

**Cases of Blindness**

\*1623. SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have made an assessment in regard to the rate and the causes of blindness in the country as compared to other Asian countries;

(b) if so, the main features thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Government during the last three years to control the percentage of blindness and the results achieved thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING (SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA) : (a) and (b) : No. assessment has been made specifically of the rates and causes of Blindness in the country as compared to other Asian countries. The Indian Council of Medical Research have undertaken a 'Coordinated Study on the Prevalence and Incidence of Blindness in the country.' This is in progress.

(c) The major causes of blindness in India are Trachoma, Smallpox, Nutritional deficiencies, Cataract, injuries etc. A national Trachoma Control Programme has been launched. There is also a programme of eradicating Small-pox. A scheme on Prophylaxis against blindness among children due to deficiency in Vitamin 'A' has been taken up in the current Plan.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : May I know whether it is a fact that because of malnutrition cases of blindness among children are found in large numbers? What has been the programme of the Government so far to eradicate blindness among children ?

SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : As I have already said in the body of my answer to the original question, some cases of blindness are due to malnutrition. In the Fourth Plan about 120 lakh children in the age group 1-5 years are to get Vitamin A in oil by mouth, out of which 48 lakh children will be covered by the end of 1971-72. Some other subsidiary food programmes have been undertaken to increase the Vitamin contents of the food of children in that age group.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : In western countries Governments are taking to the procedure of cornea grafting. May I know whether the Government of India has any such scheme in India ?

SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Yes, Sir.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE : In view of the fact that particularly in north-eastern India large numbers of children go blind on account of malnutrition, as the Minister himself recognises, may I know if this is a recent discovery by Government or is it that for so long we have been ignoring this aspect of public health in so far as the children of our country are concerned and we have only woken up in the present Plan period to do something about it ?

SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Government has been seized of the problem for quite a long time. With the passing of years Government has been increasing the Plan and financial allocations to combat the problem. I say again that Government is already aware of the problem and the increased fund allocations show the increased awareness of Government regarding the problem.

SHRIMATI SHEILA KAUL : What are the agencies through which this programme is being carried out ?

**SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :**

There are several programmes. Schoolboys are being fed through some lunch packets. There are *balwari* programmes and the supplementary feeding programmes. There are four or five programmes.

**SHRIMATI SHEILA KAUL :** I wanted to know about the agencies.

**MR. SPEAKER :** One question is enough.

**श्री हुकमचन्द कछवाय :** जो अन्धे बच्चे हैं इन्हें शिक्षा देने की हमारे देश में एक प्रथा है और उनके स्कूल चल भी रहे हैं। तो क्या मन्त्री जी बतायेंगे कि केन्द्रीय सरकार द्वारा जो उन स्कूलों को सहायता दी जाती है वह पर्याप्त है, और कितनी दी जाती है? क्या स्कूलों से मांग आयी है कि सहायता को और अधिक बढ़ाया जाय? क्या यह बात सही है कि ऐसी कोई प्रथा नहीं है कि जो अन्धे बच्चे ट्रेनिंग लेते हैं उन्हें सब से पहले काम दिया जाय। क्या व्यवस्था ऐसे अन्धे बच्चों के बारे में सरकार की और से है?

**MR. SPEAKER :** This is about the number of blind people, not about the training of these people.

**SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI :** May I know whether in connection with investigations on the incidence of blindness, the effects of the recent epidemic of Conjunctivitis have been studied? This epidemic has now spread all over India? From Bombay, it came to Calcutta and from Calcutta, it came to Delhi and now it has taken a virulent form. Has that aspect been studied? I would like to know whether this epidemic is likely to increase the incidence of blindness.

**SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :**

This question has been answered on several occasions on the floor of the House. In this connection, it may be indicated that the effect of conjunctivitis on blindness is negligible. The problem is being studied.

**SHRI DINESH CHANDRA GOSWAMI :** One of the reasons for increased blindness in the north eastern region is absence of milk and milk products, In view of this, will the hon. Minister be pleased to state whether there is any scheme to increase the availability of milk and milk products in the north-eastern region?

**SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :** There is a programme of feeding the students and the milk contents are being put into that sort of food. As regards the scheme particularly for north eastern region referred to by the hon. Member, there is no such scheme at present.

**SHRI S. M. BANERJEE :** *Dalda* is one of the causes of blindness.

**DR. MELKOTE :** Considerable sums of money are being spent to prevent as well as cure a number of disease like Small Pox, T. B. etc. Is it a fact that, as compared to this, the children's needs for preventing blindness are not sufficiently appreciated and talked and considerable sums are not being spent on that?

**SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :** I may submit that the seriousness of the problem has been appreciated and the Government is seized of the problem.

**SHRI N. K. P. SALVE :** May I know whether the hon. Minister is aware that Diabetes Mellitus adversely affect the region of the pupil, particularly in Asian countries and, if so, what steps are being taken to undertake research in this direction?

**SHRI D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :**  
I have not with me any particular record of relationship between diabetes and blindness. I will look into it.

#### **Armymen In West Bengal**

1624. **SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI :** Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Armymen posted at several Districts of West Bengal are getting co-operation from Police in tackling the situation of law and order; and

(b) the number of army personnel injured or killed in such action so far ?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE PRODUCTION) IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA) :** (a) The Army has been functioning only in aid of civil power and has been giving such assistance as is needed by the civil authorities in charge of law and order.

(b) During the course of these operations and upto 31.7.1971, 6 army personnel lost their lives and 19 suffered injuries.

**SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI :** My question was very specific as to whether the Army is getting cooperation from the Police in tackling the law and order situation. But the answer is not at all satisfactory. In view of this, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Defence Ministry is aware that the Army posted in Birbhum and Burdwan districts specifically has been asked to tackle the law and order situation because the Police has failed and whether the Defence Ministry is aware that the C.P.M. and other extremists have infiltrated into the Police

force, making it increasingly difficult for the army men to get the co-operation of the Police..

**SHRI N.K.P. SALVE :** This question should have been posted to the Home Minister actually.

**SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA :** As I mentioned earlier, the police and the military are functioning under the same civil authority. They are being controlled by the same civil authority in places where they are functioning. So, there is not any lack of co-operation but the difficulty which the hon. Member has pointed out regarding the civil police in the certain places, that difficulty has been felt and, therefore, it became necessary to use armed forces in certain places and the very fact that armed forces have been deployed indicates this difficulty that we are facing there.

**SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI :** I am very happy he has stated that. In Calcutta, in the Beliaghata police station jurisdiction, when the army was called in to investigate the bombs and other explosive materials, the Police gave instructions to the army to investigate a particular place where bombs are not there at all and where the bombs are kept, the army was not instructed to go there and investigate. In this connection, the army protested against the Police attitude. In view of this fact, I want to know the reaction of the Government.

**SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA :** It is the civil authorities of West Bengal who coordinate and direct all the activities. There may be one or two instances where such things might have happened. But, by and large, both the forces are working with effective co-ordination.

**SHRI S.M. BANERJEE :** While every one of us wants the law and order situation in West Bengal to improve, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he