effective from 1st November, 1980; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government on it ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P. V. NARASIMHA RAO): (a) and (b). Embassy of India, Kuwait, had informed the Government that the Indian residents in Kuwait were under apprehension that the new system of emigration endorsements of Indian passports would cause inconvenience to them at the time of their visits to India. However, the Embassy has since clarified that Indian nationals coming to India from abroad on return tickets or transiting through India do not require emigration endorsements on their passports at the time of their departure back to their country of residence. Reports of adverse reaction from the Indian community to the new system have not been received from any other Indian Missions. Nor have there been any further representations in Kuwait after the clarification given by the Embassy.