

what is happening. I am raising it because the situation is very, very serious. I am not joining the national perspective.

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी: उपसभापति जी, मेरा अनुरोध यह है कि 6.30 बज गए हैं। चूंकि काफी लोगों ने काफी बातें उठाई हैं और उस पर मिनिस्टर साहब भी कॉम्प्रिहेंसिव जवाब देना चाहेंगे और उन्हें देना भी चाहिए।

सर, मेरे ख्याल से आज नहीं, बल्कि कल इस पर पूरा जवाब करवाइए। अगर जवाब पीसमील में होगा, तो अच्छा भी नहीं लगेगा। मेरा आपसे यही अनुरोध है।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If that is the sense of the House, that is fine.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): Sir, I have all the answers. I am ready. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay then; everybody says that the reply would be tomorrow.

Now, Statement by Minister, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Statement on India's stand in the WTO

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, thank you very much. I know, it has been a long day, but I seek through you the indulgence of all Members because it is a written paper with detailed narration of how the whole process has been post-Bali. So, kindly permit me to give this detailed reply.

I am making this intervention in the House today in order to place before the hon. Members the facts relating to the stand taken by India in the World Trade Organization (WTO) recently.

The Bali Ministerial Declaration was adopted on 7th December, 2013 on conclusion of the Ninth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Bali. Ministerial Decisions were adopted on ten issues relating to the Doha Development Agenda which is the agenda for the unfinished Doha Round of trade negotiations, underway in the WTO since 2001.

Amongst these Ministerial Decisions, two are of particular significance — the Ministerial Decision for an Agreement on Trade Facilitation and the Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes.

[Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman]

The Trade Facilitation Agreement is basically aimed at greater transparency and simplification of Customs procedures, use of electronic payments and risk management techniques and faster clearances at ports. We have autonomously taken several similar measures such as the 'Indian Customs Single Window Project' announced in the Budget 2014-15 to facilitate trade, under which importers and exporters will be able to lodge documents at a single point, reducing interface with Governmental agencies, dwell time and the cost of doing business.

The Protocol of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) was to be adopted by 31st July, 2014 by the WTO. After this, the Agreement would automatically come into force from 31st July, 2015 if ratified by two-thirds of the members of the WTO.

In contrast to their efforts on Trade Facilitation in the WTO, some developed countries have been reluctant to engage on other issues.

Seeing the resistance to taking forward the other Decisions, the apprehension of developing countries was that once the process of bringing the Trade Facilitation Agreement into force was completed, other issues would be ignored, including the important issue of a permanent solution on subsidies on account of public stockholding for food security purposes.

India, therefore, took the stand that till there is an assurance of commitment to find a permanent solution on public stockholding and on all other Bali deliverables, including those for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), it would be difficult to join the consensus on the Protocol of Amendment for the Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Without a permanent solution, public stockholding programmes in India and other developing countries will be hampered by the present ceiling on domestic support which is pegged at 10 per cent of the value of production and is wrongly considered as trade-distorting subsidy to farmers under existing WTO rules. The existence of such a subsidy element is determined by comparing present day administered prices with fixed reference prices of the 1986-88 period which is unrealistic.

The problem is a very real one. Developing countries are finding themselves hamstrung by the existing rules in running their food stockholding and domestic food aid programmes. The developed world too had market price support programmes and was able to move away from such support -- though not fully even now -- because of their deep pockets. This is not possible for developing countries. It is important for developing countries to be able to guarantee some minimum returns to their poor farmers so that they are able to produce enough for themselves and for domestic food

security. Developed countries continue to have large entitlements to provide support to farmers. These would have been cut in the Doha Development Round which unfortunately remains unfinished. Had this Round, which has development at its core, concluded as per agreed timelines and its development agenda, the world would have had an outcome in a single undertaking in which competing interests could have been balanced. Today, developing countries are fighting to keep the negotiations focussed on development against the single-minded mercantilist focus of most of the rich developed world on market access issues.

Overall balance is important even in a limited package of outcomes. The Bali outcomes were negotiated as a package and must be concluded as such.

It is regrettable indeed that today the WTO is unable to agree even to fast track negotiations on an issue of such importance to millions of subsistence farmers across the developing world, while the rich world can continue to subsidize their farmers unabatedly.

The matter came up for discussion in the margins of the BRICS Trade Ministers meeting in Brazil on 14th July and the G20 Trade Ministers meeting in Sydney on 19th July. It was also raised by the representatives of some countries in their interactions with the Indian Government. On each occasion, I explained that India is a signatory to the Bali Decisions, including Trade Facilitation and is not standing in the way of its implementation, but is seeking an equal level of commitment and progress in working on the issue of public stockholding which affects the country's livelihood and food security. A permanent solution on food security is a must for us and we cannot wait endlessly in a state of uncertainty while the WTO engages in an academic debate on the subject of food security which is what some developed countries seem to be suggesting before they are ready to engage on this important issue.

Food security is a humanitarian concern especially in these times of uncertainty and volatility. Issues of development and food security are critical to a vast swathe of humanity and cannot be sacrificed to mercantilist considerations.

Developing countries such as India must have the freedom to use food reserves to feed their poor without the threat of violating any international obligations. This is our sovereign right. It is our duty to protect our citizens' fundamental rights to life and livelihood.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Indian population. In a country of the size of India with 60 per cent of the population dependent on a relatively unremunerative agricultural sector, we cannot give up administered prices. This is the only way we

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can procure food for the Public Distribution System, PDS, the central pillar on which our efforts to ensure food security rest. Public stockholding is a widely used means to ensure food security in many developing countries where agriculture is largely rainfed.

We have to look after both consumer and producer interests. We have to enable our people to live a life of dignity by ensuring access to an adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices.

On 25th July 2014, India made a statement in the WTO General Council conveying, inter alia, that the adoption of the Trade Facilitation Protocol must be postponed till a permanent solution on the public stockholding for food security is found.

India offered suggestions on the procedure to be followed in order to ensure time-bound delivery of an outcome on public stockholding for food security. We also urged that a similar approach be adopted on all other elements of the Bali Package notably the LDC issues.

The integrity of India's stand is reflected in our unwavering efforts to offer a way forward in the face of criticism. Even on 31st July 2014, India offered a way to achieve not only a permanent solution on the issue of public stockholding for food security but also to implement the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the agreed timeframe as well as deliver favourable outcomes for the LDCs. We have offered practical suggestions for the way forward. The issue of a permanent solution on public stockholding is a simple one that can be addressed very easily as there are already several proposals on the table. A solution to this simple problem will be a tremendous relief for millions of farmers and poor consumers.

However, despite India's efforts, our concerns were not satisfactorily addressed.

The Director General of the WTO reported to an informal meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee on 31 July 2014 that a solution could not be found to bridge the gap.

The General Council meeting was, thereafter, formally declared closed without adopting the trade facilitation protocol.

India stood firm on its demands despite immense pressure. The Government of India is committed to protecting the interests of our farmers against all odds.

Our farmers work in extremely adverse conditions, most of them at the mercy of the vagaries of the monsoon, aggravated today by climate change. For farmers in

many developing countries farming is a subsistence activity, not a commercial one. We are committed to their welfare and I am grateful for the support and understanding extended by farmers' organizations in this cause.

I must also thank hon. Members of Parliament, many civil society groups and academicians who have lent their voice in support of the Government's efforts to ensure a fair deal.

It is evident from the expressions of support that India's stand has resonated across the world and I take this opportunity to also thank the countries that have stood by India in the WTO.

India is an unwavering votary of the multilateral trading system and we reiterate our commitment to the WTO. We continue to believe that it is in the best interest of developing countries, especially the poorest, most marginalized ones among them and we are determined to work to strengthen this institution. The timely correction of any imbalances or anomalies in the working of the system or its rules is critical to ensure that the WTO works impartially and fairly in the interest of all its Members and not just a select few.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, and hon. Members, I am confident that India will be able to persuade the WTO Membership to appreciate the sensitivities of India and other developing countries and see their way to taking this issue forward in a positive spirit. This would be a major contribution by this institution towards meeting the global challenge of food insecurity and would convey a strong message that the WTO is genuinely committed to the cause of development. Thank you very much.

SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Sir, we have expressed our concerns earlier also. It is a very detailed statement. We need clarifications, I think, tomorrow. Therefore, you please fix a time for seeking clarifications. It is an important issue.

DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM: It is an elaborate statement. ...*(Interruptions)*.. We need clarifications. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी: उपसभापति जी, मंत्री जी के इस विस्तृत बयान से बहुत सारे गंभीर सवाल उठे हैं और विभिन्न राजनीतिक दलों के तमाम माननीय सदस्यगण इसके ऊपर स्पष्टीकरण चाहेंगे। चूंकि मामला गंभीर है, इसलिए स्पष्टीकरण के लिए पर्याप्त समय होना चाहिए। भारत के कृषि और ट्रेडिंग, दोनों क्षेत्रों से इसका गंभीर वास्ता है, इसलिए मैं आपसे अनुरोध करता हूँ कि इसे कल किसी समय, बारह बजे के बाद जब भी बाप टीक समझें, इसको ले लें। पेपर्स ले करने के बाद इसके ऊपर स्पष्टीकरण ले लीजिए।

SHRI D. RAJA: Sir, it is a very serious issue. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री अविनाश राय खन्ना: सर, कल मीटिंग में डिसाइड कर लेंगे।

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: It should be decided here. ...*(Interruptions)*..

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी: इसको यहीं डिसाइड कर लें, तो ज्यादा अच्छा होगा। अभी समय तय हो जाएगा, तो सभी लोग तैयार होकर आ जाएंगे।

SHRI D. RAJA: Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, firstly, we should thank the Minister for such a detailed statement. We should thank, we should appreciate her. But it is a five page statement. It is a very important issue relating to our negotiations in WTO and protection of interests in WTO. So, I think, we can have clarifications at a convenient time tomorrow sometime.

DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM: Sir, the hon. Minister has made a very elaborate statement. We want to seek certain clarifications. It can be fixed for tomorrow. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. No problem. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Sir, I remember, when we had made a statement last time, the clarifications continued for one-and-a-half day. I am not suggesting that it is going to be like that. But this is a very important subject. It is for the first time that the matter has been brought to the Parliament and the Parliament has been informed. We appreciate the statement. But, at the same time, all the Members feel that clarifications are required, given the importance of the matter. We need a ruling from the Chair. It should be taken up as the first item after the Question Hour, once the Papers to be Laid on the Table are over, unless and until there is a Zero Hour.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. I want Government's view on this. There is no doubt that there should be clarifications. This is a suo motu statement and there would be clarifications. The only thing to decide is 'when'. The Chair cannot give a ruling in this regard. But I can say there will be clarifications. The time has to be decided in consultation with the Government. ...*(Interruptions)*...

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी: महोदय, मेरा केवल इतना अनुरोध है कि कल हमें मिनिस्ट्री ऑफ विमेन एंड चाइल्ड डेवलपमेंट की डिमांड्स पर चर्चा करनी है और वह दोपहर बाद दो बजे शुरू होगी, तो हमारे पास केवल 12 बजे से 1 बजे के बीच का समय उपलब्ध होगा, तभी ये क्लैरिफिकेशंस लिए जा सकते हैं। इसीलिए मैंने यह कहा कि अगर आप उचित समझें, सब लोग उचित समझें तो इसे कल 12 और 1 बजे के बीच में ले लें। ...*(व्यवधान)*...

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: Sir, tomorrow Short Duration Discussion is also there. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: See, there is a problem. Tomorrow, there is a Short Duration Discussion also. What is the Government's stand?

श्री अविनाश राय खन्ना: सर, सुबह हमें बैठना है, उस समय हम डिसाइड कर लेंगे।
...(व्यवधान)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We agree that clarifications would be there, but time would be decided tomorrow. ...(Interruptions)...

श्री सत्यव्रत चतुर्वेदी: सर, अगर आप टाइम बाद में डिसाइड करना चाहें तो हमें इसमें कोई आपत्ति नहीं है, वह आपका अधिकार क्षेत्र है। हमारा केवल इतना कहना है कि इसके लिए पर्याप्त समय मिलना चाहिए ताकि इस मुद्दे पर लोग अपने क्लैरिफिकेशंस अच्छे तरीके से पूछ सकें।
...(व्यवधान)...

SHRI AVINASH RAI KHANNA: We are ready.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: My experience is that it cannot be over in one hour. So, we can fix a time tomorrow. I hope, the Government also agrees to that. So, there will be clarifications and the exact time will be decided tomorrow. ...(Interruptions)...

It will be tomorrow. We can postpone the other discussions. The House is supreme to decide.

Now, we shall take up Special Mentions.

SPECIAL MENTIONS — *Contd.*

Need to bring reforms in labour laws so as to protect interests of migrant labourers

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Anang Uday Singh. Do you want to read? I think, you can lay it. What is the point of reading ?

SHRI A.U. SINGH DEO (Odisha): Sir, poor labour migration conditions and obstacles in their access to shelter, education, healthcare and food are fundamental problems relating to labour migration.

Labour contractors, *i.e.*, Sardars, give large advances to labourers, thereafter exploiting them by forcing them to work in brick kilns in appalling conditions and physically harming them.

In a recent event in Kalahnadi District, two migrant labourers' – Jialu Nial and Nilambar Dhangdamajhi – hands were chopped off. An advance of ₹14,000 was given by the Sardar to 12 labourers to work in a brick kiln in Andhra Pradesh. When forcibly being taken to work in a brick kiln in Chhattisgarh instead, ten migrant labourers resisted and escaped. Two, who failed to escape, were taken captive; tortured, and their right hands were chopped off.