

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday, July 20, 1998/Asadha 29, 1920 (Saka)

(The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock)

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

[English]

SHRI VAIKO : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is high time, the Government of India should notify the scheme on Cauvery and submit it before the Supreme Court. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Vaiko, you can raise it after Question Hour please.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Women in Anganwadi Centres

*462. SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of women working in the Anganwadi Centres and facilities being provided by the Government to them;

(b) whether the Government are contemplating to regularise the services of these women; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI) : (a) As per information available with us approximately 8.28 lakh women are working as honorary Anganwadi Workers and Helpers in Anganwadi Centres in the country. Anganwadi Workers are given an honorarium between Rs. 438-563/- per month and helpers Rs. 260/- per month. Besides, they are entitled to maternity leave two times, Casual leave of 20 days per year, Travelling Allowance/ Daily Allowance for meetings etc.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the amount of honorarium mentioned in the reply is quite meagre. In the present price rise it is almost impossible to make them work for such a trivial amount of honorarium. I would like to know from the hon'ble Minister whether the Government would like to raise the honorarium, daily allowances and travelling allowances of the Anganwadi workers? I would also like to know the amount of money being spent on Anganwadi Programme every year?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : This question relates to women. Today I am going to allow only the women members.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MOTILAL VOHRA : You must allow male members also.

MR. SPEAKER : After women members, I will allow male members also.

[Translation]

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : The condition of Anganwadi workers is quite deplorable and the honorarium being given to them is meagre. We are in contact with various State Governments on this issue. States of Tamilnadu, Haryana and Maharashtra, have already increased the amount of honorarium. In Tamilnadu it has been revised to Rs. 842 and Rs. 400, that is Rs. 400 for the helpers and Rs. 842 for the Anganwadi workers. Similarly in Maharashtra, the honorarium of the Anganwadi workers and the helpers has been increased by Rs. 175 and Rs. 125 respectively. In Himachal Pradesh and Haryana also it has been increased by more than Rs. 100. On 22nd and 23rd July, we have called a conference of the Ministers of all the States who are looking after the department of women and child welfare. We are going to hold a discussion with them in this regard and then we will work in this direction according to the consensus evolved in the conference.

SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question has not been answered completely. I wanted to know the amount being spent on this scheme every year?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : In all Rs. 544.8 crores are being spent on it every year.

SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this scheme is working effectively in some States but in

some States it has just proved to be a white elephant, it just turned out to be ineffective there, nothing has yet been done there. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government will review the mode of working of this scheme and would like to introduce some changes in order to improve it? Will the Government implement some action plan to make the present system of Anganwadi more objective?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : The question of improvement in the programmes operating under this plan and in their working is quite a comprehensive one. These workers do a variety of work but work relating to education and health are the main items of work. These women perform various important work like providing knowledge about complete nutritional diet, ante-natal and post-natal care, inoculation, child care programmes etc. This organisation, was started as a voluntary organisation but now work load is increasing gradually on these workers and there is a need to form an integrated plan in consultation with the Ministers concerned because their field of work also includes medicines, education and it also includes the work related to the development. Therefore, it is necessary that all the concerned Ministries should sit together and decide to take some steps to make it more effective.

We have received many suggestions in this regard. Some suggestions were also given by the leaders of opposition and I have already told you that we have decided to hold a meeting of the concerned ministers of all the State Governments incharge of these programmes, on 22nd and 23rd of July. We will take steps on the basis of the consensus evolved in that meeting.

[English]

DR. SAROJA V. : Hon Speaker Sir, Anganwadi workers are the grassroot-level functionaries for implementing the ICD Scheme. I appreciate and understand that during the Ninth Five Year Plan, much emphasis has been laid on the social, economic, legal and political arena of women. I also understand that during the Eighth Five Year Plan, there was a ban on increasing the honorarium for the Anganwadi workers. This is a very important programme for the benefit of 8.2 lakh women workers, in three hundred centres throughout the country.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister that during the Ninth Five Year Plan, whether a uniform policy would be adopted throughout the country, because the payment of honorarium and the quality of work differ from State to State. During the meeting on 22nd and 23rd, would the hon. Minister consider increasing the honorarium and also adopting a uniform policy throughout the country for Anganwadi workers?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : As I have already indicated that on the basis of the discussion in that meeting, we would consider all aspects of this programme and the way how we could upgrade and increase their honorarium. All these issues would be discussed. On the basis of the opinion formulated in that meeting, we will form the next policy.

As regards Ninth Plan, when the final document comes, then only I could say what would be the position of this programme in the Ninth Plan.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK : Sir, it was proposed to expand the scope of ICDS. Of course, some States have decided to include adolescent girls in this, that is, girls of the age group of 11 to 18 years, that too, in two phases. That would be done in order to improve the nutritional and health status of girls of this age group, and to provide them the required literacy numerally skills and other skills for earning income.

I would like to know from the hon. Minister, how many Blocks have been covered and how many adolescent girls have been conferred so far. In view of the fact that the Anganwadi workers have take the extra burden of these adolescent girls, along with children of the age group of 0-6 years, and as the hon. Minister has just now stated that they get honorarium because they are not employed staff, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, would he consider the case of these Anganwadi workers for enhancing the honorarium at par with the minimum wage.

If they are not going to increase it at par with the Minimum Wages Act, then will not the Government deviate the minimum wage Act.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, have you understood her supplementary?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : I can understand what she is telling. You see, there is a freeze on ICDS projects. There are only 4,200 blocks in the country.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK : Only for adolescent girls?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : I am coming to that. Then, we are planning to expand this scheme in the Ninth Plan. As regards, Adolescent Girls Scheme, it is presently covering 507 blocks in the country. As regards, your other part of the question, I have already answered it.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Sir, you are giving chance only to the women Members.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes, I am giving chance only to the women Members. After that, I will give chance to the male Members.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Your support should always be there for them.

SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Their target is only for 33 per cent reservation. But you have given them hundred per cent reservation.

MR. SPEAKER : At least, some representation should be given in the Question Hour also for the women Members.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA DEVRAJBHAI CHIKHALIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for allowing women to put forward their views on the issue related to them. The plans made earlier were quite luring but return was not much. Same is the case with this plan. as everybody has said, and I too hold the same view that the salary given for this job is quite meagre and that is why two or three years ago representatives of all the women's organisations had come to Delhi and met the hon'ble Minister. In view of that I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would consider their case for enhancing their salary so that they are not compelled to come here again and again. The hon. Minister has just stated that he is going to hold a meeting. Will the issue of increasing their salaries be the main agenda of that meeting? My second question is that maternity leave given to these women is not adequate. Will the Government consider to increase the period of maternity leave.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : These are two separate questions. We will discuss the problem of Anganwadi workers in the meeting to be held on 22nd and 23rd. I would like to make it clear that the term salary is not applicable to them. This scheme has been started voluntarily, they are not treated as employees or wage-earners. Yes, if their honorarium has to be increased we will discuss the matter in that meeting. We would also discuss as to how could we bring about improvement in the next five year plan. We would formulate our policy on the basis of the views expressed in the meeting

[English]

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Hon. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity. Our Minister for Human Resource has said about the minimum wage in answer to Shrimati Jayanti Patnaik's question. I want

to know whether it is a wage or an allowance. Are you going to give that minimum sum or not? All the Members, both men and women, want to know about that. It is because the question came from Shri Chinmayanand Swami. So, all the male Members also want to know about that. This is Part (a) of my question. The part (b) of my question is, whether the Government has any intention of privatising Anganwadi. If so, how do you think that their interests will be protected?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : There is no intention to privatise Anganwadi. As regards honorarium, we are going to discuss it with all the State Governments in our next meeting on 22nd and 23rd. Only after taking their views, whatever opinion is filtered there, we will come and frame a policy regarding that.

[Translation]

KUMARI VIMALA VERMA : Mr. Speaker, Hon. Minister has admitted that honorarium is very meagre ... (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI AJIT JOGI : We supported the Women's Reservation Bill.

MR. SPEAKER : Now you allow her to ask her supplementary.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : They can raise it; there is no objection.

[Translation]

KUMARI VIMLA VERMA : Mr. Speaker Sir, hon. Minister himself has admitted that honorarium is very meagre and they have to perform many other functions such as the work related to the Deptt. of Health. I would like to ask from the hon. Minister whether he would try to contact the Department of Health and the other departments with which they are concerned and ask them to give them honorarium, so that they may get honorarium at least as per the minimum wages.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Sir, so far as first part of your suggestion is concerned, I will discuss with all those Ministries that they should co-operate in this matter. As regards question of honorarium is concerned, decision can be taken only after discussing it with all the State Governments. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Minister has told that they get honorarium per month and twenty casual leaves every year but the

position is not clear about the maternity leave. I presume that they get maternity leave twice in their service period. But if they need maternity leave for more than two times, because there is a no legal control over it what does the Government do in such cases? Second part of my question is that the Government has decided to close some Anganwadis. The workers in these Anganwadis are trained. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any scheme for these workers so as to adjust them somewhere else?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Sir, so far as maternity leave is concerned, it is granted twice for a period of three months during service period. We do not intend to give it for the third time.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : What will they do in such circumstances?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Leave would not be given to them.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : It is not proper.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : The other thing is that the honorarium is not given according to the Govt. Service. But with regard to your question regarding their future prospects, I would like to tell that in April 1995 Government have decided that 25% vacancies in Government services would be filled up by the women who were working as supervisors. It is written there. Some State Governments have taken initiative in this regard. So far as the future of other literate Anganwadi workers is concerned, we are going to discuss with the State Governments on 22nd and 23rd in this regard.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : But, what decision will you take about granting maternity leave for the third time?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Why you are taking so much interest for the third maternity leave.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : What you will do in such a situation.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : But the circumstances are not under your control.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : But there is no legal bar also.

MR. SPEAKER : No, not like this. Prof. Kurien.

[English]

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving so much importance to this question. In fact, you allowed at least 20 minutes for it. I am sorry to say that the Government is not giving that much importance to this issue.

Look at the reply which the hon. Minister, Dr. Murlu Manohar Joshi, a senior Minister, has given to part (b) of the question. part (b) of the question is, "Whether the Government are contemplating to regularise the services of these women" and the answer given is an emphatic 'No'. This shows the callous attitude of the Government towards such an important issue. Anganwadi workers are more than eight lakhs in number. What is their condition? It is most pathetic. They all come from the below poverty line rural background. And they are doing the most important national reconstruction work, in that they are giving training to the pre-primary children. Let us not gloss over this issue. This is an important issue. So far he has replied to so many supplementaries, but he has not come forward with any action plan from the Government's side.

MR. SPEAKER : You put your supplementary.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : I am just formulating my question.

He is simply saying that there is some meeting and in that they will decide. I am asking a pointed question: Whether the Government has got an action plan with regard to these anganwadi workers; if not, is the Minister prepared to appoint a Committee to look into the conditions of these poorest of the poor workers of the country, our sisters?

If you are prepared to appoint a Committee, please say in this House and give a specific answer.

[Translation]

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : You have raised a question with regard to the plight of women workers but our Government is not responsible for it. This situation has arisen during last 15-16 years. ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA : Please talk like a Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Let him complete.

...*(Interruptions)*

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : I am not yielding.
 ...*(Interruptions)* Shri Vora, I am not yielding.
 ...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

This situation emerged as a result of the policy framed by you. ...*(Interruptions)* As soon as I started getting representations and the leader of opposition talked to me. I immediately decided to hold a meeting and I am going to talk with the State Governments about their plight. What did you do? You did nothing, I have taken initiatives. ...*(Interruptions)* You are responsible for the present position. ...*(Interruptions)* You should introspect yourself. ...*(Interruptions)* We are discussing and also preparing for discussion. ...*(Interruptions)* we are going to hold a meeting. ...*(Interruptions)* we are thinking over it. We have talked with their delegation and the leader of opposition, but you are saying that we are doing nothing. What were you doing?

Norms for Selection of Artists for TV & Radio

*463 DR. MADAN PRASAD JAISWAL : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the eligibility norms for selection of artists for T.V. and Radio;

(b) whether opportunities for the selection of artists are generally cornered by the urban people; and

(c) if so, the measures proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure that artists from the rural and backward areas also get the opportunities to refine their talents?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRIMATI SUSHAMA SWARAJ) :

(a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The artists' posts in Aakashvani & Doordarshan which include categories such as Instrumentalists, Music Composers, Announcers, News readers-cum-Translators, Translators-cum-Announcers etc. are filled up in accordance with the approved/notified Recruitment Rules and instructions issued from time to time.

(b) and (c) Suitability of the candidate is assessed by the duly constituted Selection Committee on the basis of performance of the candidates in the written test/

interview/audition test irrespective of their rural or urban background. After the formation of Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India), these matters are attended to by the Prasar Bharati in accordance with relevant recruitment rules on the subject.

DR. MADAN PRASAD JAISWAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon'ble Minister is an outstanding parliamentarian and an able administrator. I haven't got reply to the main point of my question. My question was what were the measures proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure that artists from rural and backward areas also get the opportunities to refine their talents? The reply in this regard is far from satisfactory because after the implementation of Prasar Bharati the artists from rural areas are not getting due share in the programmes of Akashvani and Doordarshan. I will cite an example in this regard. Shri Bhikhar Thakur a great artist of this country, hailed from rural areas of Bihar. He was an illiterate person. But he was an artist of great calibre. There is not dearth of artists in the rural and backward areas of the country today. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the steps that have been taken to encourage the talented artists from the backward areas of the country and the total number of centres set up in order to select the folk and tribal music for Akashvani and Doordarshan and also whether any fee is being charged from the folk singers belonging to rural areas? This is my question.

SHRIMATI SUSHAMA SWARAJ : Hon'ble Speaker, Sir, the hon'ble member wanted to know whether the talented persons of urban background only are given opportunities to appear on Doordarshan and the people belonging to rural areas are being neglected. I have made it very clear in the reply given that in the selection process suitability of the candidate is assessed on the basis of only written and audition tests, irrespective of their rural or urban background. But, when selection is made in different centres for producing local programmes then their background is definitely considered because local flavour is more in local artists, and, therefore they certainly get selected. Your question was about eligibility norms. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : The guidelines are silent in this regard.

SHRIMATI SUSHAMA SWARAJ : There are no guidelines which distinguish between rural and urban background. The hon. Member's question was regarding the eligibility norms and he wanted to know whether opportunities are only accorded to urban talent and rural talent gets neglected. I have given a factual answer to that and stated that guidelines have not been formulated on the basis of either rural or urban background. Selection procedure is such that suitability of the candidate is