

श्री सभापति: वह मैं देख लूंगा। प्रश्न संख्या 62।

Merger of Mid-Day Meal Programme with S.S.A.

***62. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY:** Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have implemented Mid-Day Meal programme in the schools in various States; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government propose to merge Mid-Day Meal programme with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. The Mid-Day Meal Programme is being implemented for children at primary stage in schools run by Government and Local Bodies, Govt.-aided schools and Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education centres.

(b) A proposal is being examined.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, for implementing the Mid-day Meal Programme through the State Governments, the Government of India allotted Rs. 1,675 crores for the year 2004-05 and Rs. 3,010 crores for the year 2005-06. But, for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, an amount of Rs. 7,165 crores have been allotted. It is for this reason that the implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Programme by various States is not being done in a proper way. The States are implementing it through various agencies; like, in some States, it is done through the Education Department, in some States, it is carried out by the Social Welfare Department and in other States, it is done through various other Departments of the State Government. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether his Ministry is demanding more funds for implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. This is first part of my supplementary. I would also like to know whether the Government would like to have uniform implementation of the scheme by one agency in each State instead of giving it to various agencies by various State Governments. The Government of India may issue guidelines in this regard.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, at the moment, there is no proposal to immediately ask for more money because the money provided is being utilised, and I don't see any necessity straightway. So far as the guidelines are concerned, the guidelines are there. The States have to follow them.

If there is any specific instance given where these guidelines have been violated, I will certainly, look into it.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, my second supplementary is this. The merger of the two schemes, namely, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Mid-Day Meal Schemes has been opposed in the State Education Secretaries' Conference which was called by the hon. Minister because they felt that it would not be giving thrust to the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, if both the schemes were clubbed together. Sir, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Mid-Day Meal Scheme are constitutional requirements. But the logistics involved and the modalities are different for both the schemes. Therefore, I would like to have a categorical assurance from the hon. Minister that both the schemes would not be clubbed together. I am asking this because it appears that there is pressure from the Secretariat for clubbing the schemes under one head. If these two are clubbed, then, the importance of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme will be diluted. Therefore, I want the hon. Minister to give an assurance in this House, that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme will be implemented separately.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: The fact is that the issue of merger arose out of a speech delivered by the hon. Prime Minister at a meeting of the Committee. Since the comment was made by the Prime Minister at a meeting of the Committee. Since the comment was made by the Prime Minister, the whole issue came under scrutiny, and we thought that it would be better that the States looked into that and then we formulated a policy. Twenty-one States have disapproved of it, and the others are also in the process of forming their views. We will not change the pattern, as it exists today unless we examine all these aspects. It is only then that a decision will be taken.

श्री एस.एस. अहलुवालिया: सभापति जी, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहूंगा कि यह अच्छी तरह से अवगत हो गया है कि "मिड डे मील" प्रोग्राम पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट में बहुत दिनों से एक केस चल रहा है। "मिड डे मील" में जितने घोटाले, जो अनियमितताएं हो रही हैं या जो कुछ हो रहा है, उसमें हर एक राज्य के लिए एक अलग मोनिटरिंग कमेटी बनाई है। क्या प्रधानमंत्री महोदय ने अपना भाषण देते वक्त सुप्रीम कोर्ट की किसी टिप्पणी को ध्यान में रखा था? क्या वाकई विभाग ने, जैसाकि मेरे पूर्व प्रश्नकर्त्ता ने कहा कि अगर यह "सर्व शिक्षा अभियान" से जोड़ दिया जाएगा तो इसका जो महत्व है, वह खत्म हो जाएगा या इसका अस्तित्व खत्म हो जाएगा, क्या इसको जोड़ने की भी कोई कोशिश है? अगर कोशिश है तो मैं मंत्री महोदय

से जानना चाहूंगा कि सुप्रीम कोर्ट की इस पर जो टाइम टू टाइम टिप्पणी हुई है, अभी भी यह केस लंबित है, क्या आपने उसे देखा और देखकर कोई विचार किया है?

श्री अर्जुन सिंह: सभापति जी, सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के बारे में यह बात सही है कि मैंने खुद तो उसे नहीं देखा है, लेकिन उस फैसले को लेकर जो सवाल उठे थे, उन पर विचार भी हुआ है और यह मर्जर वाला जो क्वेश्चन है, मैंने पहले ही कहा कि इस पर हम तब तक कोई फैसला नहीं लेंगे, जब तक कि सभी प्रदेश सरकारों की राय हमारे सामने नहीं आ जाएगी, क्योंकि इसको संचालित तो उन्हें ही करना है। हमारी तरफ से ऐसी कोई राय नहीं है कि मर्जर किया जाए, लेकिन जो सबकी राय होगी, उसके आधार पर हम काम करेंगे। जहां तक माननीय सदस्य ने सुप्रीम कोर्ट के फैसले के बारे में कहा है, मैं उसे मंगाकर देखूंगा और जिन-जिन बातों में सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने संकेत दिए हैं, उनकी स्थिति आज क्या है, उनकी समीक्षा करके सदन को सूचित करूंगा।

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Hon. Chairperson. I want to ask the Minister, through you, whether he is aware of the great difficulties being faced by women who are expected to cook the mid-day meals and the fact that there is no standardised procedure as far as their payments are concerned, as far as their service conditions are concerned, and since they are such a component of this very good programme of the Government of India, whether the Minister can give an assurance that he will take some proactive measures to ensure that injustices women are facing will be addressed.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, it is a fact that in most of the States women are involved in this. And it is done at the local level. And we do not have a unified cadre of women who are doing this service. But if there is any report about anything done which is not proper, we will certainly look into it. But I cannot give that kind of categorical assurance which has been asked for because this is a very diversified scheme and people are involved at various levels.

SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Mr. Chairman, Sir, after the 73rd and the 74th Amendments of the Constitution, more and more powers are vested in panchayats and urban bodies. There is a school of thought which believes that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be implemented through Panchayats in villages and through municipalities in urban areas. Will the Government consider this proposal or suggestion?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I could not hear what the hon. Member said.

SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Sir, let me repeat. After the 73rd and 74th Amendments, more and more powers have been conferred on panchayats and urban bodies. There are suggestions that the Mid-Day Meal Scheme should be implemented through village panchayats in rural areas and through municipalities in urban areas. Is Government considering such a proposal?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: This suggestion, or, whatever the hon. Member is alluding to, is already a part of the guidelines and, wherever it is possible, it is being done through panchayats in villages and through municipalities in municipal areas.

SHRIMATI PREMA CARIAPPA: Sir, the Government of Karnataka has requested for additional quantity of rice at BPL rate to feed additional 19.66 lakhs of students of 6th and 7th standards. I would like to know the status of this request of the Government of Karnataka.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, I would like to have a notice for answering such a question.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Sir, this a unique programme, no doubt. But I would like to know from the hon. Minister the review mechanism that the Government of India has regarding the quality and the continuity, since it is not implemented during the weekends and holidays. What is the thinking of the Government?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: This is a continuous programme.

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: No, Sir, he has not followed. (*Interruptions*) During weekends, on Saturdays and Sundays, it is not implemented; and during vacations also it is not implemented. It is basically meant for children coming from rural weaker sections who are studying in Government schools. So, I would like to know whether the Government is thinking in terms of implementing it throughout the calender year.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: This is a scheme under which mid-day meal is provided to students who come to school, or who are in schools. Well, giving it to students who are not in the schools...

SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: No, Sir. No, Sir. Sir, my question is, it is not implemented on Saturdays and Sundays.

(Interruptions) It is not implemented on holidays and during vacations. Sir, in Tamil Nadu, it is being implemented throughout the calendar year. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government of India would assist the State Governments in implementing this programme throughout the calendar year for the benefit of those students who are studying in Government schools. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, how can we provide meal to students when the school is not running? *(Interruptions)*

*63. [The questions (Shrimati Vanga Geetha) was absent. For answer vide page 27.]

Elementary education and SSA in NE States

*64. DR. KARAN SINGH:†

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to strengthen the feedback gathering system on the progress of elementary education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in North-Eastern States;

(b) whether under the existing funding arrangement for elementary education and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Union and State Governments, contribution ratio has been 75 and 25 per cent respectively;

(c) whether during the last two years some degree of stability was brought in NE States; and

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to achieve progress of elementary education and SSA in these States?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir, implementation of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme has improved in the North-Eastern States, in the last two years.

(d) The Central Government has provided timely financial and technical support to the North Eastern States for the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Karan Singh.