

LOK SABHA DEBATES

1

LOK SABHA

Monday, April 3, 1972/Chaitra 14,
1894 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Increase in Retail Prices of Building Materials in Big Cities

*221 SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU :
Will the Minister of WORKS AND HOUSING
be pleased to state :

(a) the retail price of each of the principal building materials in Greater Calcutta, Bombay, Madras and Delhi in 1960-61, 1965-66 and 1970-71, year-wise ;

(b) whether the high and rising prices of building materials in Greater Calcutta have made it impossible for persons in the low income groups to build houses for their living ; and

(c) if so, whether Government have under contemplation any steps for bringing down the prices ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF WORKS AND HOUSING
(SHRI I. K. GUJRAL) : (a) The information (as far as it is available) is laid on the Table of the Sabha. [*Place in Library See No. LT—1611/72*].

(b) We have no information. The rise in prices of building materials has followed

2

the general trend of price rise of other commodities. The rise in prices of building materials in Greater Calcutta is not the only factor which inhibits the building construction activity there by the low income group. Other factors like availability of land, financial resources and building labour etc. are also important.

(c) The Government of India continue to take necessary steps to augment the supply of essential building materials. Besides cement and steel which controlled commodities, other steps taken are the setting up of mechanised brick plants and cellular concrete plants in the country. The use of secondary species of timber is also being advocated.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : In the matter of growth of rural and urban housing, we have not made much progress. West Bengal is one of the backward states. From the statement, it will be seen that there has been a price rise in essential items like cement, steel, bricks, sand and sand chips of about 80-100 per cent. In view of the fact that the price of steel, which is one of the most essential items, is one of the highest when compared to world prices prevailing in countries like West Germany, Belgium and Japan, will Government be willing to set up a national retail distribution organisation so that those who go for house-building for their own purpose could benefit from that ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : As the Minister of Housing, I have simply to note what Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu has stated. I am conscious that the small house-builders particularly face great difficulty for all essential items including steel. I have been trying to bring this to the notice of the Ministry of Steel from time to time and ask them to do something to meet this difficulty. But I think it will be better if my hon friend addresses this question to the Ministry of Steel.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : This is the fourth time that Government have set up the

Tariff Commission to go into the matter of pricing of cement etc. etc. In the terms of reference, I was disappointed to see that there is not much of a mention about reduction in price because the price of cement in India is one of the highest in the world. We have grave doubts about the Tariff Commission because it is more interested in protecting the interests of the producers than anybody else. To make sure that the price of cement becomes reasonable and is based on trust first of cost of production, will the Minister take the necessary steps through the Commission ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Again, it is very difficult for me to discuss the price structure of cement and I have to repeat the same thing because I do feel that the price of not only cement but of all the other commodities which go towards making a building should come down. The misfortune has been that whereas more houses are needed, the cost of construction is going up. It has not only affected the private builders ; it is also a fact that the cost of our social housing schemes has gone up with the result that whatever plan allocations we make, the physical results of that are coming down. That is why we are concerned at this and want to see that not only the material cost should go down and prices should be controlled, but we are also trying to evolve new materials ..

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Contributions to election funds should also be controlled. Due to cement decontrol, you got money from CACO to the tune of Rs. 2½ crores. Shri F. A. Ahmad had confessed that in the House. On the one hand, you go on collecting money from these capitalists ; on the other, you expect them to reduce prices. Shri Dixit knows it better than I do. In ten years, there has been a hundred per cent rise in prices. Yet you are behaving like an ostrich.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu is a master of irrelevancy...

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR) : And concoctions.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : ...and concoctions.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU : Hypocrisy is your monopoly. (*Interruption*)

MR. SPEAKER : Please confine to the question. Order please.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : He will also help us on the issue if he confines himself to the question,—

MR. SPEAKER : If he were to mention only this, namely, "only this was the object of this question," then, there is no need to put supplementaries, and in his reply he can safely get up and say it in one word.

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : I bow to your ruling.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH : Sir, arising out of the reply given by the hon. Minister, namely, with regard to the massive programme of construction of houses for the weaker sections, which the Government have undertaken, even the small target will go down, in view of this fact and that there is an abnormal rise in the cost of building materials and also the ingredients, will the Government reconsider the desirability of allocating more funds for the scheme ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : We have been keen on giving more funds. As a matter of fact, in the fourth. Plan allocation, comparatively speaking, the allocation is more than or equal to what had been made in all the three previous plans put together. (*Interruption*) As a matter of fact, the real difficulty is, in the Plan allocation even when we allocate the money, it is block-grants and block aid to the State sector and the States generally allocate a lower priority to housing than they should. Even if the money allocated is used for housing to an extent, I would be satisfied.

SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN : May I know whether the Minister is aware of the fact that steel is freely available in the open market at double the price that is being mentioned here, and how is it that it is freely available in open market if only one can pay double the price ?

SHRI I. K. GUJRAL : I am aware of this. Not only that I am aware that it is available for the private consumer, but even for the Government construction, from time to time, we have to go and buy from the open market. Therefore, we have been bringing it

to the notice of the Ministry of Steel to do something about it, because we feel that the middlemen should not be making profit only in distribution.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA I would like to know whether, in view of the fact that the prices of building materials seems to be outside the control of Government and the supplies are also most erratic, and it is not possible to get these building materials—the ordinary people cannot get them anyway—in view of this situation, how does the Minister relate the housing target of the Plan to this position regarding building materials? What is the relevance of the targets, if they are to be unrelated to the actual position as regards the prices on the supply of building materials in terms of costs?

SHRI K GUJRAL As I have said just now, the cost of construction has been going up. According to the data available with us, from 1966-67 to the current year, the cost of construction has gone up by about or approximately 41.6 per cent, although in certain areas it may be still higher. The difficulty we are facing now is that even when the allocation is made in terms of money, the social target and the performance target are falling.

Central Schools

*224 **SHRI S PANDEY** Will the Minister of EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the present number of Central Schools is insufficient to meet the rush of students to these institutions ;

(b) whether Government is contemplating to open more Central Schools , and

(c) if so, whether any scheme for the expansion of these institutions has been worked out by the Government ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE (SHRI D P YADAV). (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) While demand for opening of new Kendriya Vidyalayas is growing steadily, it has not been possible for Government

to meet it in full mainly due to the financial stringency. However, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan has a programme to open about six schools every year. During 1971-72, the Sangathan opened eight additional schools to meet exclusively the requirements of the Defence personnel. During 1972-73, the Sangathan has a proposal to start ten new Kendriya Vidyalayas, including four to meet the requirements of the Defence personnel. Besides, the Sangathan has decided to take over schools run by the Public Sector Undertakings provided the cost of running the schools is borne entirely by the Project authorities

श्री राम सहाय पांडे : केन्द्रीय कर्मचारियों के एक जगह से दूसरी जगह ट्रांसफर होने, कारण जो विद्यार्थी होते हैं, उनको बड़ी असुविधा होती है। असुविधा इसलिए होती है कि इन स्कूलों में रस बहुत होता है या जहाँ से जाते हैं, वहाँ स्कूल नहीं होते हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या कोई ऐसी योजना बनाई जा रही है ताकि यह असुविधा उनको न हो? क्या यह सच है कि चूँकि पैसे की कमी है इसलिए आप और अधिक स्कूल नहीं खोल पा रहे हैं?

श्री डी० पी० यादव : जब कोई आदमी ट्रांसफर पर जाता है तो वह अपने बच्चों का नाम केन्द्रीय विद्यालय में लिखा सकता है और अगर जहाँ वह जाता है वहाँ केन्द्रीय विद्यालय न हो तो हमारे यहाँ होस्टल की सुविधा भी है और वह अपने बच्चों को होस्टल में भी छोड़ सकता है।

श्री राम सहाय पांडे : क्या पैसे की कमी के कारण आप और स्कूल खोल नहीं पा रहे हैं?

श्री डी० पी० यादव : पैसे की कमी जरूर है और उसकी वजह से हम सब जगह से स्कूल नहीं खोल पा रहे हैं। जैसे-जैसे पैसा आता जायगा हम लोग कोशिश करेंगे कि और स्कूल खोलें और जहाँ केन्द्रीय कार्यालयों में काम करने वाले व्यक्ति हैं वहाँ हमारी कोशिश होगी कि उनकी सुविधा के लिए कुछ न कुछ स्कूल वहाँ खोले जाएँ।

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : क्या यह सच है कि बहुत से ऐसे केन्द्रीय विद्यालय भी हैं जैसे