

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 7th October, 1982/
15 Ashvina, 1904 (Saka)

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

INTRODUCTION OF MINISTER

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI) Sir, I have pleasure in introducing to you and through you to this House my colleague Shrimati Mohsina Kidwai, Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour and Rehabilitation.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Persons below poverty line

*61. SHRI LAKHAN SINGH:

SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:†

Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons in rural and urban areas which are below the poverty line in each of the last three years and also at the end of each Five Year Plan; and

(b) what is their estimated number by the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF PLANNING (SHRI S. B. CHAVAN): (a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

†The question has actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Kalraj Mishra.

1306—R. S.

Statement

(a) The latest available survey of consumer expenditure on which the estimates of poverty are based is for the year 1977-78. The present concept of poverty line and the number of people below the poverty line is based on the recommendation of a Task Force on Minimum Needs and Effective Consumption Demand set up by the Planning Commission whose report as published in January, 1979. As a follow up of this report, the method of estimating poverty was used during the formulation of the present Sixth Plan. Therefore, no estimates of persons below the poverty line are available for earlier plans.

The number of persons below the poverty line for the base year of the Sixth Plan, namely, 1979-80, has been estimated at 316.84 million. This is based on the Household Consumer Survey of 1977-78 and the growth of the economy between 1977-78 and 1979-80. Similarly, taking into consideration the growth of the economy (of nearly 6 per cent per annum) in the first two years of the Sixth Plan and the different poverty redistributive programmes, the number of persons below the poverty line has been estimated at 282.0 million for the year 1981-82. The number of persons below the poverty line in the rural areas was estimated at 259.56 million in 1979-80 and at 225.93 million in 1981-82. The figure for urban areas was estimated at 57.28 million in 1979-80 and at 56.07 million in 1981-82.

(b) By the same line of analysis, it has been estimated that, at the end of the Sixth Plan period, namely, 1984-85, the total number of persons below the poverty line will be 166.02 million in the rural sector and 49.14 million in the urban sector, making a total of 215.16 million, as given in the table 3.37 at page 5 of the Sixth Plan document.

श्री कलराज मिश्र : श्रीमन्, माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने जवाब में यह कहा है कि

छठी योजना के आधार वर्ष अर्थात् 1979-80 के लिये गरीबी के स्तर से नीचे रहने वाले व्यक्तियों की संख्या 3168.40 लाख होने का अनुमान लगाया गया है। यह वर्ष 1977-78 के पारिवारिक उपभोक्ता सर्वेक्षण और 1977-82 तथा 1979-80 के बीच अर्थ व्यवस्था का संवृद्धि पर आधारित है। इसी प्रकार छठी योजना के पहले दो वर्षों में अर्थव्यवस्था की संवृद्धि (लगभग 6 प्रतिशत प्रतिवर्ष) और गरीबी के संबंध में विभिन्न पुनर्वितरणात्मक कार्यक्रमों को ध्यान में रखते हुए वर्ष 1981-82 के लिये गरीबी के स्तर से नीचे रहने वाले व्यक्तियों की संख्या 2820 लाख होने का अनुमान लगाया गया है। गरीबी के स्तर से नीचे रहने वाले व्यक्तियों की ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में वर्ष 1979-80 में संख्या 2595.60 लाख और वर्ष 1981-82 में 2259.30 लाख होने का अनुमान लगाया गया है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि दो वर्षों के अंदर जो यह 6 प्रतिशत की संवृद्धि हुई है अर्थव्यवस्था के अन्तर्गत उसी संवृद्धि के परिणामस्वरूप गरीबी के स्तर से नीचे का जीवन व्यतीत करने वालों की संख्या 2820 लाख हुई है 3168.40 लाख की तुलना में तो क्या इन दो वर्षों के अंदर जो संवृद्धि हुई है इसके पहले भी जो गरीबी से नीचे का स्तर जीवन व्यतीत करने वालों की संख्या इतने जबरदस्त तरीके से बढ़ी है? अगर बढ़ी है तो इस संबंध में क्या कार्रवाई की जाती रही, यह स्थिति क्यों निर्मित हुई? इतने जबरदस्त तरीके से बढ़ती क्यों हुई? कौन से ऐसे कार्यक्रम लिये गये जिसके कारण इस बढ़ती को रोका नहीं गया? (व्यवधान) इकोनॉमिक ग्रोथ तो उस समय भी बताया गया, सारी चीजें बताई गईं लेकिन यह बढ़ती होती चली गई। यह क्यों होती जा रही है यह बताने की कृपा करें।

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, this concept of poverty line has been for the first time incorporated in the framing of the Sixth Five Year Plan. Government of India are conscious of the fact that there have been similar problems earlier also but since the concept itself has been incorporated in the Sixth Five Year Plan. I cannot possibly give the figures for the earlier period. Six per cent growth in the total economy and the poverty alleviation programme that the Government have undertaken, which has an impact on the people below the poverty line, have reduced this figure from 31.7 crores to 28.20 crores.

श्री कलराज मिश्र : मेरे यह सवाल पूछने के पीछे मूल भावना यह थी कि जो पंचवर्षीय योजना लागू हुई इस पंचवर्षीय योजना के लागू होने के पश्चात् जो परिणाम निकला वह परिणाम हमेशा सिद्ध करता है कि गरीबी से निचले स्तर का जीवन व्यतीत करने वालों की संख्या क्रमशः बढ़ती ही चली गई। ये जो आंकड़े दिये गये हैं...

श्री उपसभापति : सवाल पूछिये।

श्री कलराज मिश्र : श्रीमन् मैं इसलिये कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस संबंध में मंत्री महोदय ने जो आंकड़े दिये हैं वे सचमुच सत्यता पर आधारित हैं या केवल भदन और देश को गुमराह करने के लिये हैं? क्योंकि इन वर्षों के अन्दर बढ़ती हो गई और इन दो वर्षों के अंदर कमी हुई है यह बताया गया है। लेकिन सही बात यह है गरीबी के स्तर से नीचे जीवन व्यतीत करने वालों की संख्या जबरदस्त बढ़ती जा रही है। प्रधान मंत्री महोदय ने खुद कहा था कि विकास कार्यक्रमों का लाभ अगर निम्न और दलित वर्ग को नहीं प्राप्त होगा तो विद्रोह, अग्नि प्रज्वालित होगी। प्रधान मंत्री महोदय का 15-20 दिन पहले की यह स्टेटमेंट है। यह स्थिति वह भी स्वीकार करती है कि

इसमें बढ़ोतरी होती जा रही है। ये आंकड़े जो मंत्री महोदय ने दिये हैं सत्यता पर आधारित नहीं हैं। मंत्री महोदय से निवेदन करूंगा कि इसको फिर से देखने की कोशिश करें। दूसरा मवाल मैं यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि इन्होंने ग्रामीण और शहरी दोनों के गरीबी से निचले स्तर का जीवन व्यतीत करने वालों के यहां आंकड़े दिये हैं। उसमें दिया है कि 31 करोड़ जो गरीबी से निचले स्तर का जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे थे उसमें 5 करोड़ 60 लाख 70 हजार शहरी थे। बाकी लगभग 26 करोड़ ग्रामीण थे और उसी प्रकार से संख्या वाद में दी गई है वह छठी पंचवर्षीय योजना के लागू होने के पश्चात् गरीबी की रेखा से निचले स्तर पर जो लोग जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे हैं उनकी संख्या होगी। आज स्थिति यह है कि ग्रामीण इलाकों में जो गरीबी की रेखा से निचले स्तर पर जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे हैं उनकी संख्या बढ़ती जा रही है और उसमें कोई मुधार के संकेत भी नहीं प्राप्त हो रहे हैं। इसलिए मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा कि ग्रामीण इलाकों में जो लोग गरीबी की रेखा से निचले स्तर पर जीवन व्यतीत कर रहे हैं उनके विकास के लिए क्या आपने किसी प्रकार की कोई त्वारित योजना प्रस्तुत की है जिसके कार्यान्वयन में लोगों की गरीबी को दूर किया जा सके? मैं मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या इस संबंध में कोई निश्चित कार्यक्रम बनाया गया है?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, I do not agree with the insinuations made by the hon. Member. If the hon. Member is satisfied about the base which we have adopted for determining the poverty line for the Sixth Plan based on the 1977-78 sample survey, then the figures which we have given you are based on a realistic basis and there is no question of misleading the House. Sir, as regards the figures of people

below the poverty line in the rural areas and urban areas, the figure which was 50.70 per cent in the rural areas in 1979-80 has come down to 42.73 per cent in 1981-82, and for the urban it was 40.31 in 1979-80 and it has come down to 37.23 in 1981-82 and the total average which comes to 48.44 in 1979-80 has come down to 41.51 in 1981-82. Sir, there have been a large number of programmes which the Government has taken up for poverty alleviation—the Integrated Rural Development Programme, the NRE programme, the Hill Areas Programme, the Drought Prone Areas Programme and the Scheduled Castes Component and the Scheduled Tribes Sub-component of the Plan. These are the programmes which are directly attacking poverty and that is why we find that there has been a reduction in the figure.

SHRI R. R. MORARKA: Sir, the statement says that the figure of 31.68 crores is based on the household consumption survey of 1977-78 and the growth of economy between 1977-78 and 1979-80. Sir, may I know what the actual figure was for the year 1977-78 when the survey was carried out? Secondly, Sir, this is based on the minimum need and standard of consumption. May I know whether this is translated in money income, and while giving the figure for 1979-80 whether the inflationary impact on this money income has been taken into consideration?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, the figure for 1979 is actually on the basis of the sample survey which was conducted in 1977-78 which gave the figure of expenditure. And on that basis the figures for 1979-80 have been worked out. I have given the figures for 1979-80 and also for 1981-82. Sir, the entire base of this poverty line has been 2400 calories in the rural areas and 2100 calories in the urban areas which has been the base, and which has been adopted. And on the basis of that, we have been able to

calculate as to what is going to be the population year after year.

SHRI R. R. MORARKA: Are these calories—2400 and 2100 translated into money value?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, they have been translated into money values. The figures are Rs. 49.09 in the case of rural areas and Rs. 56.64 in the case of urban areas based on 1973-74 prices. And based on 1979-80 prices, it comes to Rs. 76 and Rs. 88 respectively for the rural and urban areas.

DR. MALCOLM S. ADISESHIAH: Mr. Deputy Chairman, may I first express my satisfaction that the Minister has really continued the basis on which the figures have been calculated in the Sixth Five Year Plan which is widely disseminated because some concern has been caused for some re-calculations which are supposed to be going on, using different indices in the Planning Commission which raises several other questions. Now, with regard to this reply of the Minister, may I say that first of all, the last sentence of the first paragraph is only technically true. Therefore, no written estimates of persons below poverty line are available in earlier plans. It is technically true in the sense that earlier plans have not specifically mentioned the figure; but official and non-official studies have been made which have been discussed in Parliament about the people below poverty line, by men like Minhas, like Dandekar, and so on. Now, even with regard to the Fifth Five Year Plan, the draft plan—not the final plan—contained a very important section which began by saying: "The poverty level has to be defined in terms of the minimum level for consumption." Then it speaks of Rs. 20 in the Fourth Plan as being the minimum level in the rural areas, and it goes up to 40.6 per cent in 1972-73, and then it goes on to say that during the Fifth Plan, there will be transfer from the top 30 per cent of ten per cent of con-

sumption to the bottom 30 per cent. All these are given in details and in the technical note behind, which we economists discussed in the Planning Commission, there were figures of people below poverty line at that time. Therefore, I would say that the Minister would agree that this is only a technical statement and there is no official figure of those below poverty line before the Sixth Plan where for the first time you did mention what the number is. But in the Planning Commission and among economists there have been calculations...

SHRI PILOO MODY: Reserve Bank also.

DR. MALCOLM S. ADISESHIAH: Reserve Bank also. That is my first question.

My second question is that in the second and third paragraph, I must say that the Minister is making a rather optimistic statement when he says that different poverty redistributive programmes will reduce poverty and has given the figures for 1981-82. We have not had an evaluation so far—official evaluation or an official statement but I believe the IRDP programme is going well; I believe the NREP is not going well. The live stock programme is still to take off. This is based on my studies as an economist. But what we do not have from the Planning Commission or the Ministry is any evaluation of the redistributive programme.

And finally, I believe that the Minister would be right in expecting in the third paragraph to reach the goal at the end of the Sixth Plan with 30 per cent people living below poverty line only if the Sixth Plan statement that 5 per cent of the surplus land, additional surplus land, will be redistributed. May I ask finally whether the Minister believes that this will take place. Whether it is taking place, is the most important question. It is a very important redistributive programme where 5 per cent of the surplus land will be redistributed.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: I am in full agreement with what Dr. Adishesiah has said that this is a technical explanation, because the fact remains that official figures of those people below poverty line, for the previous years, are not available. But if we were to apply the same formula which we have taken into account while working out the figures for the Sixth Plan, it should be possible. Taking all kinds of factors into account we can work out. But that will be an indicative figure and it cannot be considered as a kind of official figure.

Sir, for the second aspect about which he referred, this concept is nothing new; there is nothing new about it. It has been translated into action only in the Sixth Plan document. For the first time it was thought out when the Nutrition Advisory Committee thought over the problem and it was considered as a kind of subsistence level and it was stated then that in terms of rupees, Rs. 20 per capita per month should be considered as sufficient for subsistence level. But now, there has been some kind of improvement and this programme has now actually been put into action in the Sixth Five Year Plan. These are the different formulae which have been made applicable and on an adhoc basis, the six per cent rate of growth in the economy and other programmes which have been undertaken have been taken into account while working out the figures and in fact, in reducing the poverty line. Unless we have some kind of a sample survey, it will not be correct to say that there is no scope for improvement. Certainly, there is scope for improvement. I fully agree with what he has said.

In certain areas, we have been doing evaluation. But so far as this aspect is concerned, we have not been able to have a full evaluation done on this. The hon. Member has mentioned about 5 per cent of the

surplus land. In this regard, our effort is to see that the land which has been declared surplus and which has been taken possession of by the State Governments is passed on to the beneficiaries at the earliest, so that the asset distribution which we had contemplated in the Sixth Five Year Plan document is realised.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he is satisfied with the progress made in reducing the poverty line in the sense whether the efforts which have so far been made to bring people out of the poverty line have been commensurate with the various policies and schemes which we have formulated and implemented in this connection. Secondly, I would like to know from him whether there is any classification of the population below the poverty line in terms of the various groups of working people, whether in the rural areas or in the urban areas, or, whether this is a rough estimate. I would like to know whether any such classification has been attempted. Thirdly, I would like to know whether, in order to speedily bring the people out of the poverty line, any special measures are being contemplated.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, the hon. Member has asked the opinion of the Government about the implementation of the programmes and whether efforts are being made by the Government to see that the programmes are implemented in the spirit in which they have been thought of. Sir, the stage of implementation differs from State to State. It will be too early for me to say. Unless we are able to complete the mid-term review which is now going on in the Planning Commission, it will be too early for me to give any kind of commitment either way, whether it is satisfactory or not satisfactory. The classification is definitely available about the people who are below the

poverty line and special programmes have been taken up in the Sixth Five Year Plan; not only the IRDP and the NREP; but there are certain area programmes which have been undertaken. For example, the minimum wages are being revised every year. All these things will have a total impact on bringing the population which is now below the poverty line, above it.

SHR^I PILOO MODY: Mr. Acting Chairman, Sir, my difficulty is that I have not yet been able to get a definition of the term 'poverty line'. This seems to be an elusive line, which keeps on moving up and down, with different points of view. If it can be quantified in terms of calories by nutrition experts, surely it does not imply that that is all that the poverty line is based on. I take it that the poverty line should be based on a basket of goods which are considered as absolutely essential for human survival at a particular level desired by society. Therefore, I recommend that a proper definition of 'poverty line' be given by actually mentioning the basket of goods, though the basket of goods may vary slightly from area to area. Therefore, you should have four or five critical points at which a particular basket of goods should be established. Thereafter the poverty line should be defined by the actual purchase of these goods in the market and by purchasers who cannot be identified. Then it should be quantified in terms of money depending on the rate of inflation at the particular time. It can be done on quarterly or half-yearly basis, but some such scientific approach to the poverty line needs to be established.

I also want an assurance from the Minister that having done all this painful exercise there will be no fiddling with the figures.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, this poverty line concept is based on the caloric value which is being taken by people at a particular level. 2400 calories in rural areas and 2100 calo-

ries in urban areas is one of the basic objectives which every family we would like to bring above poverty line, is being contemplated. But I am in full agreement with him and that was the point which was discussed at Nainital. With the cooperation of the U.P. Government the Planning Commission held a Conference where...

SHRI PILOO MODY: Mr. Minister, my point is that, is it only a caloric level? If a man is below the poverty line that he does not get soap. Is he not entitled to wash himself and his clothes?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: I am explaining that. In the Nainital Conference where the statistical organisations of the State Governments and different Indian Institutes were also represented, there was a consensus on this issue that it is not merely the food habit of the persons but there are other factors also which should be taken into account. The Central Statistical Organisation has set up a special group because as the hon. Member will be able to appreciate, it is very difficult to find out from different classes of people and especially at the National Sample Survey Organisation level it is a kind of random survey based on certain areas which is being attempted at the national level. It is to be supplemented by the State Governments and that is why the Working Group there is going to pinpoint what exactly are the points in which these organisations will have to go into. The 2400 calories in rural areas and 2100 calories in urban areas will have to be supplemented by cloth, accommodation, and other social services which they require. There are some services which are rendered by the society and the Government also. These have to be taken into account while working out as to what is going to be the quantum of the services which are going to be available to that particular class. So, the entire thing is being attempted. It is a very crude method which we have now adopted. I fully agree that some kind of re-

finement is definitely called for, but it depends on what new ideas are thrown by the Working Group which is going into these aspects.

SHRI PILOO MODY: I said the Government should set the definition. Your survey means nothing. Your survey is only to indicate the figures. I would also like to draw your attention to one sentence of your statement, i.e., "...in the first two years of the Sixth Plan and the different poverty redistributive programmes.." I did not know that the Government had accepted redistribution of poverty as a programme.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Now I am not going into the technical question of defining the poverty line. Now I am aware, being associated with both the consumer expenditure survey and otherwise also that the poverty line can be defined on partly technical matters and partly on political grounds. You can politically define the poverty line according to your choice. But I am not asking that question. My question is that this Sixth Plan document, to which a reference has been made, itself says that no dent has been made on the 50 per cent below the poverty line level in the course of past development. Is the Minister aware of that statement in the Sixth Plan document itself?

My second question is, if such a statement is there and if he is aware of that, then from the First Five Year Plan onwards upto the Sixth Five Year Plan, has there been any economic development within the country which has not led to redistribution in terms of people below the poverty line moving up? The statement in the Plan document is that the level is constant despite development which means that the absolute number has increased.

My third question is, he is talking about the redistribution programme.

Now since the Second Five Year Plan which Plan has not contained a redistribution programme? I was associated with the formulating of the draft Plan frame of the Second Five Year Plan. Since that Plan, which Plan has not contained a redistribution programme? This is what I want to know from him.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, this concept of reducing poverty and unemployment has been thought of right from the First Five Year Plan. I am in full agreement with what the hon. Member has said. But what the Sixth Plan says is, it did not have enough impact and that is why a special programme needs to be undertaken. We have taken new programmes with a view to attacking the poverty in such a manner that at the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan, the figure of 31 crores...

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Was SFDA Programme not a special programme in the Fifth Plan?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Yes, I am aware of that fact. but still we thought that much more is required to attack poverty and to have a programme for those who are suffering from poverty in order to achieve the objective that we have in view.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Next Question.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: You did not reply to my question. (*Interruptions*). This has been admitted in the Sixth Plan document that no dent has been made.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No, please. Half an hour has been taken on one question. Next Question, Shri Ghouse Mohiuddin Sheikh. He is not there.