

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

Friday, February 26, 1982/Phalgun 7,
1903 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have to inform the House of the sad demise of one our former colleagues, Dr. Mahadava Prasad, who was a Member of the Third and Fourth Lok Sabha during 1962—70 from Maharajganj constituency of Uttar Pradesh.

An educationist and social worker, he engaged himself in social service on Gandhian lines and organised Bharat Sewak Samaj camps.

He was associated with a number of educational, social and cultural organisations including Court of Banaras Hindu University and Board of Studies, University of Gorakhpur and District Kisan Sangh, All India Backward Classes Federation; and Sub-Committees on Human Amenities and Constructive work of the National Committee of Gandhian Centenary.

He passed away at Gorakhpur on 7 January, 1982 at the age of 58 years.

We deeply mourn the loss of this friend and I am sure the House will join me in conveying our condolences to the bereaved family.

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The House may stand in silence for a short while.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

PROF. MADHU DANAVATE (Rajapur): There has been a convention that the Prime Minister should always be present when an Obituary Reference is made in the House.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY (Midnapore): She is a special Prime Minister, not observing conventions.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

New Strategy to Boost Agricultural Export

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*83. SHRI VIRBHADRA SINGH:
SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a new strategy is being formulaed to boost agricultural exports; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL):

(a) and (b). In order to realise the potential for increased exports of agricultural commodities and attain the targets laid down in Sixth Five Year Plan, there is need for evolving a stable agricultural export strategy. The Minister of Commerce is working on the formulation of such a strategy.

SHRI VIRBHADRA SINGH: Sir, agriculture is a major potential area, which needs to be fully tapped not only to increase our export earnings but also to protect the interests of

the producers and consumers. I want to know whether the Government has made any long-term assessment of the agricultural surpluses in the country that would be available for export and also taken any action so far to promote and to ensure higher prices for our exports through bilateral and multilateral discussions, particularly in view of the protectionist policies adopted by some countries. I would also like to know whether the Ministry has formulated any plan in consultation with other concerned Ministries to earmark some portion of agricultural produce for exports irrespective of our needs so as build and sustain our foreign markets.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: Sir, I do agree that agriculture has to be dealt with in a manner which is identical with that used for developing industries. Agriculture is a very important industry for our country. We do want to plan and produce agricultural products for export. We are not going to be content with the export of the available surpluses. However, the question of deciding as to how much can be exported is not a very easy job because the agricultural produce depends on the vagaries of the nature. But fortunately for our country, we have been producing something more than what is actually required for our country. We are trying to decide as to what will be the minimum that would be exported and that decision would be taken in consultation with the Agricultural Ministry, Supply Minister and the Planning Commission. We are at it. And having decided as to how much we can regularly, continuously and without any interruption export to other countries, we would be able to establish market for the agricultural produce outside. We have been examining the markets outside, where we can export our agricultural produce, and in consultation with other countries, we are trying to find out their requirements also. We do intend to export the surplus to other countries and fetch remunerative prices so that the agriculturists can also get remunerative prices out of this.

SHRI VIRBHADARA SINGH: Apart from agriculture, India has a vast potential for export of marine products. Our exports in this field so far have been very negligible. I want to know the steps the Government has taken or contemplate to take to promote the export of marine products and to provide necessary infrastructure in the country such as additional cold storage capacity, packing and transport facilities etc.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: The hon. Member has raised a very good issue. We have a very vast economic zone, where a lot of bio-mass is available and out of that bio-mass, we can get some fish and certain other things which can be consumed by the human beings. We are trying to increase our capacity for fishing in the economic zone, and having increased that capacity, we would like to give the facilities for storing the material which is brought from the sea, facilities for transporting the fish and other things to other countries also. We are at it, but this is an issue which requires a lot of attention, a lot of examination and a lot of money and scientific study. We are trying to do all these things and we would be doing that in future.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: The hon. Minister has given the relevant information with regard to the non-vegetarian stuff and I would now draw his attention to the things required by the vegetarian people, i.e. fruit etc. I hope, the hon. Minister is aware that there is a great demand of fruits, tinned and fresh, in the Middle-East countries, countries in the European continent, specially the Communist countries. If that is so, what incentive and facilities are the Government planning to give to expand this trade?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: The earlier questions asked by the previous hon. Member were about the vegetarian products as also non-vegetarian products and I answered accordingly. Now, I again revert to this question pertaining to vegetarian products.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, that is good for health also.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: I assure the hon. Member we do know that there is a requirement for the fruits and vegetables outside on a large scale and we are trying to export fruits, vegetables and flowers and such other things to the countries where those things are required. We are giving help to them for exporting these products. We have also set up the task force facilities, cold storage facilities and some monetary assistance in certain cases is also given to them. Establishment of the processing plants on a large scale is also on the anvil. At certain places, we have already established such plants and the State Governments have also established some. We are making all efforts to export fruits and other things.

SHRI P. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: Is the Government giving export promotion facilities for agricultural commodities? If so, which are the commodities and what are the incentives given?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: The Commerce Ministry is trying to promote the export of agricultural produce also. One of the facilities made available to the agriculturists is to find out the markets; the task force facilities include to see that there are no obstacles in exporting these things. These are all promotional activities. The promotional activities have been taken up by the Commerce Ministry. In certain cases some assistance is also given.

SHRI SUNIL MAITRA: Sir, how does the Government justify the export of foodgrains when last year this country imported foodgrains, specially wheat from America to the tune of 1.2 million tonnes?

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: Sir, our policy is not to export or import indiscriminately. Our policy is to have enough in our country for our people and

then to have a buffer-stock to serve as cushion in the lean years. And if anything more than that is available in our country, we have to export. This would be helping those people who want it. This will help us to earn foreign exchange also. Last year, though we imported wheat, this year and last year also we had excess of rice. Now this year sugar is in excess. There was a time when we had to import sugar, but now we have sugar which can be exported. If we have some agricultural commodities in excess of our actual demands, it would be beneficial for us to export also. Now, our policy is not to export what is actually needed here, but our policy is to export that which is in excess of our demand and after keeping a quite comfortable cushion for our consumption in difficult period also.

MR. SPEAKER: I think, in addition to foodgrains, you can concentrate on vegetables and fruits which are in abundance and you can grow them. That will very much diversify our export also. But you have to plan it in advance. It should be a ten year project or something like that.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: Your suggestion is acceptable to us and we are at it.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri R. L. Bhatia and Shri Sajjan Kumar are not present.

PROF. RUP CHAND PAL: Sir, we have already given a notice that Question Nos. 85 and 100 are related and that they should be taken together.

MR. SPEAKER: I have no objection.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: It is a very good question. Sir, don't allow it to lapse. Sir you have your residuary powers to combine the two.

MR. SPEAKER: But I have to have the concurrence of the Members.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sir, these are not related.