

RAJYA SABHA

Munday, the 16th August, 1993/25th Shravana, 1915
(Saka)

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

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*261. [The questioner (Shri N. Giri Prasad) was absent. For answer vide Col.....infra.]

Training programmes for voluntary consumer organisations and officials.

*262. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:
SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: †

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to train the officials of the voluntary consumer organisations and the officials of the Central and State Governments;

(b) if so, the details of the training programme; and

(c) what measures the Central and State Governments have taken to encourage the voluntary organisations to participate in consumer movement?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A. K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Since 1990-91, the Central Government has conducted 7 training Programmes for voluntary consumer organisations/activists and three training programmes for the officials of the Central/State Governments to acquaint them with the various aspects of consumer protection.

(c) Some of the measures taken by the Central and State Governments for encouraging voluntary consumer organisations are:—

- (i) Giving financial assistance to voluntary consumer organisations. Some State Governments like Gujarat etc. also have such schemes.

- (ii) Institution of a National Award on Consumer Protection for the voluntary consumer organisations. Some of the States like Govt. of Rajasthan have also similar Award Schemes.

- (iii) Conducting training programmes for the representatives of consumer organisations.

- (iv) Giving representation to the representatives of consumer organisations in the Central and State Level Consumer Protection Councils envisaged in the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

- (v) Distribution of quarterly journal "Upabhokta Jagaran" and printed material to all the consumer organisations free of cost. Govt. of Rajasthan also brings out a magazine entitled "Upabhokta Mangal". A few other States are also considering bringing out journals.

- (vi) Government also gives financial assistance to consumer organisations for specific projects.

For example Rs. 2.5 lakhs was sanctioned to a voluntary consumer organisation VOICE, Delhi for undertaking comparative testing of colour television sets and publication of test results. An agreement has been signed with the UNDP for financial assistance of US \$ 6.15.000 for purchase of equipments, namely, Consumer Education and Research Centre, Ahmedabad which is setting up a laboratory for undertaking comparative testing in the field of domestic electrical appliances, food items and pharmaceuticals at Ahmedabad.

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया: हमारे देश में उपभोक्ताओं में जागृति लाने के लिए हमने उपभोक्ता संरक्षण विधेयक पास किया और जागृति लाने के लिए तरह-तरह की इनफार्मेशन देने की कोशिश की जा रही है क्योंकि उन्हें बताया यह जरूरी है, इस विधेयक के तहत कि वे जिस चीज की कीमत दे रहे हैं उस कीमत के हिसाब से वह वस्तु उन्हें मिल रही है या नहीं मिल रही है और उसकी क्या गारन्टी है। मेरा सीधा सवाल यह है कि अब तक देश में कितनी स्वयं सेवी उपभोक्ता संरक्षण संस्थाओं की जानकारी सरकार को है जिन्हें सरकार किसी प्रकार की वित्तीय सहायता दे रही है अथवा देने का विचार रखती है तथा उनके कार्यकर्तियों को प्रशिक्षण सुविधायें उपलब्ध कराना चाहती है तथा ऐसी स्वयं सेवी संस्थाओं का राज्यवार ब्यौरा क्या है तथा प्रशिक्षण एक स्थान पर दिया जाएगा अथवा जगह-जगह शिबिर लगाकर दिया जाएगा, यह बताने की कृपा करें।

† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri S. S. Ahluwalia.

SHRI A. K. ANTONY: Sir, at present we have more than 500 voluntary consumer

organisations all over the country. Statewise details I will send to the Hon. Member.

Out of these 500 to 600 organisations, about 450 are from the South and roughly 150 are from the North. So, naturally we have to encourage more consumer organisations in the North.

Another thing is, most of these organisations are urban-based. We have to organise more rural organisations. The Government is taking special care for that. With the help of State Governments and also with the help of already established consumer organisations we will take action to organise more organisations in rural areas.

There is no regular help from the Government to any consumer organisation, but we are giving help to consumer organisations for specific programmes. Already we have given help to 38 consumer organisations throughout the country. Last year we gave help to 13 organisations.

There is a regular scheme for giving help to the consumer organisations. There are guidelines also for that.

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया : सभापति महोदय, जैसा कि मंत्री महोदय ने स्वयं स्वीकार किया है कि ऐसी 500 संस्थाएँ हैं जो इस समय काम कर रही हैं और दुर्भाग्य इस बात का है कि इन 500 संस्थाओं में 450 दक्षिण भारत की हैं और उत्तर भारत में सिर्फ 50 हैं। मैं तो पूरा भारत का हूँ। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि पूरा भारत की कितनी संस्थाएँ इसमें जुड़ी हुई हैं और पूरा भारत में खासकर बिहार के बारे में जानना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार की कितनी संस्थाएँ इस आन्दोलन के साथ जुड़ी हुई हैं और बिहार राज्य को आपने ऐसी संस्थाओं के माध्यम से प्रशिक्षण देने के लिए कितना रूपया दिया है ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : There are more than 50 organizations in North India. As I said, there are between 500 and 600 voluntary organizations working all over the country and, out of them, roughly 450 are in the South and the rest in the North. There are organizations working in Bihar also. There is a directory of all the organizations working throughout the country—I will send a copy of that directory to the Hon. Member. There is already a scheme for training consumer activists as well as members of the consumer organizations. Already we have held seven such training camps all over the country. We are giving training on a regional basis. Three training courses were conducted with the help of the state

Governments and four courses were conducted with the help of reputed training institutions in the country.

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया : सर, मैंने पूछा है कि बिहार को कितना पैसा दिया है ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : About Bihar is there any answer ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : We have organizations in Bihar also. That is why I said I will send a copy of the directory of all the organizations to the Hon. Member.

SHRIMATI CHANDRIKA ABHINANDAN JAIN : Sir, the Consumer Protection Act is a significant development in the efforts to make the consumer movement very effective. As per the law, Consumer Protection Councils are to be set up at two levels—at the State level and district level. As I understand, some of these Councils have already been set up and they are functioning well, but in certain areas these Councils at the State level and district level are yet to be formed. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the Central Government has taken any steps to give a directive to the State Governments to form these Councils at the State level as well as the district level. Secondly, the Consumer Protection Act has a very wide ambit and jurisdiction. There is a debate going on about medical practitioners to be included within the ambit of the Consumer Protection Council. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the Government has any proposal to see that even medical practitioners are also covered by the Act.

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : Already there are Consumer Protection Councils all over India in 31 States and Union territories, and there is no scheme for having Councils at the district level. At the district level there are Redressal Forums. Already we have 452 District Redressal Forums throughout the country. Regarding doctors, we have had enough discussion in the House when we discussed the Amendment Bill. Private doctors are already covered under the scheme. So far we have not included Government doctors.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY : So Government is not answerable for them ?

श्री ईश दत्त यादव : मान्यवर सभापति जी, मंत्री जी के उत्तर से स्पष्ट है कि उपभोक्ता संगठनों को केवल दो राज्य सरकारें, गुजरात और राजस्थान कुछ वित्तीय सहायता देने का

काम कर रही हैं, पुरस्कार देने का काम कर रही हैं और पत्रिकाएँ निकाल रही हैं। मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि अन्य राज्य सरकारें इस संबंध में क्यों निष्क्रिय हैं ? पार्टी (श्री) मेरा यह है कि केंद्र सरकार द्वारा 60 प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम आयोजित किये गये, लेकिन उत्तर से ऐसा लगता है कि राज्य सरकारों ने कोई भी प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम आज तक आयोजित नहीं किया है। तो क्या केंद्र सरकार इस संबंध में राज्य सरकारों को सचेत करेगी, निर्देश देगी कि वह भी उपभोक्ता संगठनों को प्रशिक्षण दे, उनकी सहायता करें, उनके लिये पत्रिका और लिटरेचर का प्रकाश करें और उनको पुरस्कार दें ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : The Central Government is already giving training and we have instituted an "Award" also for these organizations. We are printing and publishing materials as also making video cassettes and TV programmes and so many other things for popularizing these things. The State Governments are also now taking more interest. But we should realize one thing: the consumer movement in India is a young one. We passed the legislation only in 1986. After that in the beginning there was some slackness, but in the last two, three years it has gathered real momentum. In the last two, three years already 31 State Commissions and 452 District Commissions have come into being. Training has been started not only for voluntary organisations but for Central Government and State Government officials also. Recently we have started a training programme for non-judicial members of the State and district Forums also. We are requesting again and again the State Governments that they should also take more interest in this very important area of social activity. I hope they will take more interest in it. We are advising them to give more financial aid for the Forums also. We are also in the process of streamlining the Consumer Protection Council, the State Commissions and the District Forums in the States.

श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी : समापति महोदय, जागरूक उपभोक्ता, उपभोक्ता संरक्षण की प्रमुख गारंटी है। मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहती हूँ कि क्या पश्चिमी बंगाल सरकार ने आपके मंत्रालय के पास एक ऐसा प्रस्ताव भेजा है कि वहाँ एक नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ कंज्यूमर्स एफेयर्स की स्थापना की जाए ? पश्चिमी बंगाल सरकार ने क्या यह भी प्रस्ताव भेजा है कि इस नेशनल इंस्टीट्यूट के लिए वन साइट प्लॉक में मुफ्त जमीन आवंटित करने के लिए तैयार है। इस कोसिल का उद्देश्य उपभोक्ताओं को जागृत करना, उपभोक्ताओं में उपभोक्ता संरक्षण कानून के प्रति जागृति पैदा करना और रिसर्च एंड डेवलपमेंट के लिए पृष्ठभूमि तैयार करना

है। ऐसा अगर प्रस्ताव आपके पास आया है तो यह प्रस्ताव अभी तक स्वीकृत क्यों नहीं हुआ और इस प्रस्ताव के स्वीकृत होने के मार्ग में कौन सी बाधाएँ हैं ? मंत्री महोदय कृपया यह बताएँ।

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : We have already received proposals from two State Governments, those of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, for starting this National Institute. Some other States like Orissa, though they did not give any proposal in writing, have also told me that they are also interested in starting the Institute in their States. The recently concluded meeting of the Consumer Protection Council has taken a policy decision that we must have a National Institute like this. We will take a decision very soon on where to start the Institute because the recently concluded meeting of the Consumer Protection Council has authorised the Central Government to take a decision about the site. We will take a decision soon after consulting all concerned.

श्री अजीत जोगी : समापति महोदय, मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में बताया है कि पूरे राष्ट्र में लगभग पाँच-छः सौ ऐसी अशासकीय संस्थाएँ कार्यरत हैं। मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहूँ कि यह संख्या अपने आप में इतने बड़े राष्ट्र के लिए बहुत ही कम है तो सरकार की तरफ से क्या प्रयास किये जा रहे हैं जिससे ऐसे प्रान्तों में जहाँ यह संस्थाएँ बहुत ही कम हैं, जहाँ विशेषकर उपभोक्ताओं को सार्वजनिक उपभोक्ता वितरण प्रणाली के माध्यम से विशेषकर गरीबों, आदिवासियों को सही मदद नहीं मिल पा रही है वहाँ इनकी संख्या बढ़े, इसके लिए क्या प्रयास किये जा रहे हैं ? साथ ही यह जो संस्थाएँ हैं मी उनमें गुणात्मक रूप से क्वालिटेडिबिली उपभोक्ताओं का सही संरक्षण नहीं हो पा रहा है, उपभोक्ताओं का सही प्रतिनिधित्व नहीं है। तो यह गुणात्मक रूप से सुधरे और उपभोक्ताओं के हितों का इन संस्थाओं में संरक्षण हो, इसके लिए मी क्या प्रयास किये जा रहे हैं ?

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : I fully agree with the Member that for a large country like India 500 or 600 consumer organisations are too small a number, but we must realise one thing. In 1986, when we passed the legislation, at that time we had only 50 consumer organisations all over India. From 50, they have gone up to 500 or 600 now. Recently we have taken two policy decisions.

SHRI AJIT P. K. JOGI : There is no reason for us to be complacent.

SHRI A. K. ANTONY : That is why I fully agree with you that unless we have powerful

and mass-oriented consumer organisations, we will not be able to protect the interests of the consumers, especially in the new liberalised atmosphere when Government control on market is loosening. I agree that instead of Government control, control of the consumers by way of social control should be established. Then only we can protect the consumers. Now, we have taken two policy decisions. One is we are now persuading the State Governments that they should see that at least one consumer organisation is set up in one district. Second, in the recently concluded Consumer Protection Council meeting we have adopted a new perspective plan for the entire 8th Plan period. In the plan it was decided that the State Governments and the Central Government and also already well-established consumer organisations should work together to organise more consumer organisations all over the country, especially with an emphasis that more organisations are set up in rural areas.

Request For New Child Labour Policy

*263. SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been requested to formulate a new policy concerning Child Labour;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to take some action on these requests; and

(d) if so, the details thereof, and if not, reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Task Force set up by the Central Advisory Board on Child Labour in its Report submitted in 1989 had suggested, inter alia, that the National Policy and Action Plan be redrafted to provide a comprehensive national perspective on child labour. It further suggested that the re-written document should convey and project very clearly the vision; values; commitments and concerns; spell out the funding; the approach to voluntary agencies, the strategies for education and vocationalisation of education; public civic education on child labour etc.

Government is of the view that the existing policy framework as enunciated in the document National Policy on Child Labour, 1987 is quite comprehensive and covers most of the aspects mentioned by the Task Force.

SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Children are the nation's future. If there is any deficiency felt during their childhood, it leads to permanent infirmities in some cases. Unfortunately the world over children have no constituency and they do not have any organised voice. Therefore, everyone takes them very lightly.

The Minister has replied that there is no need for a new policy relating to child labour. It has been clearly stated by the task force that the country needs a new labour policy as well as a new action plan in regard to child labour. The hon. Minister says that the present policy is quite comprehensive. I would like to know from him what exact achievements have been there through this policy during the last three years. How many convictions have been made and how many prosecutions were launched?

I would also like to know what really is being done to improve the condition of child labour in all the fields, particularly in the organised field.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Sir, I am afraid that the Government will not be able to claim much of credit in terms of concrete results, which the hon. Member is trying to know. The 43rd round of the National Sample Survey of India has estimated the number of child labour as 17 million. It is a huge number. So, it is not easy to tackle this problem. We have to accept this problem as a national problem and we will have to have a national movement for it. The policy which had been announced in 1987 contemplates three actions. One is legislative action i.e. implementation of the Child Labour (Policy and Regulation) Act. Under this the Member wanted to know how many prosecutions have been launched. According to the information furnished by the various State Governments so far 3,488 prosecutions have been launched against the employers for employing child labour. Second is developmental programme, which includes education, health care and other areas and also the poverty alleviation programme. It is an integrated programme which is being carried on by various departments of the State Governments and also the Central Government, because the basic problem of child labour in our country lies with the economic problem of the people. Therefore,