

LOK SABHA DEBATES

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LOK SABHA

Monday, March 18, 1974/Phalguna 27,
1895 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of
the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

West Bengal Scheme for Drinking Water in Villages in Fifth Plan

*321A. SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE:
Will the Minister of WORKS AND
HOUSING be pleased to state:

(a) whether West Bengal have
submitted a scheme to Government
for providing drinking water in pro-
blematic and other villages during the
Fifth Plan;

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

(c) the reaction of Government
thereto?

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND
HOUSING (SHRI BHOLA PASWAN
SHASTRI): (a) to (c). A statement
is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

The Government of West Bengal
had submitted proposals to the Plan-
ning Commission costing Rs. 35 crores
for providing drinking water in
difficult and problem villages. In
addition, the State Government had
proposed an outlay of Rs. 10 crores
for rural water supply in other
villages. The Planning Commission,

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after taking into consideration all the
relevant factors including the con-
straint on resources, have tentatively
provided Rs. 29 crores for drinking
water in difficult and problem villages
in West Bengal during the Fifth Plan
under the Minimum Needs Program-
me. The following categories of
villages will qualify for assistance
under the Minimum Needs Program-
me:

- (i) those which do not have an
assured source of drinking
water within a reasonable
distance (say 1.6 Km.);
- (ii) those where the sources of
water supply are endemic to
water borne diseases like
cholera and guinea worms; or
- (iii) those which suffer from excess
of salinity, iron or fluorides.

While formulating specific water sup-
ply programmes/projects, preference
would be given to villages inhabited
by weaker sections of society such as
tribals, scheduled castes and other
backward classes.

SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE: The
statement shows that the Government
of West Bengal demanded a sum of
Rs. 45 crores for the project, but only
a sum of Rs. 29 crores has been pro-
vided. Will the hon. Minister kindly
tell us whether he knows that there
is the Sunderbans belt in West Bengal
where water for drinking is not avail-
able within a radius of five or six or
even ten miles at places and in the
Asansol belt at times water sells at
Rs. 2 a bucket? If this is the situa-
tion there, how is it that even this
paltry sum of Rs. 45 crores could not
be provided and what was the sense
of priority that influenced this
decision?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: Out of an outlay of Rs. 45 crores demanded by the State Government, Rs. 29 crores have been provided tentatively. The criteria are (a) those villages which do not have an assured source of drinking water within a reasonable distance of 1.6 km.; (b) those where the sources of water supply are endemic to water-borne diseases like cholera and so on; and (c) those which suffer from excess of salinity, iron or fluorides. These categories of villages qualify for this assistance.

SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE: I did not get my answer. He has described a 'reasonable distance'. According to that, one has to go for 1.6 kms. for water. Do Government take this distance to be a reasonable one? Will one have to travel as far as 1.6 kms. only to collect water?

Secondly, here is an assurance that preference would be given to areas inhabited by weaker sections, but experience shows that whenever any provision for water supply is made, it is only the affluent and vocal sections which get it and get it done. What measures are Government thinking of to make these promises meaningful and to see that the weaker sections actually get the benefit of it, not the affluent sections?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: The State Government is requested again and again to see that the weaker section gets priority in this matter

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: In the forest areas of Durgapur sub-division in Burdwan district and backward districts like Bankura and Purulia there is acute shortage of pure drinking water. May I know whether the Government of West Bengal has given any scheme in the Fifth Plan to provide pure drinking water in the above mentioned areas also in the districts of North Bengal

where Nepali-speaking people are residing?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: So far as selection of places is concerned, it is done by the State Government and it would be good if the hon. Member writes to that Government to see that those areas are selected.

SHRI SAKTI KUMAR SARKAR: Previously it was the policy that one drinking tubewell should be given for a population of 400 in a village. That being so, is not the policy which you gave out just now contradictory to the earlier policy?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: I have not got information as to who initiated the policy of giving tubewells for 400 persons

SHRI D. N. TIWARY: May I know whether the sum of Rs 29 crores allotted is against certain schemes or it had been allotted on an ad hoc basis and if there are further schemes, further sums would be allotted?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: Rs. 29 crores had been provided under the minimum needs programme in the Fifth Plan.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: From the statement it appears that the Government has decided to give preference to the villages inhabited by weaker sections of society such as tribals, scheduled castes, etc. What is the policy regarding supply of water? Is not water necessary both for developed and undeveloped areas? How can you make a distinction in the minimum needs requirement of a human being?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: Water is in the category of minimum need and so far weaker sections are concerned, Government is clear that priority should be given to such people.

SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN: May I ask the Hon. Minister the total number of villages in West Bengal lacking drinking water facilities?

SHRI BHOLA PASWAN SHASTRI: The total number of villages in West Bengal is 38,530. Out of this, 13,837 are difficult areas so far as water supply is concerned and 12,000 villages are non-difficult areas.

Amount spent on Social Welfare Activities

*322A **SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI:** Will the Minister of EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE be pleased to state the net amount spent for social welfare activities during 1971-72, 1972-73 and upto January, 1974?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-6448/74].

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: Sir, from the statement, it is found that Government have increased the social welfare activities by increasing the amount in Budget after Budget. May I know, from the hon. Minister, how far the benefits accruing from these social welfare activities have reached the weaker sections, specially, the Harijans, Santhals and other backward communities, in regard to their general socio-economic development. Sir, I would also like to know to what extent the backward communities in West Bengal, Maharashtra and Tripura have been benefited by the sports and other social and cultural activities.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE (PROF. S. NURUL HASAN): Sir, the subject of backward classes has been transferred from the Department of

Social Welfare to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

MR. SPEAKER: He has asked only for the amount. You have already replied to that question.

PROF. S. NURUL HASAN: I have given all the details in regard to the various activities. The general instructions are, for example, so far as special nutrition programme is concerned, that special attention should be paid to those localities which are inhabited by the weaker sections of the community, specially Harijans, people living in bastis or tribal areas and so on.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: May I know whether the special nutrition programme for the weaker sections of the society is being implemented in cooperation with the State Governments, or it is being operated by the Centre itself?

MR. SPEAKER: If you kindly see your question, you have just asked for the amount spent on social welfare activities.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: If the Minister becomes irrelevant?

MR. SPEAKER: This should be directed to the Ministry concerned.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: Sir, I would like to know whether this is being implemented by the Centre alone or the State Governments are also cooperating in this. I know that some State Governments are cooperating in regard to the implementation of this programme.

PROF. S. NURUL HASAN: This is being implemented through the State Governments.

SHRI PARIPOORNANAND PAI-NULI: Out of 30 per cent of the population who are below poverty line, 20