

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 1st August, 1996/the 10th
Shravana 1918 (Saka)

The house met at eleven of the clock
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

People Living Below the Poverty Line

01. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL:
1. the Minister of PLANNING AND
PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION
be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention
has been drawn to the news-item
appearing in the Business Standard of the
28th June, 1996 under the caption "Plan
Panel to review rural, anti-poverty
schemes";

(b) if so, the details of the result of
such review; and

(c) what is the total number of people
living below the poverty line, as per the
latest estimate of the Planning
Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE
MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND
PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION
(SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) to
(c) A Statement is laid on the Table of
the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir,

(b) Rural anti-poverty programmes are
being reviewed in the context of the
formulation of Ninth Five Year Plan. Six
Working Groups have been constituted
by the Planning Commission in this area
namely:

- (i) Working Group on Self-Employment Programmes.
- (ii) Working Group on Wage-Employment Programmes (IRDP and Rural Credit).

(iii) Working Group on Decentralised
Planning and Panchayati Raj.

(iv) Working Group on Area
Development Programmes and
Integrated Watershed Planning
(DPAP/DDP),

(v) Working Group on Involvement
of Voluntary Organisations, in
implementation of Rural
Development Programmes and in
Technology Transfer to Rural
Areas.

(v) Working Group on Provision of
Rural Infrastructure and Village
Amenities (MNP).

As a part of their terms of reference
these Working Groups are reviewing the
existing programmes of poverty
alleviation and rural development. The
Reports of these Working Groups are
being finalised and will be submitted to
the Planning Commission shortly.

The Government in the Common
Approach and Minimum Programme
have emphasised the need to review all
Centrally Sponsored Schemes including
rural poverty alleviation programmes with
a view to strengthening them and
providing them with larger funds. It is
proposed to give States greater freedom
and flexibility in the implementation of
these programmes.

In a recent Conference of Chief
Ministers organised on 4th-5th July 1996,
on the initiative of the Prime Minister,
the provision of seven basic minimum
services to all our people in a time bound
manner was endorsed. These seven
minimum basic services are as under.

- (i) 100 per cent coverage of
provision of safe drinking
water in rural and urban areas.
- (ii) 100 per cent coverage of
primary health service facilities
in rural and urban areas.
- (iii) Universalisation of primary
education.

- (iv) Provision of Public Housing Assistance to all shelterless poor families.
- (v) Extension of Mid-day-Meal programme in primary schools to all rural blocks and urban slums and disadvantaged sections.
- (vi) Provision of connectivity to all unconnected villages and habitations.
- (vii) Streamline the Public Distribution System with focus upon the poor.

Within these, the first three basic services are to be provided within the next two to three years. However, States which have satisfactory results in these areas could select any other component from the identified seven minimum basic services for implementation. In the budget of 1996-97, an additional amount Rs. 2466 crores has been provided as Central Assistance for States and UTs to increase the availability of funds for these basic minimum services as recommended by the Conference of Chief Ministers.

In addition, the Conference recommended that the Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the area of urban and rural poverty alleviation and employment, development of desert & drought prone areas and for the welfare of SCs/Sts/minorities and disabled persons, should be continued as such and States be given greater involvement, freedom and flexibility in the implementation of these programmes.

Provisions available under other Centrally Sponsored Schemes (excluding those concerned with seven minimum basic services and urban and rural poverty alleviation) be pooled and basic State entitlement ratios worked out on the basis of allocations made to the States in 1995-96. The States would be free to select for implementation, from the list of these Centrally Sponsored Schemes circulated by the Centre, suiting their needs, for using their annual entitlement.

The details of these revisions in the guidelines and procedures are being worked out by the Ministry of Planning & Programme Implementation in consultation with the relevant Central Ministries. This exercise is expected to be completed by the middle of August, 1996.

(c) An estimated 201.41 million persons (25.49% of total population) were below the poverty line in 1987-88. This is based on the data from Household Consumer Expenditure Survey in the 43rd Round of National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Data for Household Consumer Expenditure Survey in the 50th Round of NSSO for 1993-94 are being processed.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a very long statement. Instead of replying to the specific points that I had raised, the answer runs into three pages, and this is a very important question. I am sorry to observe that despite the repeated demands made in the House for tabling the Mid-term Appraisal of the Eighth Five Year Plan, that particular Mid-term Appraisal—this is the terminal year of the Eighth Five Year plan—which, I suppose, had been done by the Planning Commission it is concealed from the Members of the House and from the nation; and according to that, there are about 40 per cent people living below the poverty line. First, I would like to know as to what the criterion of assessing people living below the poverty line presently adopted is; whether only the household consumption is there or whether, education, health and other capability measures of assessing poverty are also there. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the criterion that we have presently adopted for the time-being in 1995-96 for assessing the number of people living below the poverty line in rural areas as well as in urban areas.

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, as far as the length of the answer is

concerned, poverty is a very serious issue and, therefore, we use the questions to give as much information as we can to the hon. Members of the Rajya Sabha.

As far as the Mid-Term Appraisal is concerned, the Ministry and the Planning Commission are seized of the matter. The draft Appraisal has been sent to the various Ministries for their comments and the reconstituted Planning Commission will certainly release the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Eighth Five Year Plan after going through the normal processes.

As far as the poverty level is concerned, this was decided by a Task Force on Minimum Needs and Effective Demands which gave its report in 1978-79 and which considered the minimum expenditure level with which the required number of calories can be met by households in rural and urban areas, and also provided for the minimum needs like education and health.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: What was the amount fixed then?

You have not told us the amount.

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: At that time the amount fixed was ...*(Interruptions)*... We have a copy of the report. In the mid seventies, it was Rs. 49 in rural areas and Rs. 56.6 per person, per month in urban areas. This is constantly updated... *(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I am asking about the latest figures. What is the criterion now available for assessing the people living below the poverty-line?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: What we do is to estimate the number of persons living below the poverty-line based on quinquennial surveys of the National Sample Survey Organisation...*(Interruptions)*... The last one was done in 1987-88 and we have the full data. As far as the latest survey for 1993-94 is concerned, we have processed the information of one sub-sample of the survey. This is a very important matter. We have collected the information for the

complete round and we will be processing it as soon as the estimates are available. They will be prepared and made available. For 1987-88, it was Rs. 132 per person in rural areas and Rs. 152.3 for urban areas. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Is it per day or per month?...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am sorry. I really want to know whether this 132 is per head, per day...*(Interruptions)*...What is it?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: As I said earlier. It is per head, per month. In 1987-88, it was Rs. 132 in rural areas and Rs. 152 in urban areas. This will be updated.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I am sorry to say that the figures that the hon. Minister just now quoted, are the same stereotype figures. It comes to Rs. 5 a day. The hon. Prime Minister gave certain figures of people living below the poverty-line while replying to the debate on petroleum price hike. I am not going to repeat it here. I have got his speech also. It was broadcast to the whole nation. He said: 'the poor are on our agenda, your agenda and everybody's agenda.' Mr. Minister, I would like to know whether you a former Vice-Chancellor of the prestigious. I Jawaharlal Nehru University have gone through the report published by the World Bank Policy Research Department, Poverty and Human Resource Division. In the report it is mentioned that poverty in Tamil Nadu was 70 per cent and it had come down to 40 per cent in 1990. In Kerala, in 1960, it was 68 per cent and it came down to 35 per cent in 1990. In Bihar it was 65 per cent and in 1990 it was still 60 per cent. In Karnataka it was 55 per cent and it had been reduced to 45 per cent. In Madhya Pradesh it was 60 per cent and it had been reduced to 50 per cent. In the case of other States it is 40 per cent. Nothing has been said in this chart. I will give this particular set to you for your kind consideration. According to this

there are various States in this country where people living below the poverty-line are more than 40 per cent. In some cases it is 60 per cent, 45 per cent and 50 per cent. How do you say that it has been reduced to 25 per cent. The availability of foodgrains in 1995 was 191 million tonnes or something like that. It has come down to 190 million tonnes. Our employment generation is less. The hon. Finance Minister who has given this update—Economic Survey—has only revised a particular chart which was given in the earlier Economic Survey. The change in the wages of agricultural labourers this year over the previous year, in percentage terms, has been given. The annual percentage change in real wages of unskilled agricultural labourers in selected States has come down to 46. This is part of the updated economic survey. The real income, the real wages of the unskilled labourers in rural sector has come down according to your own document. In Karnataka it has come down to 11.6 per cent and somewhere it is something else. So, the real wages in the rural sector have come down. It was up in the earlier survey and it has now come down according to your updated survey. Do you say that the number of people living below the poverty-line has come down?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, the hon. Member may recall that I have never said that poverty in the different States is 25 per cent. At the State level, the numbers are different. In fact, I share most of his concerns. The Planning Commission is very seriously concerned about the deacceleration in the agricultural growth rate. We are very seriously concerned about the problems of Stagnant fixed investment in agriculture. In fact, the hon. Member may recall that in an answer to an unstarred question, we have pointed out some of the kind of features he is saying, namely that in the States of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the per capita State Domestic Product has either been constant or it has fallen in the last four or five years. We are very seriously con-

cerned about that. The hon. Member may also recall that it is because of this kind of features that we made a very significant attempt this time to raise the public investment in irrigation, and to try and increase, by a very substantial amount, the allocations available for basic needs in terms of primary education, in terms of health and in terms of rural connectivity. So, these are some of the issues where I share my concern with him and I assure him that the Approach Paper for the Ninth Plan and the Ninth Plan will face these issues in a very square manner. As far as the estimates of poverty at the State-level are concerned, these are the estimates which we will be very happy to share with you. It is because of the reasons which I have mentioned to the hon. Member that I would like the 1993-94 data, the complete data, to be looked into and very careful estimates prepared in consultation with the best experts in the country, and we will make them available to Parliament. Now, as far as the World Development Report is concerned, of course, we are aware of this report. Some of these numbers are different from those which are used either in the methodology followed by the earlier Task Force or by the Experts Committee which we had set up in the mid-80s. We requested the World Bank to tell us what the source of this information is. Unfortunately, they have not been in a position to give us the details. So, I am not in a position to comment on it(Interruptions)....

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Excuse me for half-a-minute. The data which is utilised by the World Bank in preparing these reports—I have got the World Development Report—is mostly supplied by the Government of India through Economic Surveys and such other things. Now, this particular World Development Report—1996, which has been reported in various newspapers, while mentioning about the percentage share of income, consumption, etc.,—a chart has been given—states that the lowest 20 per cent of the country's population is 8.5 per cent

and the highest 20 per cent is 43 per cent. What an income disparity is there? Please look into it. I can give a spare copy to you. I have already sent a copy regarding poverty figures also to you.

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: As far as the World Development Report is concerned, I would want to give an assurance to the Member that we are fully aware of the statistics which are contained in it. In fact, as far as the lower 20 per cent and the upper 20 per cent are concerned, as he knows, the tables at the end of the Report give the position in India as well as the position in the other countries of the world and inequality in many other countries is higher. As far as the World Bank's estimates on poverty in India are concerned this is a different matter and I say, with full sense of responsibility,—and I assure the Member that I have gone into this in some detail—that some of their estimates are different from the estimates which we have prepared. We have consulted them on this. They are not in a position to tell us the source and the methods that they have followed. As such, if they tell us this, we will be in a position to comment on it. This is much too serious an issue for me to make an off-hand comment.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, as the hon. Minister is no doubt aware, it is the women who experience a much greater incidence of poverty than men. Ten per cent of the rural households are headed by women and 35 per cent of the poverty-stricken households of this country are headed by women. Sir, my specific question is: Do all the anti-poverty programmes in the rural areas have a component for women; With specific reference to IRDP, the IRDP alone has components for women, that is, the DWCRA. I would like to know whether the other programmes also have such a component and whether any research or any data exists in this regard. As regards IRDP, the target was 30 per cent.

Sir, in IRDP the target is roughly one-third; and in some State it is 40 per cent; in some States it is as low as seven per cent. I would like to know the projections for the reach of women in the IRDP coverage with particular reference to IRDP, what the reach is with regard to women beneficiaries.

Sir, part (b) of my question is: Would the Minister consider that in all these antipoverty programmes, household approach is the problem? Since the entire approach is for the household, the benefit really reaches the women of the household because of the social constraints. Therefore, in order to target women so that it reaches women specifically, does the Government have a policy by which every anti-poverty programme, every programme in these areas should have a specific component for women which also has a separate fund allocated for this component which is separately monitored. Would the Government consider this? Unfortunately, Sir, in the answer given by the hon. Minister, none of the six Groups of the Planning Commission relate to specific impact of these anti-poverty programmes on women. All other areas are covered by these six Groups. Even in the Chief Ministers' Conference in the reply.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put a question. Please don't expatiate it.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: No, Sir. I am not expatiating it. I am completing in one sentence, Sir. They don't say a single word about women in this. That is why I am asking it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him answer.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: I would like to know whether in this Approach Group they would constitute a separate working group to consider how these programmes affect women.

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, I am very grateful to the hon. Member for raising this very important issue. As she herself has said, in the IRDP, there is a 40 per cent reservation for women. Also

in the JRY in the third stream for innovative schemes, particularly if they are by women and by other voluntary organisations, we have a special provision for them. In some of the literature that has emerged in terms of concurrent evaluations and so on, one of the important issues is at the level of the *gram sabha* when the selection of beneficiaries is made, it is extremely important that we empower women's groups to play a more active role. As far as the Working Groups in the Steering Group are concerned, I want to assure the hon. Member that there are separate groups on the women's programme. What we have said is the summary of the Steering Group as a whole, but the special groups get into this issue.

I also want to assure the hon. Member that as far as the 50th round of the National Sample Survey is concerned, we would examine not only the data on consumer expenditure which I have mentioned in the answer to the hon. Member earlier, but also the employment and unemployment survey. The National Sample Survey has gone into some details to try and work out separately the labour utilisation rates for women in rural areas, particularly to get at issues like collection of fuel wood and cooking and so on. I assure you that we would examine these questions very seriously and try to incorporate them in the Approach Paper of the Ninth Five Year Plan.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to ask the hon'ble Minister what criteria are being adopted for the distribution of Rs. 2,466 crores of educational central assistance to states announced in the Budget of the current year for the seven basic services.

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, we have set up a committee which is looking into the modalities of aggregating these Centrally-sponsored schemes, and we hope by the 8th or 10th of the next month we would complete the process of discussion with some Chief Ministers—

because a committee was set up by the Prime Minister at that meeting to finish the modalities of transferring these resources to the States. There are some preliminary exercises which have been done to backwardness in the Planning Commission jointly with certain groups. We would like to give as much of weightage as possible in the existing formula, which is very well known to the hon. Member, for transfer of resources to the States. This money we hope to allocate according to these criteria and when as soon as the final decision is taken, I will report it to the House.

DR. M. ARAM: Sir, in view of the past experience that the intended benefits of these anti-poverty programmes often do not reach the ultimate beneficiaries the poorer sections, will the Minister consider involving the elected panchayat leaders in the formulation and execution of anti-poverty schemes through micro economic planning and also encouraging the reputed voluntary organisations with proven record to create poverty-free model villages and poverty-free blocks so that they serve as examples to the rest of the country?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, involvement of *gram sabhas* and local agencies in the implementation of these programmes, for selection of beneficiaries, is at the heart of the implementation of these schemes. As the hon. Member knows, the concurrent evaluation and other evaluations have again emphasised this and the Planning Commission keeps on trying to ensure that at the level of States these issues are gone into in a considerable detail. There is a special provision in the Plan for innovative schemes, both through CAPART and JRY Second and Third Streams. I am sure the Government and my colleague in the Ministry of Rural Development will be very happy to look into innovative schemes developed by the voluntary organisations. We thank the hon. Member for his suggestion.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Sir, I want to add to what Shrimati Natarajan has already said. She has mentioned about women getting benefits from these anti-poverty schemes, 40 per cent of the beneficiaries being women, etc. But, the problem is more acute when it comes to women-headed families, that is, women who become widows or women who are deserted and so on. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any assessment and estimation has been made on the women-headed families in all the blocks and panchayats. If so, what is the number of these women-headed families and whether they get priorities in availing of the benefits of these anti-poverty programmes? Has any review been made in this particular area?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, there are some aggregate statistics which are available on the performance of reservation with regard to women amongst IRDP and other programmes. There are significant variations across the States, as the hon. Member may recall. However, the very specific kind of information that she is requesting for, to the best of my knowledge, is not available, apart from a few selected sample studies that I have seen in some of the earlier rounds of the National Sample Survey. We did have information on women-headed household. My impression is that perhaps in some of the recent rounds it is not available. But, the hon. Member has raised an important question.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is aware that a number of studies made by a number of leading economists of the country and also the Report of the National Commission on Rural Labour had suggested or identified that the impact of the anti-poverty schemes, including RLEGP, NREP and JRY, had been very marginal on the poverty-stricken people of the country.

If the Government is aware, could it tell us the steps being taken by it so that the benefits of anti-poverty schemes

could flow to the persons for whom they are intended; In view of the fact that there is a great controversy going on in the country with regard to the volume of population which is below the poverty line and the opinion expressed by the previous Government about the decline of poverty being severely contested, will the Government tell us the measures being taken by it to find out what actually is the poverty zone of the country?

SHRI YOGINDRA K. ALAGH: Sir, if the hon. Member would permit me to take up the second part of his question first, I would say that one of the reasons why we want a full and detailed analysis done by the 50th Round of the National Sample Survey for 1993-94 is to come out with a very studied response to the whole question of the percentage of population which is below the poverty line as well as the rate of unemployment in the country and its different regions and different sub-groups to the extent the data is available. The Planning Commission would like that full round data is used for this because otherwise with incomplete information, one can come out with different sets of answers which professional opinion, as the Member may recall, tends to suggest a certain degree of variability in some of these statistics. We have also been very seriously examining—in fact, we are examining it already—the Expert Group reports on the estimation of the percentage of population which is below the poverty line. We find some of its aspects a little worrisome. For example, the Expert Group report for 1987-88 says that urban poverty is more than rural poverty, or in some of the important states where we feel that the poverty and the problem of low agricultural growth is endemic, the report tends to suggest that their poverty numbers are a little less than the numbers in other States. We think these are the kinds of issues which have to be looked into very seriously and I assure the hon. Member that the Planning Commission will continue the tradition of an open debate. We will involve the best people in the country or anybody

who has something serious to say in regard to these questions.

As regards the first part of his question which is an extremely important issue, the Government and the Planning Commission give the highest priority to the whole question of provision of minimum services for people who are below the poverty line and to evolve a strategy to remove poverty and the kind of steps that have to be taken for this purpose. We are happy to report to this House that at the Chief Ministers' Conference, there was unanimity on this question. The Chief Ministers, coming from different States and belonging to different political parties, have appreciated the enhanced allocation for providing the minimum basic services. The enhanced allocation of Rs. 2,500 crores is a fairly substantial sum of money to these identified minimum needs of the poor people. Also our concept that we will give much greater flexibility to the State Governments in deciding which aspect they would like to lay emphasis on, whether it is connectivity, whether it is drinking water, whether it is rural education or whether it is rural health, has to be appreciated. We have every intention of seeing to it that the decisions which were taken by the Chief Ministers in the Conference which was called by the Prime Minister, are implemented in this year's Annual Plan. The Budget has made specific provisions for such things. I would also like to inform the hon. Member that the Approach Paper to the 9th Five Year Plan following the CMP will give a very high priority to the kind of issues that he has raised.

Blowing up of Army Headquarters in Jammu and Kashmir

*302. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether attempts to blow up Army Headquarters in Kupwara District of Jammu & Kashmir were reported in April 1996;

(b) if so, whether militant's access to the headquarters is very easy;

(c) whether 12 people, including four militants were killed in these incidents, and the security forces had arrested 20 militants, alongwith the arms and ammunition;

(d) whether the militants had also torched three school buildings and a hut of the Public Health Engineering Department in the Valley; and

(e) if so, the details of these incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) As per the information given by the Ministry of Defence adequate security measures are in place in this regard.

(c) No. Sir.

(d) and (e) According to information provided by the state Government, during the month of April 1996, 7 School buildings were set on fire by militants in J & K, including 2 School buildings in Kupwara. A PHE hut was also set on fire in Kupwara on 23/24.4.96.

SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Sir, my question was whether attempts to blow up the army headquarters at Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir were reported in April 1996. The basis of my question was the report which appeared on the 27th of April in the newspapers. Now, in view of the denial of the Government that such news is not there, my question to the hon. Minister is this. In view of the massive presence of security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, publication of such news adversely affects the morale of not only the security forces but also of the people at large. My question to the hon. Minister will be whether the Minister will take prompt steps to contradict such news in future?