

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Thursday, July 18, 1991/Asadha 27,
1913 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Draft National Policy on Agriculture

+

*81. SHRI ATAL BIHARI
VAJPAYEE:

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Draft National Policy on Agriculture is still under the consideration of the Government;

(b) whether the Draft Policy has been circulated to the State Governments and the Agricultural Universities to elicit their views;

(c) if so, the response of the State Governments/Universities thereto;

(d) the likely date by which the Government propose to introduce this policy; and

(e) when was such policy last framed and what has been its impact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN): (a) to (d) A draft of an Agricultural Policy Resolution formulated in March, 1991 had been circulated to all the State Governments and U.Ts and Agricultural Universities for eliciting their comments. Five States/U.Ts and 7 Agricultural Universities have sent their comments. After the receipt of comments from the State Governments

further action will be taken.

(e) No comprehensive Agricultural Policy Resolution has been placed before the Parliament in the recent past.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, to date, a National Policy on Agriculture has not been brought either before the House or the country. We always say that our country is primarily an agricultural country and agriculture is the largest sector of our economy and that progress in the agricultural sector is the key to the economic development of our country. It is ironic that while we have an industrial policy, a labour policy, a gold policy, but there is no such policy on agriculture. The Agriculture Minister himself is a very reputed farmer, so much so that he has even been adorned with the title of 'Krishi Pandit'. Does he consider the delay in formulation of a National Policy on Agriculture proper? In this regard, I would also like to say that when the draft of the Agricultural Policy has been circulated to all the State Governments, Union Territories and Agricultural Universities for eliciting their comments, the Government could have also placed a copy of the same on the Table of the House so as to make it a topic of public debate and also to make the hon. Members aware of its contents.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has rightly said that the country entirely depends on agriculture for its well being and that the country has been able to save its economy from crises and has earned a reputation for itself everywhere, all because of agriculture. The hon. Member made a reference to the Agricultural Policy in his speech. Yes, we have not been able to bring forward a comprehensive Agricultural Policy but it is not true that there was no such policy or we did not have any such policy earlier.

All work is carried on the basis of a policy, but unfortunately, we have not been able to give a concrete shape to our Agricultural Policy. Therefore, it may be said that the main points of the draft national policy on Agriculture have been formulated after much deliberations. This draft has been circulated, so that it could be finalised on the basis of the comments that we receive. That final draft would certainly be placed before the House. It is a public document. There is nothing confidential about it. It has been circulated to all the State Governments and Agricultural Universities. There is nothing to suppress about it.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA

Copies of the draft policy should also be distributed among the Members.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR We will definitely do it, that is no problem (*Interjections*). The policy of our party in this regard has undoubtedly influenced the formulation of this draft policy. I would like to repeat that we had specifically made a mention of it in our election manifesto.

[*English*]

It is from the Manifesto of the Indian National Congress for the Lok Sabha election 1991. It refers to package pronouncement from the former Prime Minister. In this, it has been stated that a comprehensive strategy will be formulated and implemented to ensure coordination of agricultural development with conservation of the environment, afforestation, wasteland development, water resources management, forest land and common property resource management including grazing and community lands. And the following items which are also covered in the draft Agricultural Price Resolution circulated to States are:

expansion of allocation of bank loans and credit for agriculture;

strengthening extension services and construction of new godowns and storage facilities.

establishment of agro-based and food processing industries;

promotion of agricultural exports,

high priority to allied activities such as livestock, horticulture etc.

fair and remunerative price for farm produce,

more efficient use of irrigation water and land;

massive thrust for food processing and other agro-processing.

[*Translation*]

Thus it has been included in the manifesto also and I too am personally committed to it. I am prepared to give you the details of all the programmes.

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPA-
NIEE** So, should we take it for granted that the hon. Minister of Agriculture is going to place a copy of the draft National Policy on Agriculture on the Table of the House?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR It is there before one and all. It is not being concealed from anybody. It has been circulated to all the State Governments, Union Territories and Agricultural Universities. Similarly, it would be placed before the House also.

**SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPA-
NIEE** Mr. Speaker, Sir, while formulating the Agricultural Policy, one should take into consideration the relation between the prices of agricultural produce and the prices of goods manufactured in factories. We want to give remunerative prices to the farmers but it has been observed that while prices of agricultural produce are hiked up at a very low pace, the prices of articles of daily use, manufactured by factories, increase by leaps and bounds every other day. If we cannot bring about a parity between the above two prices, the farmer will continue to suffer losses. I would like to know whether this aspect has

been taken into consideration while preparing the draft Agricultural Policy and what has been its outcome?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR We will definitely do it I too have been stressing the point all along which you have raised now We will have to work out a ratio between them. It has to be ensured that there is proper co-relation between them. What is the difference between the rate at which the farmer purchases and the rate at which he sells. I hope special attention in this regard would be paid while framing a new policy and implementing it

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPA-YEE There is an Agricultural Prices Commission, but there is nothing like Cost Price Commission to monitor the prices of industrial goods. (*Interruptions*) It is a bureau and the reports of that bureau are not even placed before the House

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR If that is the case, it ought to be looked into

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH: In a vast country like ours, where there are many agro-climatic zones, agriculture is a vast subject. Owing to this very reason, National Agriculture Commission was set up about two decades ago and it was on the basis of its reports that the existing policy was formulated. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government proposes to set up a National Agriculture Commission to go into all the aspects of a vast subject like agriculture.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: At present, we are doing the first thing. We have elicited opinions from all concerned. As soon as they are received we will consider them.

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is why I would like to submit that unless a separate Commission is set up for this to go into all the aspects of such a wide subject it will serve no purpose. Earlier, it

was done and Shri Ram Niwas Mirda was one of the Members of the committee that had been constituted for this purpose.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: No, it was Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha.

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH: Anyway, that Commission had presented a comprehensive report, but in the changed circumstances, it has become essential to set up another commission. Will the Government please consider it?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: No, it is not necessary now. We will formulate the policy on the basis of the opinions we have called for

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there can be no two opinions that ever since independence, the agriculture sector has been neglected and I am sure that the hon. Minister will also agree with me in this regard I don't want to go into the reasons behind it I would like to tell the Government only this much that the National Front Government during its tenure had taken a decision to observe the next ten years that is upto the year 2000 A.D., as the 'Decade of Agriculture' and it was envisaged that the lot of the farmers will be improved and development of agriculture in rural areas etc. will be ensured during this period. I would like to know whether the Government would implement the above decision to observe the next ten years as the 'Decade of Agriculture' and take steps to boost agricultural production and improve the lot of farmers

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: The agriculture sector forms the very foundation of our economy and if the country wants to achieve self-reliance in economy, agriculture should not be neglected. I am very optimistic in this regard as we have with us all the essentials, God's gift, nature's benevolence and the indomitable spirit of our farmers. We shall certainly succeed in making our country self-sufficient and self-reliant and we shall

encourage them with these objectives in our mind. There is no doubt about it ...*(Interruptions)*. ...

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, what I want to know is whether the Government will pursue the decision of the previous Government to observe the next ten years as the 'Decade of Agriculture' or abandon it?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we will do our duty.

"Jo diya karte the dava-e-darde dil,
Ve apni dukan badha gaye"
(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI SOBHANA DRESWARA RAO VADDE: Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the draft he referred in the answer said to have been formulated in March, 1991, was the same as the one prepared by the standing advisory committee on agriculture headed by Shri Sharad Joshi or was a different one.

I would also like to know whether the Government will restructure its priorities. I hope when Mr. Balram Jakhar is the Minister of Agriculture the priorities will be restructured to give first and foremost priority and allocate funds to maximise the production as well as export from the agriculture sector.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: It was not that committee which you were referring. It was a report prepared by the Department or the Secretaries concerned. Then, it was a sort of a marriage between the two. That has been circulated. I assure that the rest will be done.

SHRIMATI BASAVA RAJESWARI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know whether it has come to the notice of the Government that due to hike in inputs like fertilisers, seeds, pesticides, labour, power tariff, the

cost of production of various agricultural commodities has gone very high, and the farmer is asking for a remunerative price.

On the other side, the consumer is asking for the supply at a cheaper rate wherein the Government has to come forward to subsidise. It is very difficult.

Is the Government seriously thinking of removing all the duties and taxes on agricultural inputs so that the farmer will grow at a cheaper rate and the consumer will also get at a cheaper rate?

MR SPEAKER: This is about the taxes.

SHRIMATI BASAVA RAJESWARI: No, this is a policy matter.

MR SPEAKER: All right.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: We can answer. But let there be a question. I will reply fully well on that score.

[Translation]

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Minister said just now, the Government will be formulating a National Policy on Agriculture and I also agree with him, but I would like to know as to who formulates this policy? Are they the people who sweat and toil and plough the field braving the vagaries of weather? A great injustice is being done to the farmers. The people who do not have basic knowledge of agriculture and are not aware of the problems of the farmers are entrusted with the task of formulating policies. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether views of the farmers as to what are their real difficulties will be called for and the prices of their produce will be fixed accordingly ensuring at the same time that items of their daily necessity are made available to them at reasonable rates. Will the hon. Minister ensure that these points would be considered while formulating the policy?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR Mr Speaker Sir I can assure one thing I myself have worked in the fields and my hands are a testimony to it
(*Interruptions*)

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA I did not want to know about the hon Minister I was enquiring about the policy (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR I express what I think You are right We shall formulate a policy only after eliciting the opinion of the farmers those who work in the field It would not be dealt with in a casual manner

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA Mr Speaker Sir I have doubts about the reply given by the hon Minister Our agricultural policy is totally one sided Only the interests of the big farmers who extract work from labourers are kept in mind Our policies do not protect the interests of those who actually work in the fields I would insist that the steps taken for land reforms

MR SPEAKER Mr Bhogendra Jha you may please come to your question

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA I am doing just that At the meeting of the State Revenue Ministers held in 1986 and 1987 it was unanimously decided to expedite the land reform process including delimitation distribution of surplus land ownership rights to the tiller distribution of surplus lands donated during the 'Bhoodan Movement' protection of the common land set aside for public utility etc Will the Government accelerate the land reform process and implement these decisions under the national policy on agriculture and will it ensure the transfer of ownership rights into the hands of the tiller?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps the hon Member has not gone through the Land Ceiling Act Had he gone through it

he must have been aware of the number of people required for cultivating a piece of land If the production is to be increased a lot of work has to be done even if it is a 15 or 2 acres of land Whoever contributes to farming in my opinion is a farmer and their interests will always be uppermost in our minds We will be able to protect the overall interests of the farmers only if we adopt such an attitude If we don't look after the interests of those who work in the fields it will all be an exercise in futility (*Interruptions*)

DR I AXMI NARAYAN PAN DEYA Mr Speaker Sir keeping in view the prevailing financial crisis I would like to know from the hon Minister whether there is a possibility of reduction in subsidy on fertilizer or its being withdrawn (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR Mr Speaker Sir this is something which future would unfold how can I say anything about it The Finance Minister may be able to comment (*Interruptions*)

DR I AXMI NARAYAN PAN DEYA Mr Speaker Sir the hon Minister has said in the other House that subsidy cannot be reduced in this way (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR Mr Speaker Sir since it is a question for the Finance Minister to answer I cannot reply However there is no contradiction in whatever I have said I had said in the past and I am still maintaining it that we should not reduce subsidy If it is done I shall have to give them full compensation We shall have to safeguard the interests of the farmers no matter how it is done

Talks with Nepal on Multi-purpose Projects

*97 **SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA** Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state

(a) whether bilateral talks between India and Nepal with regard to con-