

must inform the hon. Member that any organisation, including the United Nations, would be very willing to be very active, but we should carefully consider the implications of any such suggestion. Our approach should be to solve these matters between India and Pakistan by mutual discussions, by mutual agreement, and it will be in the interest of both if outside agencies, including the United Nations, take less interest in this and encourage the countries in the Sub-Continent to arrive at mutually acceptable agreements.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: The hon. Minister has said that before there can be a summit meeting, some meetings at the lower level are necessary. I want to know whether that attempt is being continued. Secondly, I want to know whether, in the meantime Mr. Bhutto has sent a personal letter to the Prime Minister for a summit meeting and, if so, what is the reaction of the Government thereto.

SHRI SWARAN SINGH: I agree that the Simla Agreement does contemplate meetings at other levels. We would welcome such meetings. But to understand the attitude of Pakistan in a correct perspective, it is necessary to remember that for about two months, prior to the elections in Bangladesh, President Bhutto has consistently been taking the stand that further moves should await the outcome of elections in Bangladesh. We never accepted this as a valid reason for not taking the initiative and for not even organising the discussions as contemplated under the Simla Agreement. An initiative from our side knowing fully well the attitude of Pakistan would not be productive. Now that the elections are over and even Pakistan does realise that the Government and the majority party in Bangladesh has got overwhelming support of the people, the atmosphere, I think, is now ready for taking further initiative,

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: He has not replied to second part of my question, whether Mr. Bhutto has written a personal letter to our Prime Minister for a summit meeting.

SHRI SWARAN SINGH: As regards the correspondence between our Prime Minister and President Bhutto, a suggestion at one time had been made that there could be a summit meeting. As I have already explained, our position is that a summit meeting without adequate preparation is not likely to be productive.

RE: Q 429

DR RANEN SEN: Sir, before the Minister answers the Question, I want to draw your attention that this Question should have been replied by the Housing Minister. The Question No. 423 put by Shri Indrajit Gupta was directed to the Labour Minister but it was replied by the Steel Minister....

MR. SPEAKER: Whom did you address it to? To which Ministry did you address it?

DR RANEN SEN: This Question should have been replied by the Minister of Housing. Anyway, since the Labour Minister is here, let him reply it.

MR. SPEAKER: You should be sure. Do you want I should postpone it?

DR. RANEN SEN: No, no. Further postponement means it is gone!

MR. SPEAKER: You should be sure about it.

Amount spent by owners of Tea Plantation for building houses for Workers

*429. **DR. RANEN SEN:** Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the tea plantation owners in West Bengal spent only Rs. 20,000 out of the Central Government allocation of Rs. 40,00,000 advanced to them for building houses for workers during 1972;

(b) if so, what measures Government have taken against these tea plantation owners; and

(c) what steps Government intend to take to build the houses for workers?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY): (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) to (c). The Subsidised Housing Scheme for Plantation Workers, under which Central financial assistance is admissible to the Planters, is implemented through the respective State Governments.

During 1970-71, a sum of Rs. 6 lakhs as loan was released to the Government of West Bengal for implementation of the Scheme in the State. Out of this amount, the State Government have been able to advance to the planters only Rs. 20,000/- during 1971-72. They expect to utilise another sum of Rs. 5.50 lakhs during the current financial year.

The main difficulty for implementation of the Scheme was that the planters were not taking out leases for lands they are permitted to retain under the West Bengal State Acquisition Act, 1954. The State Government have recently taken action to get the leases finalized.

Another difficulty is stated to be procurement of building materials particularly G.I. sheets and cement, etc., in North Bengal districts in which the plantations are located.

To discuss all related problems in accelerating the implementation of the Scheme, a meeting was held at Darjeeling on 10th February, 1973. While the States concerned agreed to exercise close supervision over the implementation of the Scheme, it was also decided that a machinery comprising of all connected Ministries and agencies should be set up to review the progress of the implementation of the Scheme periodically and to suggest solutions to problems which might hinder its progress.

DR. RANEN SEN: The statement laid on the Table of the House does not correspond to the statement made by the P.W.D. Minister of West Bengal Government. In view of the fact that the West Bengal Minister has categorically stated that the planters have refused to take the subsidy and the grant given by the Government to the extent of 87.50 per cent, may I know whether the Government of India would ask the State Government to take proper steps to see that the tea planters utilise the Government grant and subsidy to build houses and that, if they refuse, proper steps be taken by the State Government as it is the State Government which is responsible for implementation of the provisions under the Labour Act.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: The statement attributed to the State Government, I am not aware of; I will out what the position is, in what circumstances the statement was made. But it is true that the planters are very slow in making use of the provisions made or the facilities provided for the housing scheme for the plantation workers. As the hon. Member has rightly said, nearly 87.5 per cent by way of subsidy or by way of loan was provided by the government and government organisation, but the planters are not taking. The Government is fully seized of this matter. In fact, the scheme is sought to be taken away from the State sector to the Central sector.

DR. RANEN SEN: The Government of West Bengal was given a sum of Rs. 40 lakhs to be taken by the planters for the construction of houses. Out of that, only Rs. 20,000 have been taken by the planters....

AN HON. MEMBER: Out of Rs. 6 lakhs.

DR. RANEN SEN: According to the statement of the Central Government, the sum of Rs. 6 lakhs is for one year. But the total money sanctioned by the Government of India for the construction of houses was Rs. 40 lakhs, according to West Bengal Government. Now you can verify.

In view of such a poor performance, may I know whether Government are thinking of taking any other steps to see that the houses are built, if not by the planters, by the employer, by the State Government and the Central Government out of this fund which is lying idle for the last two or three years.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: The Government of India decided to transfer the scheme from the State sector to the Central sector of the Plan, outside the State Plan ceilings, from the year 1970-71. Government of India also provided a sum of Rs. 2 crores in the Central sector for the scheme during the Fourth Plan. To vigorously pursue the plan schemes for providing houses for plantation workers, the Minister of State for Housing held a conference, including therein some of the officers of the State and other representatives. This matter is being vigorously pursued.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY: The Central Government has now taken up the Plan in the Central sector. In view of the fact that the tea industry is already in the Central sector, I cannot understand why the Government of India took such a long time to come to a decision. For not implementing the housing scheme for plantation workers, two reasons have been

mentioned by the hon. Minister. One is that lands are not being taken on lease by the planters from the State Government under the West Bengal State Acquisition Act of 1954, and the other difficulty is stated to be in the procurement of building materials, particularly G. I. sheets, cement, etc. In view of the fact that building materials are not properly available in North Bengal for the housing scheme of plantation workers, may I know whether the Government or the Labour Ministry will make liaison with other corresponding Ministries for availability of these raw materials to complete the scheme of housing for the tea plantation workers in West Bengal.

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not ask so long a question. Please be brief.

SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY: The plantations are asked to renew their leases as early as possible.

About the rest of the question regarding materials for building, etc., the attention of the concerned Ministries has been drawn and they have taken a very helpful attitude... (*Interruptions*) About the material like zinc sheets and building materials, etc, the attention of the Ministry of Steel has been drawn to this and they have taken a very helpful attitude in the matter.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Ranen Sen, I have seen your original question. It is in your own hand-writing and you have addressed it to the Labour Minister.

DR. RANEN SEN: Even then, you could have referred it to the Works and Housing.

SHRI R. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI: From the answer it is clear that so many lakhs of rupees allotted by the Central Government for building

houses for the plantation labour have remained unutilised. So, why not the Government consider making this money available to Tamil Nadu and Kerala where there is lack of funds?

MR SPEAKER From Bengal you have moved to the other end. Sorry, I am not allowing.

Shri Nawal Kishore Sharma

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD If that is a fact and knowing full-well that the tea plantations are not using the sanctioned money, what steps the Government are taking in this regard to build houses for the plantation workers?

SHRI P G MAVALANKAR Have you allowed him Sir? How can he ask a question when you have moved to the next question?

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD: Is he the Speaker?

SHRI P G MAVALANKAR. When the Chair says that it has moved to the next question, how can he put the question? I want your guidance.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA The Chair only was moving. He has not moved.

MR SPEAKER I did move to the next question. Now, the Minister does not move. What should I do? (Interruption)

MR SPEAKER Mr Azad, I have not called you. (Interruption)

SHRI S M BANERJEE When you have already moved, can some hon Member pull the chain and stop you? How can it be?

MR SPEAKER: Shri Shankerrao Savant

Escape by Pak P.O Ws. from Camps

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*432 SHRI SHANKERRAO
SAVANT.
SHRI DHAMANKAR.

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state.

(a) how many Pakistani Prisoners of War have escaped from the Indian Camps so far,

(b) how many were killed while escaping and how many were re-arrested,

(c) the factors that have facilitated the escape of Prisoners of War, and

(d) whether any organisation is trying to help the Prisoners of War to escape?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE PRODUCTION) IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA) (a) 22

(b) Killed 12 Rearrested 49.

(c) and (d) Adequate security measures already exist in the Camps to prevent any escape but inspite of these the Prisoners of War, take the risk to escape. The Government is not aware of any organisation trying to help them to escape.

SHRI SHANKERRAO SAVANT. According to the code of conduct for the soldiers every prisoners is expected to make a bid for escape. Indian prisoners have not made a bid to escape because the entire population roundabout is hostile to them. But the Pakistani camps are away from the border. And still as many as 92 persons have tried to escape and 22 of them succeeded in escaping also. Though there may not be any organisation to help them, have any persons helped the POWs to escape and if so, what are the reasons? How many are there? Who are they? How are they being dealt with?