

श्री सभापति : आपकी डांट वहां पहुंच जाती है।

श्री राम विलास पासवान : सर, हम किसी को डांटते नहीं हैं, लेकिन हमारे कंज्यूमर्स का इंटरेस्ट रहता है। जहां तक डंकन का सवाल है, डंकन प्योरली एक प्राइवेट कम्पनी है, यह आप जानते हैं। सर, प्राइवेट कंपनी के ऊपर हमारा कोई अधिकार नहीं रहता है। हम उसको फेसिलिटेट करते हैं और यह हमारी सरकार की पॉलिसी भी है। सर, एक बात सही है कि नेप्था के दाम 22 हजार रुपए प्रति टन है, जोकि बहुत अधिक हैं whereas जो गैस पर आधारित है, उसके दाम 22 सौ रुपये टन है। इसी तरह से एल.एन. जी. का भी एक स्टैंडर्ड है, लेकिन जब वह बाहर से मंगाते हैं, इसका दाम करीब 85 सौ रुपए प्रति टन पड़ जाता है। इस परिस्थिति में सरकार ने यह जरूर कहा है कि नए जितने प्लांट्स लगें वे सारे — के — सारे गैस आधारित लगें। अब जहां आपने अपने सवाल में डंकन के बारे कहा, हम अपने स्तर से मजदूर के हित में क्या कर सकते हैं, उसे जरूर देखेंगे। लेकिन हम ऐसी परिस्थिति में नहीं हैं कि सदन को assurance दें कि उनको बुलाएंगे। मगर हम अपने स्तर से, हमारी गवर्नमेंट के जो लिमिटेशन हैं, उस स्तर से भी इतना जरूर चाहेंगे कि मजदूर को कोई उसमें परेशानी न हो।

Hunger Free India

*507. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRIMATI AMBIKASONI:†

Will the Minister of Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have prepared an action plan for turning every village into a knowledge centre and making India hunger free by 15th August, 2007;

(b) whether the country has the necessary technical, financial, managerial and political capacity to launch an integrated nutrition-cum-livelihood security system to achieve freedom from hunger;

(c) if so, whether there is a need for paradigm shift in planning and implementation from the concept of food security; and

(d) to what extent these provisions are being worked out successfully to make India hunger free by 2007?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI) ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Ambika Soni.

[29 April, 2005]

RAJYA .SABHA

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, article 47 of the Constitution binds the Government and States to provide freedom from hunger and improvement in public health. I am confident that the Government of India is putting all its efforts to work towards this goal. There was a National Commission set up under the chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan who said in that report that by 2007 India would be hunger free. The Minister in his reply has enumerated several schemes which have been undertaken by the Government of India over the last 50 years and wants us all to believe that these schemes are working towards the goal of making India hunger free by 2007. I am subject to correction but I am aware of the fact that this scheme of starting foodgrain bank was initiated in thirteen States. I also learnt that there were about 1,881 foodgrain banks started. I also have learnt that there are Rs. 1,004 crores which have been given by the Government of India for these foodgrain banks and these foodgrain banks have been started in States like Orissa, Tripura, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, drought-prone tribal-inhabited States. But the Government of India today in its answer has also talked of how important it is that the public distribution system works well for them to achieve this goal. I would like the hon. Minister to enlighten this House as to how confident he is that all these 1,881 foodgrain banks are working and if they are working very well, how many more does he plan to increase? I would also like to know, in the last six or seven years what have been the reports about deaths due to starvation in those States where foodgrain banks are supposed to be working. How many deaths have taken place in the last six years?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, first of all I appreciate the concern of the hon. Member pertaining to the overall food scenario, public distribution scenario and the grain bank support to the respective States. There is no doubt about it that the Public Distribution System throughout the country, unless is sufficiently modernised and sufficiently taken care of to ensure that food is reached to the vulnerable sections in time as per the respective scheme, whatever manner you may think of —interim report recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission was received only in December and the final Report is expected by 2006- it will be difficult to achieve the goal. It will be difficult to achieve the goal, I can only ensure and assure the hon. Member that the UPA Government would take a two-pronged approach. The first approach is: As and when Dr. M.S Swaminathan submits his final Report, it will be considered by the

Government to set up, first, the knowledge-based centre in every village, provide updated information based on science and technology and capacity building to improve the agriculture pattern and variation to the farmers so that the capacity building will reach to the maximum to ensure that the dream of 2007 is fulfilled.

The other approach is with regard to the Public Distribution System network. We have to examine not merely the PDS, but also the access to foodgrains by the vulnerable sections by taking care of their purchasing power. Therefore, the Government has also launched the Food-for-Work Programme. The Government is very seriously considering the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. At the moment, the Bill is still under consideration and as soon as it is finalised we will bring it before the House for its consideration.

So far as the issue of indebtedness of farmers is concerned, it is a fact that hon. Member has raised a right point. From the analysing Report of various States, we found that one of the basic reasons for committing suicides is over-indebtedness. The farmers borrowing is going up and he cannot repay the loan. Even in some dry areas, the water level is so low that the farmers is not getting water. Sometimes, even the seeds that he gets are not up to the mark. This is one of the reasons. Of course, besides these, there are also other reasons which I am not going to debate now. It was debated twice in this House. At the moment, I do not have the actual up-to-date figures of suicides. I will hand it over to the hon. Member immediately after the Question Hour.

The position of loan is like this. The credit flow to the farmers, through cooperative banks, has been improved by this Government from Rs. 1,08,500 crores credit flow by previous Government to Rs. 1,41,000 crores. Loan given to farmers, who are in distress, up to 28th February, 2005, was Rs. 6,819.91 crores. Dues from farmers in arrears up to 28th February, 2005, were Rs. 1,695.93 crores. And one-time settlement for small and marginal farmers up to 28th February, 2005, stands at Rs. 625.45 crores. And dues from farmer's indebted to moneylenders are Rs. 39 crores till date.

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, I am sorry. I seek your protection. I asked for the number of deaths reported, due to starvation, in those States where we have the Foodgrain Banks, I did not, today, ask about the

[29 April, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

farmers committing suicides. But, I still have my second supplementary. I don't blame the hon. Minister. He is supposed to ensure irrigation and water to the fields which will grow the food. And the distribution of foodgrains is taken care of by someone else.

There is a great coincidence. In the reply given to me, it has been stated that the Government of India, naturally, takes its ambitious plan of making India Hunger-free by 2007. We have become a part of the World Food Summit and the International Alliance against hunger and there is a National Alliance against hunger. The coincidence is that in the reply they say that the first meeting of this National Alliance for hunger is scheduled to take place on the 29th April, 2005, *i.e.*, today. I would like to know from the hon. Minister — if this meeting is going to take place today — would he enlighten us what is the agenda of this meeting and also who are all from NGO world those who work in civil society that are going to participate in this meeting today?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I respectfully submit that, politically, there are a lot of starvation death reports from various States. But technically and administratively, most of the State Governments do not admit that there is a starvation death. They, sometimes, interpret it as lack of nutrition, anaemia, etc. So, officially, hardly any State Government admits, in official figures, that there is a starvation death in a State, (*interruptions*)

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: Sir, this is a Centrally-governed scheme. *...(Interruptions)...* I am sorry to interrupt. I request the Minister to allow me to speak for a minute. Foodgrain banks is a Centrally-governed scheme. ' So, in those places where there are foodgrain banks, if deaths take place, I am sure, there must be a monitoring system in place to say why they die.

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, again, I respectfully submit and convey to the hon. Member that foodgrain banks are located in States. But they are implemented, planned and executed totally under the supervision of the State Government. Government of India's job is only to ensure the supply of the foodgrains to the respective States where there is a need. But the Government of India does not take care to see that food

from the foodgrain bank reaches 'X' village or Y village or not. It is left with the State Government and administration will appreciate it.

In so far as monitoring of the schemes is concerned, 'Yes' for all the schemes, which are supported by the Central Government and are given to the State Governments, there is a periodical review and monitoring -between the States and the Centre. Corrective steps are taken as and when necessary at the behest of the State Government.

In regard to the meeting today, 'yes, the meeting is being held today. It is scheduled for today. Eighty-nine organisations are linked with the national alliance, the meeting for which will be held today. It is not exactly a concept of the Government of India. The international organisation called FAO, they met in Rome, and, finally, adopted a resolution to ensure that the whole world fights against hunger. Based on that, the Government of India also, one year back, appointed this Commission and this Commission's first meeting will discuss the issue today. It so happened, Sir, that the Government of India has already a certain programme against poverty in terms of the poverty alleviation programme for which I can give figures. We have substantially improved. The agricultural sector investment, and the poverty alleviation programme have substantially improved compared to the previous regime. I am not going to argue about that now. But what I am going to say is that there is a three-pronged approach. Firstly, the National Farmers' Commission headed by Justice Swaminathan, also dreamt a dream. It was not a dream, it was a justified demand that by 15th August 2007 our entire system should be made in such a manner that there is no cry for food and there is no hunger. The other point is that there is an ongoing scheme of the Government of India, which is being implemented by the State Government, called the Antyodaya Anna Scheme for the poorest of the poor, for the BPL families and for the aged people above 65, who do not come under the old-age pension; who do not draw the pension, for giving to 10 kg. per month rice. All these programmes, including Human Resource Development Ministry's programme of mid-day meal, and the children's nutrition programme under ICDS, come under one set of programmes. And the third one is that the National Alliance is thinking to predict and to project how all these could be coordinated. So, in one way all these are one, windows are different. At the end of the day, I am confident, Sir, that the objective that the Government has adopted, — based on the recommendations — hopefully, will be implemented if the State Government's mechanism is linked with it.

[29 April, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

DR. K. KASTURIRANGAN: Thank you, hon. Chairman, Sir. Through you, I would like to seek this clarification from the hon. Minister. I would like to know whether a concept called the Village Resource Centre is under evaluation between the Swaminathan Research Institute and the Indian Space Research Organisation. If so, what are the present preliminary results of this concept because it is supposed to provide timely information to the village-related activities in areas like agriculture and health. I would also like to know whether there are any plans for the Government for scaling up this concept to other parts of the country.

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, the House will be glad to know that the Finance Minister's Budget this year, gave an immediate response to the Committee's interim report. You will also appreciate that the UPA Government appointed the Swaminathan Commission in November 2004. And the Commission did so well that in December 2004, they came with the interim report. That report was instantly responded to by the Government in the Finance Minister's Budget Speech to allocate, as a pilot pattern, Rs. Hundred crores for this programme called Village Knowledge Centres. Village Knowledge Centres will provide access to key local information or entitlements, governance and the infrastructure while supporting access to dynamic information on weather, market, on line public service etc. Sir, the Centre shall also provide retail outlets for a host of online learning, skill building, training service, providing information and informal opportunities. Sir, hon. Kasturiranganji has mentioned that the higher scientific input on the entire ecology and the earth-soil pattern, all should be included in the whole jacket. But, at the moment, you can understand that Rs. 100 crores is not enough to take care of the villages. So, we feel, we will have to wait till the final recommendations come in. As a pilot basis, these Rs. 100 crores will take care of a few villages of India in restricted parts of the States which have been selected. Around 9 or 10 States have already been selected by us for this year. While this thing is being set up, let us wait for the output. However, Sir, I commit on behalf of the Government » that in this matter, further discussion with the scientific experts on the agro-scientific basis will be taken care of to give it a fine tune.

DR. M.S. GILL: Sir, does the hon. Minister really believe that by 15th August, 2007, India will be made hunger-free, when the investment in agriculture is less than 2 per cent? in his own Ministry of Irrigation, about Rs. 600 crores have been provided for the sub-continent of irrigation, perhaps not even that has been spent. In the Minimum Support Price, if you want

more grains, a nominal price of Rs. 10 was given the other day. And, yesterday or today, I read that in Maharashtra, one more farmer went to the Collector's office and committed suicide. This is a new standard of things, I read somewhere. Does he really believe that he will have a hunger-free India, if this is the level of investment and interest and support to agriculture and farmers?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, first of all, I would like to say with all emphasis at my command that in the present-day scenario, today, the 29th April, '2005, we are having 212 metric tons of the food-grains support for the country, with an average of 169 kg per capita to individuals. Sir, if we channelise the whole system today — as I used the word 'leakproof' — and if we improve the accessibility of the vulnerable having some purchasing rights of theirs, then, this is substantially enough to take care of the vulnerable, if we ignore the surplus that we export. But why are not achieving it? We are not achieving it because the substantial part of the Below Poverty Line population and the poorest of the poor suffer because of not having enough purchasing power, to have the access into it. Even for 2 kg or 3 kg rice and wheat, you will see, Sir, in many parts of the country, the BPL list in spite of being finalised, the Panchayati Raj is not getting full command and access with their support. They are overburdened to meet that problem. So, we have to go a long way. The Mission 2007 does not mean that till today we are hungry, and one fine morning on 15th August, 2007, we will find our stomach is full. No. It has three parallel lines — (a) improve the purchasing power, give them certain kind of work by which they have something in their hands, (b) whether you can ensure rural employment guarantee, which is still under examination, and (c) the work of the durable asset nature through *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana*, through Panchayati Raj. While assets will be created, at the same time, based on that asset, rural infrastructure development will ensure them some more greater employment opportunities. So, it is the collective and combined effort by which the availability of foodgrains to them, including their children, will be ensured, if they are taken care of by the nutrition programme (a) through ICDS and (b) through Mid-day Meal. So, it is a collective effort, it is a National movement, I should rather say. If we can successfully do that, Sir, I am confident, the UPA Government is confident that 15th August, 2007, will be a real sunshine.

श्री मोती लाल वोरा : माननीय सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि

नेशनल कमीशन ऑन फारमर्स ने अपनी अंतरिम रिपोर्ट दी है और उस रिपोर्ट में उसने जिन बातों का उल्लेख किया है — I - establishment of knowledge centres in every village to create a veritable platform for knowledge transfer between and across rural communities, scientists, educators, health care. Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the recommendations of Dr. Swaminathan Commission have been implemented, which he has given in its Interim Report. The Second Report is yet to come. This is what I would like to know from the hon. Minister.

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, first of all, I stated that the first recommendation of establishment of knowledge centre in every village is a pilot module thing. The Finance Minister instantly responded to it in the current Budget allotting Rs. 100 crores for this purpose, and a few States are preparing those villages. In so far as final report is concerned, we are awaiting it, but we are not keeping quiet till we receive the final report. We have already started augmenting, reviewing and strengthening the on-going schemes of the programme, improving the budgetary provisions and supply of grains.

SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Sir, my question was quite different I want to know whether the recommendations have been implemented or not. This is the only question. In the Interim Report, they have mentioned that the farmers are to be educated; the scientists are to get in touch with the farmers. So, if the farmers are (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, the interim, Committee Report Part I, of the Village-based Knowledge Centre, etc., will be effective from June 1, 2005.

KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Sir, it is common knowledge that there are grain banks and godowns, full of grains is, and people are starving and dying. So, the best way is people's participation in distribution, and that can be done when the village *Gram Sabha*, not only the panchayat but the *Gram Sabha* — means, all the villagers together — are entrusted with this job of distribution and small, small grain banks in every village are established. I think, then this problem can be solved. Is there any proposal of people's participation or entrusting it to village *Gram Sabha*? Is it under consideration?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: I am thankful to the hon. Member She has very rightly suggested a very constructive thing. Out UPA Government is exactly doing the same thing. You know there is a separate Ministry now in this Government, called the *Panchayati Raj*, to give more authoritative *panchayati* system and to coordinate it with the rural health, rural ecology and the foodgrains distribution programme, including the identification of the beneficiaries of the BPL list, of the *Antyodaya Yojana* Programme. The *Panchayati Raj* should be involved deeply, and a comprehensive plan of action is being drawn through the *Panchayati Raj* very shortly.

श्रीमती जया बच्चन : सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी से यह पूछना चाहती हूँ, जैसा कि आपने थोड़ी देर पहले कहा कि ये जो हंगर डेथ्स हैं, इनकी मोनितरिंग राज्य सरकारें करती हैं। महाराष्ट्र में करीब — करीब एक वर्ष पहले जो डेथ्स हुई थी, क्या उनकी कोई मोनितरिंग हुई है ? क्या उनकी कोई रिपोर्ट है? यदि है, तो क्या हमें मिल सकती है?

श्री प्रियरंजन दास मुंशी : मेरे पास इतनी जानकारी तो नहीं है, लेकिन मैं यही कहूंगा कि हर जिम्मेदार स्टेट गवर्नमेंट इसके बारे में स्वयं देखती है। और उसकी सूचना जब हम लोगों को प्राप्त होती है, हम उसे सदन में लाते हैं। जहां तक महाराष्ट्र का सवाल है, मैं आपके सवाल और आपकी चिंता को महाराष्ट्र सरकार के समक्ष पेश करूंगा, वहां से तर्क आएगा तो मैं आपको भेज दूंगा।

श्रीमती जया बच्चन : क्या महाराष्ट्र में आपकी गवर्नमेंट नहीं है ?...(व्यवधान)...

श्री प्रियरंजन दास मुंशी : नहीं, हमारी गवर्नमेंट की यह बात नहीं है, सारे भारत में ही हमारी गवर्नमेंट है।

श्रीमती जया बच्चन : मैं खासतौर से महाराष्ट्र के संबंध में पूछना चाहती हूँ। ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री प्रियरंजन दास मुंशी : हम राजनीतिक दृष्टिकोण से गवर्नमेंट पर विचार नहीं करते हैं, इन्स्टीट्यूशनल दृष्टिकोण से विचार करते हैं कि प्रत्येक राज्य में जो सरकारें हैं, वे ही इसकी निगरानी करती हैं। आपने जब स्पेसिफिक सवाल पूछा, तो महाराष्ट्र सरकार से बात करने के पश्चात जो सूचना मुझे मिलेगी, वह मैं आपको पेश कर दूंगा।

श्रीमती जया बच्चन : क्या आप महाराष्ट्र सरकार से बात नहीं करते ? क्या आपकी कोई बात नहीं हुई है, महाराष्ट्र की सरकार से? ... (व्यवधान)...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, I welcome the spirit of the Minister in

[29 April, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

expressing this resolve that India will be 'hunger-free' by 15th of August, 2007, but while expressing this resolve, I think, our feet should also touch the ground, because the latest report of the Food and Agricultural Organisation in the beginning of the new century showed that in the second half, since the nineties, actually the number of the people going hungry had increased alarmingly and that has also led to the incremental addition of population of people who go hungry globally. A major reason for this is the policy approach of the Government. The increase of issue price in our public distribution system was a major reason.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Basu, the time left is very short and there are two other hon. Members who would like to speak on this issue.

SHRI NILOTPALBASU: Sir, I shall just take a minute. The fact that so much foodgrain is stored in our godowns is, in fact, a policy failure rather than a success, because our food production is not going up substantially. I think the employment programme is also not yet off the block. The PDS is in shambles. In such a situation, what is the objective behind this resolve that we would be hunger-free by 15th August 2007?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, (would like to once again make things very clear, so that the confusion can be prevented and avoided. The Government of India did not declare that India would be declared a hunger-free nation by 15th August, 2007. Government of India says that if the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee, and the resolve of the National Alliance, are implemented through a 'leakproof mechanism with the help of the State Governments, the stock available as on today, that is 212 metric tons, and further growth as we envisage at the end of the Tenth Plan, would definitely show to the whole world that India is hunger-free. That requires total involvement of the State machinery.

Insofar as the PDS system is concerned, the hon. Member will agree, that the strengthening of PDS depends on the State Governments and their vigil. So far as the issue prices are concerned, they were linked with issues like (a) normal subsidy; (b) transportation charges; and (c) whether the transportation charges are higher, whether that would be absorbed by the State Government alone, and that too, with an amount of subsidy.

Thus, this question cannot have a straight and simple answer. The answer is, increase the accessibility of the vulnerable section to food,

increase their purchasing power, and create enough opportunities for them to work in the rural areas. That is one of the basic concerns of this Government, towards which we are working.

SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Sir, I wish to compliment the hon. Minister on the Government's initiative to make the country hunger-free. But, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that Government after Government has been formulating policies to keep the country hunger-free, especially after the alarming deaths in Kalahandi in Orissa and Bara in Rajasthan. Some starvation deaths had taken place there. It is unfortunate that the Government of the day had said that the deaths were not due to hunger, but that they were due to malnutrition in these areas.

I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the situation prevailing especially in Orissa and Rajasthan. Rajasthan is prone to drought. Is the Government taking any precautionary measures to avoid deaths due to hunger and starvation in these two States? Are these hunger deaths occurring over the past so many years being reported?

SHRI PRIYARANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, this concern has been conveyed to the State Governments from time to time on various occasions, and they come forward with various schemes. I can give you an example. One after another, incidents of drought were striking Kalahandi. Then, the Government of India declared the KBK districts as a Special Category Zone, to be given 100 per cent support through irrigation facilities. That is how, the KBK area of ten years back and the KBK of 2005 are quite different.

Sir, insofar as Rajasthan is concerned, I must congratulate the successive Governments of Rajasthan for having taken such aggressive measures while responding to the small and medium irrigation sectors, which was beyond any other State's imagination. We are now giving special priority to this area. Another programme of the UPA Government is the drought-prone area support with Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme and Rainwater Harvesting Scheme. I would like to inform the hon. Member that Rajasthan will get top priority in the matter.

*508.[The questioner (Shri P.K. Maheshwari) was absent. For answer *vide* page 36 *infra*.]

*509. [The questioner (Shri V. Hanumantha Rao) was absent. For answer *vide* page 37 *infra*]

*510.[The questioners (Shri Raj Mohinder Singh Majitha and Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad) were absent. For answer *vide* page 36 *infra*]