

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU : With my own observation across several States, at least, in the State capitals...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please ask the question.

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU : Yes, Sir. Even in the State capitals, the support mechanism, the infrastructural support and particularly the support based on computers are yet to take place. We are yet to have an understanding about the mechanism that is being planned by the Government, the Union Government as well as the State Governments. Thus, I would like to seek the information about the infrastructural provisions and the support mechanism for the physically and mentally-challenged persons who are already in place of some position.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Sir, as far as coordination with the State Governments for the purpose of providing amenities and facilities to the physically-challenged people is concerned, the general category has to be done by the Ministry of Social Justice. I would request the hon. Minister for Social Justice to inform about the coordination with the State Governments. As far as Central Government offices are concerned, it is our responsibility. We have been upgrading them. In most of the offices, we have the toilet facilities and also the infrastructure facilities. Separate lift facility has also been provided. That is being done. We will upgrade it even if it is required further.

Introduction of plastic currency

*285. SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry is contemplating to introduce plastic currency;
- (b) whether it would stop the counterfeiting of currency;
- (c) the number of trees that would be saved and whether it would affect the environment in comparison to paper currency; and
- (d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) With a view to elongating the life of banknotes, particularly in lower denominations, the Reserve Bank of India, in consultation with the Government of India has been considering various options including printing of banknotes on polymer substrate. A decision had accordingly been taken to introduce one billion pieces of Rs. 10 banknotes on polymer substrate on a field trial basis in five cities. The primary objective of introduction of polymer/plastic notes is to increase its life and not to combat counterfeiting.

The polymer banknotes are made from a non-fibrous and non-porous polymer. The Indian Banknote paper is made from long fibers obtained from cotton comber and linter. There is thus no direct relation between paper based currency and cutting of trees.

The Reserve Bank of India has informed that The Energy and Resources Institute was commissioned by them to estimate the environmental impacts and carbon footprints of plastic currency vis-à-vis paper currency. Their study has found that polymer notes would be more environment friendly than paper based currency.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Thank you hon. Chairman. I compliment the hon. Finance Minister for the decision to introduce polymer/plastic currency notes in place of paper notes. But, Sir, in his reply, he says that the primary objective of the introduction of polymer/plastic notes is to increase its life and not to combat counterfeiting. Sir, counterfeiting of our currency notes is a matter of serious concern for the nation. The Home Ministry report says that it has a great role in funding the terror groups. There are extreme examples of fake currency notes being supplied to the terror groups to acquire illegal arms from our neighbouring countries. There is a report of the Home Ministry. Sir, even some of the banks are involved in it. There is a report of the Home Ministry that lakhs of fake currency notes have been recovered from a branch of bank in UP.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Question please.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Sir, what action is the Government contemplating to stop or to reduce the entry of fake currency notes from the neighbouring country as well as from inside the country?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, I will be quite happy to answer the question, but, with great respect, the question is not about fake Indian currency notes; the question is about plastic currency notes. Therefore, I don't think we can convert it into discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Answer it in your former capacity.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : I am willing to reply on that, if the Chairman wishes.

Sir, when we introduce polymer or plastic currency notes, there are many objectives. All that we have said in the answer is that the primary objective is to increase the life. If it helps in making it difficult to counterfeit, that is an added advantage. But, I cannot say with certainty that the plastic currency notes cannot be counterfeited. Counterfeiting means access to the same technology that we use and access to the same raw material that we use. If a counterfeiter has access to the same raw material and the same technology, surely he can counterfeit plastic currency as well as paper currency.

The reason why we think that we should experiment with plastic currency is that the life of a ten-rupee note, because of velocity of circulation, is one year and we have to print millions of pieces of ten-rupee notes every year. In 2010-11, for example, we printed 5,000 million pieces of ten-rupee notes. In 2011-12, for example, we printed 5,700 million pieces of ten-rupee notes. They go out of circulation in one year which is why we think we should experiment with plastic currency. This is a project that will not take off immediately. We have shortlisted the firms. We have to get security clearance and then do it on a pilot basis and then we will see it.

As far as fake Indian currency notes are concerned, it is a problem that we face because fake Indian currency is smuggled into India from across the border. There is a nodal agency, the NIA, which is being charged with investigating FICN cases. There is an Inter-Ministerial Group which keeps a close watch on FICN smuggling. We have good cooperation from Bangladesh. We have good cooperation especially from Nepal. We have successfully interdicted a number of cases where FICN were smuggled into the country. But, as I said, this is a problem that arises from across the border and until those who are across the border realise that good relations with India is a pre-requisite for being good neighbours, we have to fight this menace as and when we face this menace.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Sir, the currency notes are used by every citizen of this country. There is a concern whether it is environment friendly. I am happy that the Minister has replied that plastic/polymer notes will be environment friendly. By what time will the paper notes be phased out and when will they be replaced by plastic/polymer notes?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, we have not even started the pilot project. The pilot project will have to start. In the pilot project, the plan is to print one billion pieces of ten-rupee notes whose face value will be about Rs. 1,000 crore. But the face value of Rs. 1,000 crore must be measured against the total currency in circulation which is Rs. 11,00,000 crore. So, it is a drop in the ocean. The pilot project has to be done. The pilot project has to be proven, if the pilot project is successful, then we can extend it and more pieces can be printed. At this stage, we have not even started the pilot project.

श्री मोती लाल बोरा : माननीय सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि पॉलिमर नोट्स पहले किन पाँच राज्यों में प्रभावशील होंगे? महोदय, सबसे बड़ी बात तो यह है कि माननीय मंत्री जी ने स्पष्ट रूप से कहा कि ये जो पॉलिमर के करेंसी नोट्स हैं, ये जाली और नकली नोटों के प्रचलन को रोकने के लिए नहीं हैं। क्या माननीय मंत्री महोदय इस बात की जानकारी देंगे कि जाली नोटों को रोकने की दिशा में अब तक सरकार ने कौन-से कदम उठाए हैं?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, the pilot project is to introduce a billion pieces of ten-rupee banknotes. It is only after field trials, etc., that we can prove the pilot project and then we can extend it. At the moment, it is only intended to introduce a billion pieces of ten-rupee notes. Again, the question has strayed into another subject, which is FICN. As far as the FICN is concerned, there are two ways of dealing with the FICN. One is to improve the security features of our currency notes. Security features of our currency notes are constantly improved upon to make it difficult for the counterfeiter to produce a similar fake Indian currency note.

The last time we introduced security features was in 2005; and this is an ongoing exercise, as and when we have access to better technology, we will introduce new security features. This is one side of the story. The other side is how to take steps to prevent the entry and circulation of FICN. Now, Forged Notes Vigilance Cell has been formed in all the banks. Instructions have been issued to banks to disburse only sorted and genuine notes over the counter, or, through the ATMs. The Reserve Bank of India coordinates with investigating agencies, as well as, the State police authorities. A State level committee has been formed in each State under the DGP of that State to deal with counterfeit notes. RBI conducts training programmes for detection of counterfeit notes for employees and officers of banks. All issue officers, and there are 19 of them of the RBI and currency chest branches 4,402, are equipped with note sorting machines which have the capacity to detect counterfeit notes at the entry level. Steps are being taken to install note sorting machines by the RBI at bank branches.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has taken a number of steps to curb the menace of FICN. The BSF has been alerted to keep a vigil at the forward posts. MHA periodically

reviews the situation. MHA has initiated legislative measures for amendment of Section 292 of the Cr.P.C. to enable the notification of officers of bank note presses and State and Central Forensic Laboratories to give evidence in courts. A high level committee is under the Union Home Secretary to review the matter. NIA is the nodal agency.

SHRI K.N. BALAGOPAL : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has done any comparative analysis of experience of plastic currency in major countries. Regarding the fake notes and longevity of the notes whether it can be organically destroyed; otherwise it will become a pollution problem like plastic bags in the country.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, the polymer banks are made from non-fibrous and non-porous polymer. The Indian bank paper note is also made from non-fibrous obtained from cotton comber and minter. We are actually not cutting any trees to make any currency note whether it is paper currency or polyester currency. No tree is being cut. Therefore, both are, in a sense, environment-friendly.

As regards the impact of plastic notes The Energy and Research Institute (TERI) was commissioned by the RBI to estimate the carbon foot print of the plastic currency versus paper currency. The study found that the polymer notes would be more environment-friendly than the paper currency notes. Therefore, I think, from an environment point of view it is, perhaps, wise to experiment with this. Let us see what the results are. ...(*Interruptions*)...

Sir, about 20 countries are using plastic currency notes. In respect of three countries—Australia, New Zealand and Romania—all currency notes are plastic. But I must also say that Thailand introduced it and withdrew it. But there are 20 countries which use piastic currency.

SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA : Sir, circulation of counterfeit notes in border areas is a serious problem. Our border areas with Nepal and Pakistan are full of circulation of fake currency notes. NIA has been assigned with the job to detect fake currency notes. But our border areas are so long it is very difficult to control it. May I know from the Minister whether the Government will put a check at the source of supply of raw material for the currency notes? There are not major ingredients only three items are there—paper, ink, Band and back intaglio printing. With the cooperation of international agencies why couldn't the Government check at the source point? Pakistan is procuring the same paper, same ink and same back intaglio printing from the same source.

Why shouldn't we have a check at that point itself so that these currency notes are not printed by them and dumped into our country to destabilize our economy?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Mr. Chairman, Sir, as I said rather guardedly, these fake Indian currency notes are smuggled into India from across the border. I think that Statement tells you more than what I should be saying publicly. This is, in my view and in my assessment, an organized activity with some kind of State support. Therefore, all that we can do is, stop the entry of currency notes into India and also stop the circulation of currency notes. How do I go to the source of this currency note when it is manufactured across the border with State support? I think there are serious issues there in answering the question of the hon. Member. I am aware of it; the Government is aware of it. But at the moment, speaking as the Minister of Finance, I am saying that we take steps to prevent the entry and the circulation. But the larger question is, of course, a question which has serious implications. ...(*Interruptions*)...

वन अधिकार अधिनियम के अंतर्गत जनजातीय परिवारों को दिए गए अधिकार पत्र

*286. श्री फग्गन सिंह कुलस्ते : क्या जनजातीय कार्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) वन अधिकार अधिनियम के अंतर्गत क्या जनजातीय परिवारों को अधिकार पत्र दिए गए हैं;

(ख) यदि हां, तो ऐसे परिवारों की राज्य-वार संख्या कितनी-कितनी है;

(ग) क्या इस अधिनियम के अंतर्गत सामुदायिक दावों पर भी विचार किया गया है;

(घ) यदि हां, तो देश में ग्रामवासियों से कितने सामुदायिक दावे प्राप्त हुए हैं और उनमें से कितने दावों को स्वीकृति प्रदान की गई है; और

(ङ) इस संबंध में प्राप्त दावों का राज्य-वार ब्यौरा क्या है?

जनजातीय कार्य मंत्री (श्री वी. किशोर चन्द्र देव) : (क) से (ङ) एक विवरण सभा पटल पर रखा जाता है।

विवरण

(क) और (ख) वन अधिकार अधिनियम, 2006 उन वन निवासी अनुसूचित जनजातियों तथा अन्य परंपरागत वन निवासियों को मान्यता प्रदान करता है और उन्हें वन अधिकार एवं वन भूमि के कब्जे का अधिकार देता है जो पीढ़ियों से ऐसे वनों में रह रहे हैं, परंतु जिनके अधिकारों को दर्ज नहीं किया जा सका है। राज्य/संघ राज्य क्षेत्र सरकारों से प्राप्त सूचना के अनुसार, 31 अक्टूबर, 2012 तक इस अधिनियम के तहत कुल 32,36,539 दावे दायर किये गये थे तथा 12,75,570 अधिकार पत्र संवितरित कर दिये गये थे। इसके अलावा, कुल 14,603 अधिकार पत्र संवितरण हेतु तैयार थे। 31 अक्टूबर, 2012 तक इस अधिनियम के तहत संवितरित अधिकार पत्रों के राज्य-वार ब्यौरे संलग्न विवरण-1 में दिये गये हैं (नीचे देखिए)। मंत्रालय इस अधिनियम के