

14.51 hrs.

Title: Combined discussion on the Budget (General) for 2003-2004, Demands for Grants on Account for Budget (General) 2002-2003, Supplementary Demands for Grants of Budget (General) for 2002-2003 and Demands for Excess Grants of Budget (General) for 2000-2001. (Concluded)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Adhir Chowdhary is permitted to lay his speech on the Table of the House.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Our most hon. Finance Minister inherits a versatile mind and also inexhaustible patience. I cannot express my views due to the constraint of time. However, in my paper, I have elaborated the problems of West Bengal and other parts of India. I would request the hon. Finance Minister to utter a few lines so that the people of my State can get a clear picture from him.

MR. SPEAKER: Both hon. Members, that is, Shri R.L. Jalappa and Shri Vinay Kumar Sorake, are allowed to lay their speeches on the Table of the House.

Now, the hon. Finance Minister will reply to the debate on the General Budget.

*SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY : Mr. Chairman, Sir, our Hon. Finance Minister has presented his maiden Budget proposals by employing all his manoeuvring skills while treading through the meandering path macro and micro economics, out to manage any major mishap of our economy. Nonetheless he has failed miserably. He has pleased none, but a few industrial houses and the worst victim of this year's Budget is our farming community, who have scathed mercilessly by the cut-throat Budget proposals.

Sir, agriculture contributes 26.85 of our GDP. However, it receives only 1.35 of total public investment and foodgrains production has also declined by a margin of 29 million tons. Overall agricultural growth has registered a decline of

3.1%. Capital formation in agriculture has also been declining. Given this lack-lustre performance of this Government, I do recall a few lines from Dr. Swaminathan's exhortations. Dr. Swaminathan says : "Now we do need the evergreen Revolution producing more with less water and less land. If we do anything for the small farmers, the entire farming community will be benefited". Eleven million new livelihoods will have to be created per year in our country. And this has to come largely from farm and rural industries. Soil health is fast deteriorating in our country. Fertile soil is marching towards salination and now nutrient of the soil is also depleting. Seventy per cent of our gross cropped area, it is observed in India, has been experiencing nutrient depletion by a margin of 50 kg. Per hectare. Almost 50% of nutrient removal is accounted for potash, whereas the use of potash is hardly exceeding by 6%. So, there remains a wide disparity between nutrient removal and nutrient application.

So, what I suggest is that an integrated plant nutrient programme must be initiated in a vigorous way so as to save our soil and to sustain our growth.

Sir, in the din and bustle of robust foreign exchange reserve, in the yelling orchestration of Government's success and last but not the least is Finance Minister's brainchild, five gospel as was enunciated by him in this Budget proposals as 'Panch Priority', the other more sensitive social issues have been subdued.

Sir, you must appreciate that erosion has become a menacing problem of our country in general and West Bengal in particular. Sir, in my district Murshidabad, the word 'erosion' propels a child down to the spine of the people. It is as if nemesis descends on for over last two decades. More than 600 sq. kms. of land mass has been engulfed by the fierce blow of erosion. Ten lakhs people have been rendered homeless. Assets worth Rs. 4000 crores have been engulfed by river Ganga and Padma.

Sir, the geographical expression of our District Murshidabad and Malda have been radically changed – now the existence of Murshidabad district is at stake. The link between Kolkata and North-eastern region is served by NH-34 and railway line. Now both NH-34 and Railway Line are belonging in the eroision zone of this river. At Sankopara, the rail line which connects Bengal and North Eastern region is now few kilometers away from the erosion zone. Similar is the condition of NH-34. Sir, now the distance between river Ganga and river Bagirthi has been reducing menacingly. Now the eroding gap between the two rivers stands merely 1.2 kms.

Sir, you may easily imagine that if the two rivers get merged, then it will be nothing but an apocalypse at least for the District of Murshibabad. Various townships, namely, Dulkan, Akkraganj, etc. have been wiped out from the map of Murshidabad. The land eroded on Indian side is emerging out on the Bangladesh region because this river is flowing through Murshidabad before debauching into Bangladesh. Naturally, it is assumed not only national but also international proportion. In the year 1978, one committee was constituted under the stewardship of Keskar, another committee was appointed at the behest of Planning Commission. Again various recommendations had been made but there is no respite of erosion. Again, various recommendations had been made but there is no respite of

erosion. People are getting disgusted over the repeated constitution of committees when nothing tangible is being worked out.

Sir, Keskar Committee, so far as I know, had proposed for short term and long term measures involving 927 crore. Sir, how much of this sum as was proposed by the Keskar Committee has so far been released because State Government of West Bengal is always concealing their inefficiency and dismal performance by resorting to central bashing. Their only pretext is that Central Government is behaving step-motherly towards West Bengal. People are getting disgusted over observing such sea-saw game and passing the buck tricks. Therefore, may I urge upon this Government and through you the Minister to issue a statement so that we can get a clear picture about the intention of the Government.

Sir, one more thing, as you know that Farakka barrage, a Central Government's project, it was commissioned in the year 1975 with a view of preservation and maintenance of Calcutta Port by improving the river regime. To facilitate navigability along Bahirithi-Hoogly river, to ensure sweet water and to remove salinity in river Bagirgthi, one rail link and NH-34 were also constructed across the same barrage. The river Bairithi-Hoogly, river Ganga, from the inland waterway from Haldia to Allahabad. But now the situation is very much grim. At Farakka, the depth of the water level has been reduced to 13 ft. while the depth was 75 ft. at the time of commissioning the Barrage. Due to huge siltation which is the fundamental problem of all Himalayan-fed rivers in India, the river Ganges carries down 80 crore ton of silt every year, as a result of which 55 lock gates of Farakka barrage project are not in operation. In addition to, due to the same siltation, the mighty river Ganges has become dwarf now. She has lost its kinetic and morphological variations, this river is swinging towards east of Malda district to hug with its dormant tributaries – Kandri, Parla, Choota Bhagirithi and Mahanadi.

Sir, those tributaries flow to the direction of east and south east gradient. Therefore, if the present swing of the river is continued then there is every possibility that river Ganges will flow through tributaries and ultimately get merged with River Padma in Bangladesh by circumventing the Farakka barrage project as a consequence of which Farraka barrage project itself will be made redundant. Considering the grim and menacing situation in West Bengal arising out of erosion on the one hand and flood on the other hand, Government should come out with a National Plan to save the people of West Bengal.

Sir, you must also appreciate that arsenic has become a threat for the people of India. Most of the North Eastern States Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura bordering with Bangladesh as well as West Bengal have been bearing the brunt of arsenic contamination in ground water. Even Bihar and UP due to their geographical locations are not spared from the innocuous invasion of arsenic. Sir, you will be surprised to note that in West Bengal eight districts covering a population of 4 crore have been infected by arsenic contamination beyond the permissible limit of .05 mg per liter, as prescribed by World Health Organisation.

Sir, arsenic is regarded as an insidious poison. It has no taste to zest, no smell to smile, it only warrants silent death in surreptitious way. Therefore, given the spread of its tentacles, it has assumed a national dimension. Million of people are potentially at risk for arsenic, poisoning, thus reaching epidemic proportion. Sir, in India, in rural Bengal most of the irrigation is being served by groundwater. Therefore, the same contaminated water finds its berth into plants and vegetables. However, the Government is totally silent on this gruelling situation in India. According to Prof. Smith of the University of California, Berkley, in his bulletin in World Health Organization has warned that the scale of environmental disaster is greater than any seen before. It is beyond the accidents in Bhopal of 1984; it is beyond the disaster of Chernobyl in 1986. His research shows one out of ten will die of cancer caused by long-term exposure to arsenic at levels greater than 500 ppb particles per billion. Sir, I can narrate a harrowing story of my District of Murshidabad. Out of 26 blocks, 22 blocks have been affected by arsenic. Dmkul PS, village Rajapur, arsenic has taken a toll of 14 members of a single family. Only the mother of the family barrage Bibi along with her two kids are now awaiting for embracing death, as they have also been affected by arsenic.

Sir, the problem is that there is no universal definition of the disease caused by arsenic, there is no universal method to identify the Internal Cancer caused by arsenic. It has been manifested in multifarious way, such as Keratosis, Melanosis, Hipo pigmentation, Hyper pigmentation, blisters and so on. The presence of excessive fluoride, arsenic, bracksihness, iron along with bacteriological contamination which are further aggravated by the insufficient ecological sanitation are posing a serious health hazard for our country. Immediately, the Union Government should conduct an extensive study to identify the arsenic infested zone and adopt the viable remedial measures before it is being too late. The arsenic Atlases must be prepared immediately; piezometer for monitoring arsenic contamination must be installed in each block. In this regard, I may suggest one proposal that each village in arsenic affected areas should be provided Central fund in order to dig out a pond meant for exclusively drinking water as it is experienced that only surface water can reduce or prevent the spread of arsenic because the presence of arsenic in ground water has been largely the result of geo-chemical soil leaching. In spite of the fact that 70 to 80 per cent of ground water is consumed by irrigation, only 56% people, specially rural population do have access to safe drinking water which vindicates the argument of uneven distribution of our national asset.

Water is an elixir of life. India received water precipitation including snowfall 4000 BCM, out of which we can exploit for our utilisation at present to the tune of 1122 BCM, but now we actually utilise 605 BCM. The remainder gets unutilised amounting to 517 BCM. In 1947, the per capita availability of fresh water in India was to the tune of 6,000 cm. Fifty years later, in 1997 it got a sharp decline and stood at 2300 cm. By extrapolation, it is estimated that by the year 2017, the availability will be further reduced to 1600 cm. Water availability less than 1700 cm. is believed to be under the category of water stress and below 1000 cm. is categorised as water scarcity. Given the alarming phenomenon, may I ask whether a survey has been conducted to ascertain the stress and scarce category? If so, what are the percentages of population living under these categories? However, it is true that we are using excessively our water asset and especially in irrigation. To produce only 1 Kg. of rice, we need 5000 litres of water. However out of 42.6 million hectare net sown area 40% is irrigation and 60% rainfed, green revolution is confined to irrigated area, has left a vast tract, specially, Eastern India yet to tap its potentialities. When irrigated accounts for the largest consumption of water, it is pertinent to note that only 37% of the total amount of water used in irrigation is put to productive use and the balance 67% is left as waste. Similarly, industry accounts its waste by a margin of 20%, domestic services 25% and construction 25%. It is estimated that only 10% water use efficiency can augment the irrigation potentialities to an additional 14 million hectares of land. Therefore, we should resort to the slogan of "Water Productivity." While 90% of rural population depends on ground water, water efficiency in India is too low and the irrigated area transferred to Water Users Association in India is only 7% as against 445% in Indonesia, 66% in Philippines, 22% in Thailand. The rate of extraction of water is higher than the rate of replenishment as a result of which there is an alarming increase of 70% over-exploited area during the last 14 years. It is deplorable to say that our new water policy only has paid lip service to the acute problem, never explored inter-alia a comprehensive plan to sort out or to diffuse the problem.

Sir, Atharv Veda exhorts 'what of thee, I dig out, let that quickly grow over. Let not me nit thy vitals or thy heart.' Sir, as per the UN Report, India ranked 133rd among 180 nations in terms of water availability. India's neighbour, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan have fared better occupying 40th, 64th, 78th and 80th slots. In terms of quality indicator value given to these 122 nations, India has given a value of – 1.3%.

Sir, the report warns that with inertia at the leadership level, the situation has thus come up. When we cannot exploit our existing potentialities, we are suddenly rushing for an ambitious plan which is being termed as one in a life-time programme, inter-basin water transfer. When even Planning Commission has alleged that we are unable to exploit 50% of our irrigation potentialities.

Sir, may I ask the Hon. Finance Minister, how much sum or how much provision has been proposed for this river-inter linking project, as you have said in your Budget speech that adequate outlay is being provided to support this task force. Whether the river inter-linking proposal was broached by Planning Commission or by Water Resources Commission? We should remind that India is enriched with its immense bio-diversity asset. We possess 20 agro-ecological zones, 45,000 plant varieties, 77,000 animal species on record. India is one of the 12 bio-diversity areas of the world. Many years ago, Garland Canal was proposed by engineer, Dastur which was consigned into oblivion by terming it as fanciful. Later in the 70's K.L. Rao also proposed Ganga-Cauvery Link. It was rejected on the pretext of geo-technological non-viability. What is the rationale behind which has prompted you to resort to such stupendous project which also involves the mind-boggling sum of Rs. 5 lakh 60 thousand crores, when as per your Budget statement it is assumed that we are heading for a enormous debt trap. The river inter-linking involves constructing 10,000 kms. long network of 30 canals to connect major rivers of India into vast water grid. Whether the Government has got any approval from Nepal or from Bhutan or from Bangladesh because this project involves three neighbouring countries as is proposed that for this project four large dams will have to be constructed in Nepal, two dams in Bhutan, whether any topography survey has been conducted over Manos Sankosh, Tiesta and Ganga canal.

Sir, each river water's properties are different from other. And on this distinctive property depend the aquatic species they nurture and variety of insects and birds. Over-irrigation has already turned Mesopotamia into a barren land for last 3,000 years which was once a cradle of civilisation. Civilisation always thrives on the banks of river, but any unceremonious interference into the equilibrium of nature always incurs retribution. This is the experience of humanity. Therefore, we should be very careful before initiating this kind of venture. The currently assessed average potential of all the rivers in India is 1953 BCM. Out of this, the ultimately utilisable flow is considered to be only 690 BCM. The National Commission for Integrated Water Resources Development estimated the projected water demand for India by 2050 to be in the range of 973 BCM to 1100 BCM. This included demand for all purposes and takes into account the growth in population as well as better standards of living. It was show in the Report of the Commission that this demand can be fully met from available services and ground water resources with appropriate measures for development and management. It does not envisage large scale inter-basin transfer.

Sir, eminent hydrologist, Dr. Bharat Singh has stated that there really seems to be no convincing argument or vital national interest which can justify this mammoth undertaking in its entirety. Dr. B.R. Pisharoty, an eminent Meteorologist said: "if the rainfall over the area is merely 50 cm. per year, then all the water requirements can be

met by local rainwater harvesting techniques." Can you assure the House that through this project, the most drought-prone areas in India, Rajasthan, Kutch, Saurashtra, Rayalaseema, Telangana, Kalahandi, Nowpara will have been benefited? Whether Supreme Court has fixed any time frame for the completion of this inter-linking basin project or is being launched on your own by resorting to the argument of Supreme Court? Human beings do not weave a web of life. However, it is strand of it. Whatever it does for the web, he does for himself. Indira Gandhi Canal Project took 30 years for constructing 1000 kms. stretch. Then what magic do you have to complete this gigantic task within a span of ten years. That is really a surprise for me!

Last, I just quote a few lines from C. Rammohan Reddy: the construction of barrages and excavations of thousand of kilometres of canals will make villages disappear, flood towns and cut through millions of hectares of agricultural land. It will uproot millions, the number exceeding the population shifts of barrages. Sir, I won't go to roll out other disastrous aspects that the Budget has warranted but prefer to confine my arguments to water resources itself. With these words I am concluding my speech.

* Speech was laid on the Table.

*SHRI VINAY KUMAR SORAKE (UDUPI) : Sir, the General Budget 2003 under discussion has nothing much to cheer about for the common people except Government employees and salaried middle class who together comprise about 10% of the population. It has also attempted to please the business and corporate lobby by concessions and reliefs.

The working class and farmers are left out to fend for themselves. There has not been much allocations for crucial social service sectors as also for agriculture. For infrastructure sector, the Minister has drawn a mega dream involving investments of Rs.60,000 crore of public/private partnership. But in the Budget, the outgo from the public sector is only 200 crores. Where the rest is coming from? It is the same story with power sector. In most of the sectors including irrigation, the allocation has been that of last years and there is no increase of any sort.

About introduction of VAT system of taxation from 1 April 2003 it is highly impossible as most of the States are not ready to change over to the new VAT system. Even the necessary constitutional amendment to this effect is yet to be moved. The tax simplification measures announced are only on paper. The rigours of complying with tax filing and follow up is still a harrowing experience and even a common man has to seek a lawyer's or consultant's advice to apply for a PAN Number. The agricultural credit system still needs to be modified with priority sector lending amounting only to 18%. Even this target is not achieved.

With so much food and forex reserves, we should have gone for early completion of ongoing irrigation and power projects. The Budget is only a window dressing for all to see and enjoy but if you peep through, you will find the old rot still at work. There has been serious attempts to face grave structural problems.

*Speech was laid on the Table.

*SHRI R.L. JALAPPA (CHIKABALLAPUR) : Mr. Speaker, Sir I rise to oppose anti-farmer, anti-labour and retrograde Budget presented by Hon. Finance Minister.

Sir, for thousands of years our country had been agriculture dominated country. Even though we are depending on agriculture for the last thousands of years, there has not been stability in the economic life of the farmers.

They shudder and sink with depression and lots of suicides have been reported across the country day in and day out. The consequences of W.T.O. are staring at our farmers face menacingly. In the Budget, it is said about diversification of agriculture and I do not know what sort of diversification it is. The Government should have given loans at concession rate of interest say at about 4% to 5%. In the years of natural calamity that is during flood and drought provision should have been made to right off both principal and interest of those farmers who have less than 25 acres of land, provision should be made to write off interest and convert the loans into 5 yearly instalment for farmers above 25 acres and in both the cases fresh finances should be made available.

Thousands of crores of rupees are being spend on major irrigation projects. No irrigation project is completed within a stipulated time and there are insistence having spent 10 times over and above estimated cost. Under such projects the beneficiaries are charged a nominal water rate for each crop for such irrigation projects to cover the

maintains charges.

In almost all the States, farmers are depending on Borewells for irrigation. The water table has gone down borewells have to be sunk 700 to 800 feet below; to irrigate 2 to 3 acres of land. Such farmers have to spend 1 to 1.2 lakhs. Because of the dropage in voltage, many pumps either do not work or get burnt. Moreover, they have to pay exorbitant power charges.

This is great injustice being done to such farmers. Under major irrigation projects, farmers are getting water by paying a paltry sum, whereas other farmers who are investing lakhs of rupees are being made to pay power charges, pump repairs, etc. though their noses. All such farmers who are depending on borewells should at least be given power at a minimum nominal rate.

Some subsidy is provided to a few farmers for installing drip irrigation and sprinklers. But most of the farms are supplying substandard material thereby the beneficiaries will stand to lose this benefit within a year or two due to the spoiling of the units. Arrangement must be made to supply one best quality material throughout the country. We cannot forget that mighty Russia disintegrated because of their inability to supply food for their people.

We must be grateful to our farmers who are feeding the country, in spite of their misery. They are responsible for both green and white revolutions. The country is enjoying a safe position, and if the farmers are neglected and farming community suffers, we may be forced to go in the way of Russia.

The livestock which is nerve centre of our farming community should be protected. Efforts must be made to encourage the farmers for intensive cultivation and increase productivity in each acre. Use of natural manure and green manure should be encouraged. The country can be happy only with the contented farming community.

The Finance Minister generously cut down duty on gold. But he has with vengeance has increased the prices of fertilizers. I demand the Minister to roll back and reduce the prices on fertilizers. Many farmers are using diesel for their diesel pump sets as an alternative to electrical pump sets. The Government should reduce the price of diesel at least by Rs.5 per liter for such uses.

Sir, I do not wish to go into the detail of Budget. I oppose this anti-farmers, anti-labour Budget.

* Speech was laid on the Table.

*SHRI BIR SINGH MAHTO (PURULIA) : Sir, I would like to lay my speech on the Table. This Budget has failed to address the problems of poverty, unemployment, slow down of industry, negative performance in agriculture.

In other words, it has served the interest of the richer section of the society, corporate Sector and M.N.C. This Budget is pro-rich and anti-poor, anti-farmers and anti-industry and small- industries.

Eighty per cent of our people living in the rural areas. But in the case of rural development, it has been cut drastically from Rs.15,176 crores to Rs.10,270 crores. Allocation of elementary education is drastically reduced.

The Government actually declare war against the farmers. They are not getting the remunerative prices. Growth rate in agriculture is negative 3.1%. Foodgrains production has fallen by 13.6%. Debt service is 70%. It is alarming what is required now is new avenue for employment. In the last four years of this Government, such 3 million young men and women have been added to the category of unemployed. I am sorry to say there is no job created but on the contrary to the Prime Minister's own statement promising one crore jobs, there has been a fall in employment.

The Government has marginalised the social sectors like elementary education and public health care. There is no social welfare. V.R.S has become C.R.S. Industries are being closed down.

In the name of reform, Government is selling out everything. Even the profit-making public undertaking.

The State of West Bengal has been in grip of severe drought in three districts. Many States get assistance. West Bengal has not got a single paisa for drought.

The reduction in the interest rates on small savings, provident funds, will hit the common man. Therefore, I oppose this Budget.

*Speech was laid on the Table.

*SHRI P.D. ELANGO VAN (DHARMAPURI): Hon'ble Speaker Sir, First of all I congratulate the Hon'ble Finance Minister Shri Jaswant Singh for presenting the progressive oriented and far-sighted budget of the NDA

Government under the dynamic guidance of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The Budget [General] 2003-2004 with the five priorities [PANCH PRIORITIES] will certainly put our country in the fast track of development and fulfils the desire and aspirations of more than 100 crore Indians.

The Budget 2003-2004 has provided most of the things wanted by the common people, for ensuring their socio-economic security. One of the greatest strengths of the NDA Government is that this Government has the real vision to achieve the sustainable growth, poverty eradication, employment generation and improving the quality of life of people of all walks of life in our country.

Our country's Foreign Exchange reserves touched an all time high last year and continue to rise so as to enable our country to stand upright in the prevailing global economic conditions.

In the field of agriculture and co-operation the Government has announced many innovative policies and schemes so as to bring about an all round growth. This is a highly commendable work and invites appreciation. The financial allocations made for the Agriculture sector may not be sufficient considering the magnitude and extent of works in this sector. I wish that more financial allocations should have been made to all the drought hit districts of the country so that the farmers, particularly those affected badly in Tamil Nadu State owing to the scarcity of water and failure of monsoon rains would be benefited.

I wish to convey my satisfaction with regards to the steps taken by the Government to provide 2 lakh hand pumps in water-scarcity areas and schools, rejuvenation of 1 lakh traditional water sources in villages and for the inter-linking of the rivers in the country. But I also wish that this work should be formulated and executed on a war-footing note. As far as the problem of water crisis in Tamil Nadu I wish, the Government would provide adequate funds for the desilting and deepening the rivers and lakes and also raising the bunds of rivers and lakes in Tamil Nadu. I also wish that the Government would extend the whole-hearted support for getting financial assistance to implement the long pending Integrated Hogenakkal Drinking Water Project at the earliest.

The Government has adequate food stocks in its godowns and still it is unreasonable and unthinkable to see millions of people below poverty line starve for the food. I wish the surplus food stocks would be judiciously and effectively distributed to those millions of people starving for food in many parts of the country. The additional allocation of Rs. 507 crore for this purpose had been highly commendable. The Budget 2003-2004 undertakes to provide a major thrust to the basic and essential infrastructure like roads, railways, airports, seaports through innovative funding mechanism is indeed really innovative hitherto unimagined in the past. The allocation of Rs. 40000 crore for 48 new road projects, Rs. 8000 crores for National Rail Vikas Yojana projects are highly appreciated. At the same time, I wish the Government would also provide more funds to link all villages with roads. The earmarking of 50% of the cess on the diesel for the execution the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana is innovative and effective.

For the supply of safe drinking water orders have been issued to grant depreciation at the rate of 100% on plant and machinery and buildings that house such plants would encourage more water supply projects and water treatment system. The exemption of excise duty for pipes used for bringing raw water from the source to the treatment plant and for conveying treated water to the storage tanks has to be appreciated. I hope this would bring about a revolution in the supply of safe drinking water.

Promising gains from the profit making agro-diversifications into horticulture has to be viewed in proper perspectives. The introduction of a new central sector scheme on Hi-Tech Horticulture and precision farming with an initial fund of Rs. 50 crores has to be welcomed. Also this funding pattern should be expanded in future so that our farmers would get economic self-sufficiency in future. The announcement of price stabilisation fund of Rs. 500 crores for the benefit of tea, coffee and natural rubber growers is indeed the need of the hour. I wish the fund allocation could be increased time to time to solve the pertinent crisis in the plantation sector. India's cattle wealth is the largest in the world. More facilities and credits should be accorded to bring about the desired development in this sector which directly feed more than 20 million people in our country. The Government should direct the Nationalised banks, rural and co-operative banks to provide easy-term loan facilities for the cattle keepers of our country. The role NABARD in this sector needs to be extended further.

The provision of adequate outlay to support the Prime Minister appointed task force to expedite the inter-linking of the rivers in the country is most welcome. And I wish more funds should be allocated to execute the proposed work.

The reduction of excise duty on polyester filament yarn is a welcome sign for the growth of textile industry in the country. Like-wise the reduction of duty on apparel grade raw wool from 15% to 5% is also most welcome. The technology upgradation fund scheme for the modernisation of power-looms, to obtain higher productivity and the new power loom workshed scheme's entry have been very encouraging sign for the rejuvenation and rehabilitation of textile industry in our country.

The Income tax concessions to Pharmaceuticals, Bio-technology and Information Technology will enhance the benefits out of these sectors. The reduction of customs duty on import of certain drugs and medicines from the present 25% to 15% will provide better supply of medicines and drugs to the common people. The reduction of customs duty on number of capital goods used by the telecom and IT sector from 25% to 15% is most welcome. The steps taken by the Government to develop tourism industry in our country is highly promising and encouraging. Kudos to the Hon'ble Finance Minister for providing such innovative tax benefits to promote Tourism sector.

The Hon'ble Finance Minister has indeed done a highly commendable job in striking right balance between the developmental needs on the one hand and fiscal stability on the other.

On behalf of our beloved leader Dr. S.RAMADOSS and our party PMK, I wish to congratulate the Hon'ble Finance Minister and his cabinet colleagues for presenting the people-oriented, priority-oriented and progress-oriented budget 2003-2004. We extend our full support to Budget 2003-2004 that address to the Five [Panch] Priorities.

Before concluding my speech, I wish to convey the august House the following 10 points that needs to be given utmost priority.

Credits and loans with subsidies provided for the poor farmers in the country need to be increased considerably. The heavy burden imposed on the poor farmers in the way of increase in fertiliser prices has to be removed immediately.

More financial assistance should be provided to develop the agricultural market infrastructures in all the States, so as to provide direct link between the Farmers and the consumers.

More funds to be allocated for the development of cattle-rearing, dairying and poultry industries in the country. Special schemes for the benefit of cattle-keepers in indeed the need of the hour.

Provision of 'safe drinking water for all' needs to be given top priority. For this the Government need to allocate more funds and need to generate financial support from the external funding agencies like the World Bank, IMF and the Asian Development Bank etc.

Another very important project, perhaps 'the project of the future' is the inter-linking of rivers in the country. The Task Force set up by the Hon'ble Prime Minister need to be catered with all the requirements for the speedy execution of the project.

There is an urgent need to increase the forest cover in the country. It is very unfortunate that our forest wealth has had been wasted and vandalised in the past thoughtlessly and it is for the Centre and the State Governments to increase their budgetary allocations and to support the NGO's engaged in this noble work.

Education sector is one sector that needs to be monitored throughout. 'Education for all'; should not be a slogan only. This should be made reality. For this there is a need to take more care and attention in all spheres to provide education for all and to make education a constitutional right of every children. The financial allocation for Education programmes needs to be increased many fold. Infrastructure facilities for providing better education needs to be enhanced many times. The overall allocation for education needs to be increased.

Provision of educational and job opportunities for the poor, downtrodden and backward communities needs a rethinking. There is an urgent need for implementing of reservation quota system in job opportunities in private sector too. In this age of privatisation the backward classes needs separate reservation quota for getting jobs in private sector.

There is an urgent need to improve the fast dying agro-based industries and the small-scale industries in the country. The sudden emergence of MNC's have completely collapsed the country's agro-based industries and the small scale industries. More funds needs to be pumped in as well as to avoid policy decisions that would adversely affect these two vital sectors of our country's economy.

Last but not the least, the health sector in our country needs to addressed with more care and attention. Medical advancements and infrastructure should be extended to the poorest of the poor too. Health sector needs for more financial and technological assistance.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very grateful to all those hon. Members who participated in the discussion that has spread over three days. Thirty-seven hon. Members spoke in the house; a number of hon. Members who were not able to speak or did not prefer to speak placed written statements on the Table of the House.

I am grateful to hon. Member Shri Shivraj Patil who opened the discussion on behalf of the principal Party in the Opposition. He covered a wide variety of subjects starting from general approach to Budget-making, covering

poverty and *Antyodaya*, and his views in regard to what he thought was the inadequacies of the effort that I have made. I will endeavour to respond to as many of the queries as I can.

I hope you appreciate, as I am sure will hon. Shivrajji Patil and other hon speakers that participated in the discussion, that it will, in fact, not be possible to cover each and every issue that was either raised, touched upon or queried. This, as you know, is a fairly prolonged process which starts with the discussion on the General Budget and it will go on until the Finance Bill is adopted by the House. We will have several other occasions too to discuss this. In today's reply I shall endeavour to answer as many of the questions as I can. As you know, the discussion on the General Budget has started in the other House as well. This is part of the natural order or process of the Budget Session.

An issue that has been raised by several Members, including by Shivrajji, relates to management of the fiscal deficit of the country at larger macro-economic level. Broadly may I submit that there are three aspects of it that I have endeavoured to address. I do commend to hon. Shivrajji Patil or such others, who have no doubt attended to it, that the rising curve of the fiscal deficit has begun to come down, and I have attempted to address myself to that. The current year was a year of exceptional difficulty on account of a combination of circumstances with which I do not want to test the patience of the House by repeating. This combination of circumstances related to an unprecedented drought, a global downturn, the uncertainties on the geo-strategic front – for example the Gulf and the standoff we had with our neighbour continuing terrorism – all these contributed. But, nevertheless, despite that, the ascending curve, the ascending graph of the fiscal deficit has begun to decline and the decline had started. It will be impractical and in fact impossible for anyone to claim that the fiscal deficit can be corrected in one fiscal year itself. I think that this correction process has started. In any event, fiscal deficit is primarily a function of revenue receipts, expenditure and GDP growth, in which combination we are able to achieve the three.

On the basis of underlying assumptions regarding these parameters, the apprehensions that have been voiced that the fiscal target for 2003-04 may not be met, to my mind, are unfounded. On the receipts side, the tax revenues have been projected to grow by 13 per cent next year as against the 20 per cent growth estimated in the previous year. We have not done this in a fit of amnesia. We have done it deliberately because we are taking into account the likely reduction in the interest receipts due to the Debt Swap Scheme for the States of the Union that we have introduced. The non-tax receipts for 2003-04 have been projected to decline from roughly Rs.72,759 crore in the RE of 2002-03 to Rs.69,766 crore in the BE of 2003-04. The Government has made, I assert, realistic projections about the

revenue receipts that are likely to be received. We have deliberately made realistic projections, not unrealistic.

15.00 hrs.

On the expenditure front, Sir, due care has been taken to ensure that there is no under-funding of any scheme, and I say this with due sense of responsibility of the job that I currently have.

As regards the introduction of VAT, it is part of a much bigger package which includes phased removal or melting away of Central sales tax enabling the States through the Constitutional amendment – which is already with the House – to levy service tax in their States and share part of that service tax. It is also the question of additional excise duty which earlier the States did not have, and which we are trying to introduce.

There have been some queries raised that the quantification of possible losses under value added tax and what the Centre might have to compensate to the States in that regard, has not been made. Well, it is difficult to make an accurate provision of that. But I do submit that that losses are unlikely to crystallise for the year 2003-04. Taking into consideration these aspects, the Budget provision, that has been made of Rs. 700 crore, has been made to compensate the States revenue losses – the States for their revenue loss have switched over to value added tax.

I do believe, Sir, that there is a growing momentum of the non-agriculture sector during the current year and I have expectations and prayers of course, that the agricultural growth which has been now at very low level this year on account of the unprecedented drought, will pick up and the impact of the current drought, therefore, will be revert to a growth projectory in the next year. There is no reason to apprehend that the Government will not be able achieve the fiscal deficit target in 2003-04. I thought it best that I deal with the subject now because this is an issue that was mentioned by several hon. Members.

I do wish to take a little bit of time, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to share the underlying thoughts on the sectors that we have chosen for special emphasis. The special emphasis is the total emphasis of encouragement through fiscal taxation and direct methods. Again, an abstract choice has been made. The sector starts, for example, with health. I do believe and make bone to assert that what this Government has projected in this Budget on the health sector is the most outstanding package any time any Government has projected earlier. It is with the view in the health, for example, it would be difficult for anyone to question 'a one- rupee-a-day medical cover scheme' that we are

introducing through insurance. It is really for the benefit of people. It is covering people even below the poverty line by a third of the premium of 365. We have, therefore, deliberately chosen health. It is also part of the lifetime concern, and I do believe that India has the potential, has the talent, has the ability and wherewithal to really become a global destination of health.

What we have to improve, no doubt, is the infrastructure, our arrival and departure, and particularly the post-operative care. After these are paid attention to, I have no doubt in my mind. If our doctors can go all over the countries of the West and excel there and achieve the primacy or position that they do, there is no reason why the very same doctors of the same stock -- this is the stock from which they have all grown -- cannot be replicated in India. That is why health sector has been chosen.

In a similar fashion, we chose textile as the oldest of the traditional industries which is lagging. It is the highest in the industrial sector as an employment generating industry. I do believe that if we did not attend to the ills of the textile industry now, with the coming to the end of the multi-fibre agreement at the end of 2004, we, in India, who were one time leaders of the world, would face increasing difficulties which we already are.

In a similar fashion, tourism was chosen. It is my belief; it is not an elitist industry; every tourist that arrives, gives direct employment to 5-7 persons who are benefited, whether it is taxi driver or it is a guide or it is a shopkeeper or it is a hotel. Every tourist arrival benefits 5-7 directly in terms of employment.

A number of suggestions were made from the Opposition Benches about why 'gems and jewellery' has been chosen.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, the Standing Committee on Tourism and Transport has submitted a report on Centaur Hotel in regard to tourism, where bungling has been exposed. It neither benefited the tourists, nor the Government, but it benefited only a few hands.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: At this stage of the discussion, it would be difficult for me to enter into a dialectical argument with Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : The report of the Standing Committee on Tourism and Transport has been tabled in the House, which exposed what happened in the Centaur Hotel. It neither benefited the tourists nor the Government, but only a few hands. I said only that. The Minister may not be aware that that report was tabled in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, you can continue with your speech.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: He is entirely free to hold the view that he does.

On the sector of 'gems and jewellery', some strange assertions were made including my origins of parentage, which are not what was asserted there, but nevertheless, it is to be considered like that. 'Gems and jewellery' is again one of the principal employers in the country. India has traditionally been the leader in the world of both gold-smithy as also the traditional crafts of gems and jewellery. We have our jewellers, diamond cutters and colour stone cutters particularly of Jaipur, in the face of the grimmest challenge, who globally have been able to go and establish themselves in centres in Rotterdam and in New York. If we do not pay heed to this, if we do not encourage this industry, this industry which is again employment-oriented would be dragged away or lured away by Thailand. It is not an elitist industry. The kind of employment that diamond cutting is today providing to centres like Surat or the kind of employment that is being provided in Jaipur, otherwise people would not find employment. This is the aspect entirely export-oriented; it is entirely employment generating and we are one of the global leaders in this. It would be a pity if we do not attend to it and that is why we have done so.

The three sectors of information technology, biotechnology and pharmaceutical are knowledge-based industries. Pharmaceutical in any case is very closely linked with the whole question of health industry; these are "today's sunrise and tomorrow's future" industries. We have chosen them and we have chosen them to give them direct support in this regard.

The other question that was raised by a number of hon. Members is on the aspect of infrastructure, the scheme that we have. It is ambitious; it is innovative; it is extra-budgetary; it is costing Rs.60,000 crore. But it is not a figment of anybody's imagination. A great deal of work went into it, preparatory to the announcement in the House. That is why, the Budget of 2003-04 has taken. Let me very briefly cover this sector that I am talking of.

In the road sector, I wish to share with the House that out of the 48 projects that I announced on the 28th of February, detailed project reports for eight projects costing between Rs.3000-4000 crore has already been

prepared. They will be tendered on a BOT basis very shortly by the Ministry concerned. It is not that we arrive at a point of simply making announcements and not following it with a deliberate and time-oriented action plan.

In Ports Authority, I would assure the House that the project reports of two ports, Nhava Sheva and Cochin, that are to be undertaken for renovation and upgradation, amounting to Rs.7150 crore have already been prepared and they will be taken up on a BOT basis because we will be going for tendering shortly....(Interruptions)

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI (VISAKHAPATNAM): Visakhapatnam is the highest cargo handling port....(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : कृपया आप बैठ जाइए।

â€¦ (व्यवधान)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन (फिरोजाबाद) : आजादी के बाद जो सड़कें बनी हैं, जिन पर पैदल चलना मुश्किल है, उनके लिए क्या प्रावधान किया गया है?â€¦ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Let the Minister complete his speech.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS (TRICHUR): Cochin project has not been completed by the Government....(Interruptions)

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (ADOOR): All this you had already mentioned in your Budget speech....(Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: This is exactly what I have said.â€¦ (Interruptions)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन : आजादी के बाद जो सड़कें बनी हैं, जिन पर चलना मुश्किल है, उनकी मरम्मत के लिए क्या हो रहा है, यह आप बता दें।â€¦ (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : सदन चाहता है कि मंत्री जी का भाग पहले पूरा हो जाए, उसके बाद आप बोलिए।

â€¦ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Let the Minister complete his speech.

...(Interruptions)

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : असली विद्युत किसानों का है, आप उस पर बोलिए।â€¦ (व्यवधान)

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह (महाराजगंज, उ.प्र.) : आप बढ़ी कीमतें वापस ले लीजिए।â€¦ (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : आप बेताब मत होइए, मैं सब चीजों के बारे में बताऊंगा।â€¦ (व्यवधान) यह नकली नहीं है। यह भी असली है।

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, you just address to the Chair.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI : Visakhapatnam is the largest cargo handling port in India. You must do something for its modernisation....(Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: The kind of interventions that the hon. Members have found fit to make, I am encouraged very greatly because hon. Members will not stand up for Visakhapatnam or Bay of Bengal or ask what is the progress of Cochin....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Members are not allowed to speak. Let the Minister complete his speech.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: The hon. Member is not enthusiastic but indeed we are enthusiastic and we will work. Detailed project reports for these two projects amounting to Rs.7150 crore have already been asked for. I am very sure that for these ports the Ports Authority will be globally tendering for their upgradation and modernisation. It is not as if discrimination would be made less against Visakhapatnam or any other port on the Eastern sea port. It is really because we want to make a beginning and demonstrate success. It is my belief and conviction that success is the contingency and if we are able to demonstrate success on two projects, I have no hesitation in sharing with you now that we will take up other ports for modernisation.

I might as well share that Railways Special Purpose Vehicle Fund has already been established. It is not a question of funding. Railways would be undertaking it. Finance has been arranged. Part of it will be made by ADB and a part of finance will be made through equity contribution both by the Railways as also by the Government and in similar terms for airports.

Now, this has been going on for some time because of the legislative limitations that are placed upon what can be done in regard to our airports. We undertook to modernise and upgrade these two airports of Delhi and Mumbai. Considerable amount of work has already been done. I do not want to report any abstract terms but it is a measure of the attraction that I have already received a very serious request from the hon. the Chief Minister of West Bengal. Though they might protest and say that this is not a viable project, but the hon. the Chief Minister of West Bengal has already approached and asked us as to why not do the same in Kolkata. We have no difficulty in examining that for Kolkata either. In similar fashion, we have received exactly the same request from Chennai. We have no difficulty in multiplying the modernisation project but what I am submitting to the hon. Members is that let us start with the two that we have taken in hand. Let us demonstrate the ability of India to do this work on its own, and certainly we will take up such projects whether it is Kolkata or Chennai.

Now, in this regard, there were questions raised about the current year's allocation. Sir, Rs.2000 crore that have been allocated is primarily for the equity of Railways and for the Special Purpose Vehicle of the airports. The Port Trusts are taking care of themselves as the roads are on the basis of BOT. In my Budget Speech, I had said that we envisage a commitment of roughly about Rs.2000 crore for meeting the annuity flow and it is our estimate that this flow could be around a period of roughly 7 to 10 years. Therefore, the over all commitment in a time frame of 7 to 10 years that we are talking is of roughly Rs.14,000 to Rs.20,000 crore, and in a time frame of 7 to 10 years, we have to achieve a target of Rs.60,000 crore worth infrastructure project. Now if it is not undertaken, there is no other way in which we would be able to immediately generate this kind of money resources so as to be able to meet the infrastructure requirement of the country. I do believe that if we have to move forward India as a model country and benefit from the opportunities that we are offering, we simply cannot neglect the infrastructure sector.

Sir, hon. Shri Shivraj Patil and some others also raised queries about the employment figure. Shri Patil read out a document that had been given to him. Let me reaffirm that the Manifesto of the National Democratic Alliance in 1999 had said that our new investment, an institutional thrust to agriculture, self-employment, the unincorporated sector, infrastructure development, and housing will act as the vehicle for employment creation at all levels. We are committed to that and we have worked on that basis. Now, the *Economic Survey* which is cited, is an integrated document because I could very easily cite and raise numbers from the very same *Economic Survey*. The figures that you cited are only of the organised sector as hon. Shri Patil has himself recognised. Now it is a small percentage of the total work force which is in the organised sector and that small percentage of the total work force in the organised sector is 8 to 9 per cent as Shri Shivraj Patil, I have no doubt in my mind, recognises.

Now, if you would look at page 215 of the *Economic Survey*, you will find employment figures in the unorganised sector which I will share with you. This information reports the physical performance of the special employment and poverty alleviation programmes. There are a number of them. In 2001-02, the man-days of employment created under *Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana*, Employment Assurance Scheme merged into the *Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana* with effect from September 25, 2001 for a total of almost 523 million man-days.

Under the *Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana* 0.94 million per family were assisted. In the urban areas 0.23 million and 3.63 million mandays of employment were generated by the Prime Minister's *Rozgar Yojana* and Urban Wage Employment Programme. What we have to see is the cumulative total of what is done.

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA (CANARA): Hon. Minister, why do you call them mandays? You can call them workdays. Women also work.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I have no gender bias in this regard.

While I am on this subject, I would just like to mention one thing.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU (SRIKAKULAM): It is being called mandays for so many years.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, there was a question on gender Budgeting when she intervened in the debate. When I wrote my Budget speech myself, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had included two to three paragraphs on gender Budgeting. But I found that the time that is available to a Finance Minister is so limited at that time that it was not possible for me to cover the entire thing. But I am really sorry to say that only one speaker, out of all the speakers that spoke in the debate, spoke about gender Budgeting. I am very grateful to her for that. She said a lot of things which I am not in agreement with. But she is given to doing it. But so far as gender Budgeting is concerned, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that we are very conscious of it and I would like to assure the House that very soon, certainly in the Mid-year Review on the Economy we would certainly come out with a specific chapter on gender Budgeting as such.

Sir, now I would like to cover some other issues. I will first cover State finances. A number of Members raised queries on deteriorating State finances. That is very correct. The hon. Members are very mindful of that. We have various tax reforms measures like the VAT, the AED, the CST and also the service tax. The hon. Members are, no

doubt, aware of the Debt Swap Scheme which would enable the States to pre-pay the high cost debt and substitute it with low interest tariffs, small savings and open market loan. In addition to this Debt Swap Scheme, for the benefit of the finances of the States I would like to take this opportunity, and I am happy to do so, to announce that the interest rates on fresh loans given by the Centre to States will be reduced by 100 basis points. This should go towards improving the finances of the States.

Sir, I would come back to the agricultural sector in a few minutes. I would like to take this opportunity to re-emphasise what I have said in regard to agricultural credit. This is an issue that was mentioned by a number of hon. Members. I am entirely dissatisfied with the disparity in the credit that was available to the agriculture sector and the credit that was available to other sectors. That is why in my speech I said that I found it difficult to accept that a loan for a car should be available on easier terms than a loan for a tractor. Therefore, we had worked on it. The Government had worked on it. I had personally worked on it with the Reserve Bank of India and for the agriculture sector I had announced and wish to re-emphasise that we are going to make it operational before the 1st of April. As soon as the new PLR is announced, the agriculture sector shall be provided credit at PLR + (-) 2 with effect from 1st of April. This is clearly a commitment of the Government and we will do it.

Sir, I wish to make one more announcement.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU : Sir, the Reserve Bank of India is not following the directions of the Government.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: The Reserve Bank of India is an autonomous body. We would like to retain them as an autonomous body. The Reserve Bank of India works in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and I have had no difficulty at all at any stage.

DR. NITISH SENGUPTA (CONTAI): There is no directive on the RBI.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: We are not in a position to give directions to the RBI.

There is a third aspect and that is about reduction of interest rates. I will now go to the interest rate for pensioners which is not covered so far. We had simultaneously benefited the pensioners. Just as whatever is available to farmers and agricultural sector is simultaneously made available to the small scale sector, the same interest rate on 100 basis points will be.

SHRI N. JANARDHANA REDDY (NARASARAOPET): The Prime Minister has announced that in view of the severe drought in the country, farmers will be freed from interest payment. But, it is now changed to the last instalment to be paid. All commercial banks are collecting dues in this manner.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: This was raised during the discussions also. I may now cover whatever points I have and I will answer this query also. This is particularly in regard to the plantation industry. I am aware of this.

On the interest rate, with the reduction of interest rates for the States, with the reduction of interest rates for the agricultural sector and for SSI, I wish to also announce that interest rates shall be reduced by a similar 100 basis points on loans and advances given to the Central Government employees for construction of houses, purchase of computers and conveyances.

On the aspect of plantation industry, it was announced keeping in view the totality of the drought situation, that interest shall be waived; as also what was crop loan shall be rescheduled into a term loan. Whatever was five-year term loan, in the case of coffee for example, which was earlier extended to seven years and then to nine years has now been extended to eleven years. Interest rates were waived and they will be. I assure you that if there are any complaints that you receive about commercial banks, and if you are so good as to write to me, I will ensure that this is implemented and the Reserve Bank will give suitable instructions in this regard.

With this reduction, the benefits to the senior citizens were simultaneously announced. I wish to repeat what was announced to the senior citizens. Their tax concession has been increased to Rs.20,000 and their self-declaration about TDS will be accepted. They will not be questioned when they submit their returns. A special pension policy will be launched by the LIC guaranteeing a nine per cent return for citizens above 55 years of age. I was queried to make up my mind as to what is a 'senior citizen' and whether a senior citizen is 55 years of age. We have deliberately given 55 years because in a number of services people are retiring at 55 years. It is a benefit that we wish to give not simply after a particular age, but also to those who retire early and wish to place their lifetime earnings in a certain fashion which has an assured return.

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: Is there a ceiling on that?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: There is no ceiling on it except that there is a ceiling on the monthly pension that you get. This is the initial start that we have made. If, upon implementation, we find that it is not going to be hijacked – we do

not wish it to be hijacked or purposes other than what we intend – then certainly we will revisit the whole question of ceiling.

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA : Can a senior citizen live on Rs.2000 a month?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: That is not the question. This question related to the interest rate. If there is a decline in the interest rate, I am providing a vehicle for giving a return of nine per cent which otherwise is not available through any other vehicle.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, just one minute.

The Private Members' Business was to start at 3.30 p.m. Since the Budget related matters are to be completed before that, I am extending the time of the House for completing the business relating to Budget and as soon as that is over, we go to the Private Members' Business. Because of this, whatever time is spent now will be extended to transact the Private Members' Business. I hope the House agrees.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, Shri Deve Gowda is not present here. But there was a query which he had raised about the benefits that we are giving to housing. He raised a query on whether any retrospective benefit is being given. I think there is a misreading of the whole provision there. Earlier the benefit to housing had a cut-off date. If your construction has not started on a particular date, a project had been started by a particular date, then you would not get the benefit if you start it subsequently. We found this anomalous situation as far as the whole objective of promoting and encouraging housing is concerned. Therefore, what we have decided is not to make it open-ended. If your project had not commenced in March ending 2001, then that was it. And you would take a certain number of years to complete it. We have stressed on 2000-2005 which means in 2005, you can start a project and you can complete it as you go along. It has not got any retrospective correction.

A number of Members raised the question of ex-service men. So far as ex-service men are concerned, the benefits are already contained in the speech. We have made a first time provision regarding the medical facilities to about 227 ex-service men. It is a major step again in the health sector plus other facilities on the ex-service men's front.

There is a query that keeps coming up constantly about one-rank one pension which was raised earlier and again being raised here. It was in the 1980s - I do not want to speak in the first person singular – that we started addressing ourselves to the question of equalising pensions through one-rank one -pension scheme. I have little to do with it. Thereafter, the Pay Commission took over. The Pay Commission addressed the whole question and despite the Pay Commission and all that, on whatever anomalies were left over, a Committee has again been formed very recently to address the question of one-rank one-pension scheme and to see that all such anomalies are eliminated. More than that, I do not think anything can be done.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Concern has been expressed by all the Members of the House about the small savings interest rate. A majority of the people who have a very low income stake everything on the small saving schemes, and you have brought down the interest rate of that scheme. What is the logic behind it? All Members from both sides of the House have expressed concern on this matter to which you have not answered.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I have answered it. If there is a general easing of interest ratesâ€¦...(*Interruptions*) Now so far as the question of Employees Provident Fund and Public Provident Fund are concerned, these are two different things. We have all these issues ahead of us. We have the full.....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : There is unanimity in the House on this issue. All Members, cutting across party lines, have expressed concern on this matter. I expect you to respond on this point.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU : About the cutting down of interest rate by one per cent in the small savings scheme, all the State Chief Ministers, the MLAs and MPs have expressed concern. It is a great blow to the people who invest in small savings scheme. Some States are doing well.....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (HOOGLY): There is hardly any rationale behind it. The measurement of inflation is defective. Dr. Rangarajan, in his report in the Statistics Commission, had specifically stated that the measurement of inflation is defective because the WCI is not incorporating the service sector which is more than 50 per cent. The Government had assured last time that a Task Force is being set up to go into this issue. Even after one year, it is being done on the plea that since inflation is down, the interest is being brought down. This is objectionable.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I will attend to this issue.

MR. SPEAKER: In due course of time, you can speak about it.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: There are some other issues relating to taxation.

So far as the taxation issues are concerned, they are really best attended to in detail when the Finance Bill is taken up for consideration. So, with your permission, I shall leave it at that and take up those issues of detail when the Finance Bill is taken up.

Sir, now I would cover some aspects in detail of what steps have been taken, for example in regard to agriculture, poverty reduction etc. Poverty eradication was one of the *paanch* priorities that I cited. The package that has been announced for poverty reduction – I said this and I repeat this – a number of hon. Members chose to ignore about what has been announced and to come to conclusions which I do not think are borne by the facts.

We are expanding the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* to fifty lakh more BPL families. The Deputy-Chairman, Planning Commission is to head a Committee which will consider all poverty alleviation schemes and recommend measures to converge them for better utilisation of resources. Fifty lakh below poverty alleviation families are to be subsidised for health insurance at the rate of Rs. 100 per family. ...(*Interruptions*) States identify that. I am afraid the hon. Member is entirely mistaken. It is the States that give the figures. The States share the figure with the Centre to the effect that this is the number of BPL families. The States maintain the figures.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : This has not been accepted by the States. Irrespective of the political parties, the States are of the opinion that the BPL parameters that have been fixed by the Central Government is excluding even the poorest people. It is only Rs. 339. Everybody is earning more than that. Even a common daily wage earner earn more than that. The poor people are being excluded because of the parameters fixed by the Central Government.

MR. SPEAKER: How can you interrupt and stop the speech of the Minister?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: If the hon. Member does not like the parameters, if he wishes to alter it, then there is a method for altering it, rather than barracking me when I am attempting to correct it.

Additional funds, over and above Rs. 2,325 crore, are being made available for rural roads from additional cess which is of 50 paise on diesel. Matches produced by non-mechanised sector are fully exempt from excise.

On poverty reduction, I do not wish to again enter into a dialogue, a dialectical dispute about whether it has been reduced. But it is reflected in the decline in the combined poverty ratio, which was 54.9 per cent in 1973-74. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : It is Rs. 507 crore for fifty lakh families. How much does it come to per head, per day? It is less than Rs. 8.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I think, his point is that the figure should be reduced further. I agree with him totally. They should be reduced further. Poverty reduction is a continuous exercise. We share that aim. There is no disputing the aim. There is little point, therefore, in our disputing the objective of what he had said.

There are some apprehensions with regard to WTO stipulations on agriculture. I might share with the hon. Members that there is monitoring of 300 sensitive product imports. It so far reveals that these imports are limited and in the aggregate constitutes a small percentage of the total agri imports. Nevertheless, we have retained considerable flexibility to counter any attempt for flooding the Indian market by any cheap agro imports through the bound-rate tariff under the WTO. Under the WTO, the permissible tariff rates are reasonably high. They are 112 per cent for nuts; 150 per cent for sugar and coffee and 100 per cent for tea and cotton. 70 per cent to 100 per cent for foodgrains; 45 per cent to 300 per cent for edible oil; 40 per cent to 50 per cent for fruits. Actually, it now provides the fair level of protection. The average rate that is being applied for agriculture is 34 per cent whereas the average bound rate is way ahead at 118 per cent. In the Budget of 2001-02, the import duty was raised in respect of many agricultural products – on tea, coffee, pulses and edible oil. In 2002-03, the import duties were raised again in respect of pulses, tea and coffee. In respect of coffee, we went from 70 per cent to hundred per cent. In respect of natural rubber, pepper, cardamom, cloves, it has risen from 35 per cent to 70 per cent....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K. FRANCIS GEORGE (IDUKKI): This is applicable only to natural rubber latex and not to the rubber sheets. This will not help the farmers....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: We did it. We did raise it. An hon. Member had enquired that in the plantation scheme, why we have not included coconut. But coconut and areca are included. I do not know where the assumption came. I have myself gone there. There is the Minimum Support Price for coconut. It is the best that can be done. It is very difficult to classify coconut under plantation scheme. It is really a tree that is bearing a fruit. But, nevertheless, we have gone ahead and done it. You can say that coconut has special difficulties. We are addressing ourselves to these difficulties. If there are any additional areas that we need to look at, we will naturally do it. But I might share with the House that the State Governments concerned have also to contribute very much more than what is currently being contributed in this regard.

About the countervailing duty etc. I will share the details with the hon. Members. Some doubts were raised or some apprehensions were voiced. The peak rate of customs duty - though it has been reduced from 30 per cent to 25 per cent - does not apply here because these are separately covered. On Garlic, for example, the import duty has been raised from 30 per cent to 100 per cent. Anti-dumping duty has been imposed on import of raw-silk from China. Anti-dumping duty is so adjusted that the minimum landed cost, inclusive of all duties, is at least US \$33.20 per kilogram. There is no import of liquid milk. I want to make it quite clear. The total value of imported milk powder is only Rs.3.5 crore till the end of September, 2002. This compares to the similar amount in 2001. I can have these import data on all agricultural products. They are part of the Commerce Ministry's routine publication and they will be made available....(Interruptions)

SHRI MAHBOOB ZAHEDI (KATWA): What about other food items? You say that milk powder is not coming. Are the other milk products coming?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: There is no liquid milk coming. I have not readily got the figures for cheese. If you are asking whether cheese is coming into the country, I have not readily got the figures in respect of cheese. But you can also refer to the documents of the Ministry of Commerce. This is readily available there.

I wish to share one more thing. An opinion was expressed that on the agricultural front or the agricultural sector, the Government has not done enough. First, let me share with you the movement of the Minimum Support Price. The Minimum Support Price in 1997-98 for paddy was Rs.415 a quintal; in 2002-03, it is Rs.550. It is a 32.5 per cent increase.

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह (महाराजगंज, उ.प्र.) : माननीय वित्त मंत्री जी कहीं पर भी धान की खरीद 550 रुपए प्रति क्विंटल पर नहीं हुई है। आप आंकड़े दे रहे हैं, लेकिन सच्चाई को भी जानने की कोशिश कीजिए। धान की खरीद 450 रुपए प्रति क्विंटल से ज्यादा नहीं हुई है। किसानों का शोण हुआ है। (व्यवधान) आप अपने क्षेत्रों में जाकर देखिए। किसानों के धान की खरीद नहीं हुई है। (व्यवधान)

वित्त मंत्री जी यह सुनिश्चित करें (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मैंने आपको इजाजत नहीं दी है। आपने जब अपना भाण किया होगा, तब उस समय यह बात कही होगी। मंत्री जी ने आपका भाण तो सुना है।

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, in the same period between 1997-98 and 2002-03, the Minimum Support Price for wheat has gone up from Rs. 455 to Rs. 630 which is an increase of 38 per cent, on groundnut as an oilseed, the Minimum Support Price has gone up from Rs. 980 to Rs. 1,375 which is an increase of 40 per cent, on mustard and rape-seed it has gone up from Rs. 940 to Rs. 1,340 which is an increase of 42 ½ per cent and on gram it has gone up from Rs. 815 to Rs. 1,225 which is an increase of 50 per cent.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the agricultural input costs are also increasing at the same time.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I know that.

Sir, I have just mentioned about the total drought relief that has been provided. It has been discussed often here and it will be discussed again, but the availability of credit should be smooth, should be enough, should be hassle-free and it should bear a relationship with the credit ratios that are available to other sectors of industry. That is why we have taken some measures which is PLR plus or minus two, in addition to the aspect of encouraging the private banks to come into this sector. We want the private sector banks to enter into agricultural lending sector and the SSI sector so that credit becomes available at more competitive rates.

Sir, we are going to experiment, on a trial basis, with enabling the Post Offices to provide credit in the agricultural sector because we have roughly 1,26,000 Post Office openings all over the country and they have earlier handled money. We are trying to find an answer to this problem of agricultural credit. Has the ultimate answer with regard to agricultural credit been found? I do not claim that it has been found. We are attempting to find an answer. It is a situation that I have inherited. The best I could do, under the circumstances, is to reduce the interest rate and I assure you that when the new PLR is announced, the current interest rate that is being offered, from that the agricultural credit will, at least, be two to three per cent cheaper.

I do not want to go into the total flow of credit to agriculture sector in the Ninth Plan or the Tenth Plan, but currently, the agricultural credit which is outstanding is about Rs. 75,000 crore, 50 per cent of which has been given by commercial banks, 42 per cent by cooperative banks and the remaining eight per cent by regional rural banks. Similarly, the commercial, cooperative and rural banks have issued over three crores of Kisan Credit Cards. Is it a full answer? No. But we are trying to find an answer through various mechanisms to ease the lot of farmers.

On irrigation, I do not think we should make light of what we are trying to do by way of drip irrigation. Why are we promoting drip irrigation? It is because drip irrigation conserves scarce water and introduces water at the required spot, at the root in the most effective manner. We wish to spread it and we wish to reduce the cost of irrigation by introducing drip irrigation. That is why, we thought of a mechanism of establishing a Task Force to do that.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Finance Minister must appreciate that water is the elixir of our life. In the entire Indo-Gangetic belt, crores of people have been drinking arsenic- contaminated water everyday. It is a very menacing problem. In the State of West Bengal, already eight districts have been affected and the people have been drinking water which is polluted beyond the permissible limit of 0.05 mg per litre, as has been prescribed by the World Health Organisation.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I am mindful of this difficulty. The difficulty that the State of West Bengal faces is in part the difficulty born of plenty on water pollution. I come from a State with which the difficulty is of acute scarcity combined with salinity.

What has the Government done? We have announced a package for water purification that has no match anywhere in the world. I am going to say it: "For hundred per cent depreciation, hundred per cent tax-free, no import duty, no excise duty." If you wish to purify water, desalinate water, decontaminate and deliver water in bulk to municipalities, we will be able to provide all these facilities, including hundred per cent depreciation on the housing of such plants.

I can only encourage a process of recognising how important water is. I can only encourage the process of facilitating water purification through the means that I have, and our means are the fiscal means. I am mindful of this. Is there a overnight cure? There is no overnight cure. A part of that is also drip irrigation. If we introduce drip irrigation, we can start saving on water that we have. Currently, I do wish to share this because you have asked me the question. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister is replying to the questions.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY : It is for the information of the hon. Minister of Finance. As far as the water availability *per capita* is concerned, India has been ranked 133 out of 180 countries. The United Nations has reported it. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: This does not require a ranking or an assessment by the United Nations to bring home to us what the reality is. We live with reality. Shri Shivraj Patil will recognise what I say. We can, no longer, continue to have the luxury of flood irrigation that we engage in. Flood irrigation is the most expensive and profligate manner of irrigating our fields. All of us continue to do so where it is irrigated. The flood irrigates where it is well-drawn. We have to reflect all this. Is there a solution overnight that we can find? Of course, there is not so. But that is why, we say that allowing sprinklers is wasteful. The sprinkler in our climate is not the same as the sprinkler in a temperate climate. The answer is in drip irrigation. We have to, therefore, address this. That is why we have done it.

What are some of the other initiatives that we have taken in this regard? Now, take for example: Micro-Finance Development Fund with the contribution of Rs. 40 crore each from RBI and NABARD; Export Zones in 17 States - to promote only agri.-export zones in 17 States. We believe that the farmer of the country has the ability to meet the challenge of the world in competition and still be better if we are only able to provide the wherewithal.

For development of agriculture in the North-Eastern States on a mission mode, a Technology Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture has been launched to serve the needs of the farmers. A new collaboration for agricultural insurance has been incorporated in 2002. Is agricultural insurance satisfactory? It is not yet so. But we can only keep moving down that path and try to improve that with every successive step.

There are other additional packages. Now, the Central sector scheme and high-tech horticulture and precision farming do not deride precision farming. There are small holdings. Families are dividing and sharing that land. The landholdings become smaller and smaller. The answer is in cash crops, in high-value crops and in precision crops. We have to enable the farmers to be able to do that. We have established a Price Stabilisation Fund because the plantation industry is in particular difficulty in the South, employing almost 20 million citizens. Some of the coffee planters, particularly in Karnataka, are not big planters. They are small planters and having small holding. Their difficulties are real. So, there has to be modernisation and price stabilisation. Regarding the fund for Rs. 500 crore, you might say that this amount is not enough. It perhaps is not enough. But we have made a beginning. The States will also have to give. It is a State subject.

In a similar census, why have we done this excise duty swap of Re. 1 which was a cess on tea? It was earlier an excise duty of Re. 1. We have turned it into tea modernisation cess.

On excise duty, you will understand that a third of it almost got distributed. When I convert it into cess only for

development of tea, then I have the entire rupee available with me for development of tea. It is for that purpose.

Now, the basic customs duty has been reduced on variety of items, and we are already considering the whole question also of franchising agricultural credit. I have also said, Sir, on inter-linking of rivers. I do not wish to take time into what has been done in the co-operative sector. Let me address this question which has drawn everyone's attention. ...(*Interruptions*)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन (फिरोजाबाद) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, इसमें सबसे महत्वपूर्ण सवाल खाद और डीज़ल के दामों का है। खाद और डीज़ल के बढ़े हुए दामों को सरकार वापस लेगी या नहीं? **â€¦** (व्यवधान) सबसे पहले जो खाद और डीज़ल के बढ़े हुए दाम हैं उनको सरकार वापस ले। **â€¦** (व्यवधान) इस संबंध में तरह तरह की बातें कही जा रही हैं। **â€¦** (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवन्त सिंह : अरे बैठिये मुलायम सिंह जी, मैं आपकी ही बात कर रहा हूँ **â€¦** (व्यवधान)

श्री सुरेश रामराव जाधव (परभनी) : किसानों को खाद पर सब्सिडी डायरेक्ट मिलनी चाहिए। **â€¦** (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: The Members are standing and asking questions to you without my permission. You need not reply to the questions which have been asked by them.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister's reply must be heard. If you want to make your point, you can do it afterwards. Please sit down. Let him complete his reply.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Let me share the thinking clearly on fertiliser. Now, we have a situation of subsidy which is a major issue of expenditure, which we all recognise. I have no doubt in my mind that the collectivity of the political community of India will recognise that we cannot continue to have a subsidy bill annually of Rs. 50,000 crore. Of that subsidy bill of Rs. 50,000 crore, as the hon. Members know, about Rs. 28,000 crore is on food. How is that Rs. 28,000 crore constitute? A part of it is a subsidy which benefits the agriculturists, a part of it as the minimum support price mechanism, and a part of it is the food subsidy that goes through *Gramin Rozgar Yojana*, *Antyodya Anna Yojana*, Food for Programme, etc. So, that comes to Rs. 28,000 crore.

We have roughly Rs. 12,000 crore to Rs. 13,000 crore subsidy on fertiliser and we have roughly Rs. 9,000 crore to Rs. 10,000 crore subsidy on petroleum products. Now, you will recognise and I am sure the hon. Members will recognise that of these three major components of subsidy, the two, that is, fertiliser and petroleum are not essentially in our control. They are governed by various factors of international pricing. If the price of crude oil goes up, and the price of crude oil has gone up now beyond 35 dollars, inevitably our import bill goes up. There is no Administered Price Mechanism when it comes to petroleum products or diesel. There is price control on kerosene and gas. As far as fertiliser is concerned, Sir, it is a complex situation. I would request the hon. Members to permit me to just share very briefly the complexity of the situation. To provide fertiliser at affordable prices to the farmers is, has been, and shall be the cornerstone of the fertiliser pricing policy of the Government. That is why, fertiliser is made available through subsidised pricing at less than the prevailing international market price. ...(*Interruptions*)

DR. M.V.V.S. MURTHI: We are paying it at very high cost. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Please listen to me.

Let me explain by sharing with the hon. Members the reasons for this high fertiliser subsidy.

16.00 hrs.

Principally, it is on account of the high production cost of some of our units that manufacture urea. While the average price of half of our required urea, which is produced from 13 gas-based units, is under Rs.6,700 per metric tonne, which is considerably less than even the international price of Rs.8,200, the price today for the Naphtha-based urea is over Rs.11,000. But that does not end there. To some of such Naphtha-based units, we are currently having to pay almost Rs.16,000 per metric tonne as subsidy. That is why, the Government went through the whole exercise, established a Group of Ministers and re-examined the whole scheme. Similarly, the price fate of the five units that manufacture urea by using fuel oil and allied matters is also considered. This is the principal factor that resulted in a significant part of fertiliser subsidy actually ending up supporting the production of urea by the Naphtha-based units, and not really supporting the farmers. We are trying to correct the situation. The Government is committed to correcting the situation. The subsidy must reach the real objects. The subsidy must reach the farmers. It is no good continuing to subsidise as much as Rs.16,000 per metric tonne to inefficient units. This is what is saddening us. The Government has a scheme.

SHRI A.C. JOS (TRICHUR): It is not because of inefficient units. It is because of the Naphtha price. Unless we change the Naphtha into some other thing, we cannot move it.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: I will answer this. First, let me complete.

Now, in addition, in the last six months, the price of Naphtha has gone up by almost 60 per cent.

डॉ. सुशील कुमार इन्दौरा (सिरसा) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहता हूँ कि **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : इन्दौरा जी, मैं आपकी ही बात का उत्तर दे रहा हूँ।

डॉ. सुशील कुमार इन्दौरा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरी बात मंत्री जी सुन तो लें। आज प्रश्न-काल में माननीय केमीकल एंड फर्टीलाइजर मंत्री कह रहे थे कि खाद की सबसिडी सीधे किसानों को जा रही है और अब वित्त मंत्री जी कह रहे हैं कि खाद की सबसिडी किसानों को नहीं जा रही है। अब इन दोनों बातों में से कौन सी सही है, यह मैं समझ नहीं पाया। दोनों बातें अपने आप में कंट्रोवर्शियल हैं। **â€** (व्यवधान)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : In the morning, the Minister said it is going to the *kisans*.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: What is happening currently is this. If you compare between Rs.16,000 per metric tonne subsidy to a fertiliser unit and the subsidy that is actually going to the farmers, then I would say it is a very small fraction that goes to the farmers. The Government has adopted a three-pronged approach in this regard. Firstly, we have to encourage higher production by the more efficient units which are gas-based. For this purpose, there is a Group of Ministers that has already announced a project, and that is certainly to be considered by the Cabinet. They will announce a scheme in regard to what is to be done about the subsidy to the factory.

Now as against the present 50 per cent reduction of subsidy to the factory, some percentage will go to the farmers. There was a suggestion to pay directly to the farmers. This was tried once. The SDOs and the BDOs were required to pay subsidy directly to the farmers. It caused a lot of confusion.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI : Then, who will buy from the Naphtha-based factory?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: This is exactly what I am coming to. Therefore, I must share this with the hon. Members. Then, I saw the debate that took place. और उसके बाद, कई प्रकार के समाचार छपने लगे कि मैं बहुत हठी हूँ, किसी की नहीं सुनता। मैं हठधर्मिता के कारण किसी की नहीं मानता। जब ये समाचार मैंने पढ़े, तो मैं आज प्रातः माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी से पूछने गया कि क्या मैं बहुत हठी हूँ, क्या मैं किसी की मानता नहीं हूँ। उन्होंने मुझसे कहा कि मैं अपने ब्रह्म से पूछूँ। मैंने फिर अपने ब्रह्म से पूछा। इसमें इतनी बड़ी द्विविधा या संकट की जरूरत नहीं है। अगर सभी लोगों का यह मानना है कि 700 करोड़ रुपए, फर्टीलाइजर का काम सुधारने के लिए उसकी कीमत मत बढ़ाइए, तो मत बढ़ाइए, इसमें कोई बात नहीं है।

मुझे कुछ समझ में नहीं आता। तीन दिन की बहस में माननीय सदस्य लगातार इसी घानी से तेल निकाले जा रहे हैं।

श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव (झंझारपुर) : फर्टीलाइजर के दाम पर पूरा सदन सहमत है। आप वोटिंग करा लीजिए। **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : अध्यक्ष जी, ये लोग मानेंगे नहीं। विशोकर हमारे जो बहुत पुराने मित्र हैं, वे मानेंगे नहीं। इन तिलों में तेल नहीं है। इस विषय में तेल नहीं है। **â€** (व्यवधान) अगर नहीं बढ़ाना तो मत बढ़ाइये। परन्तु वास्तव में जो समस्या है, वह सबसिडी की समस्या है। केवल सरकार को नहीं बल्कि हम सभी को कभी न कभी इस सबसिडी की समस्या का समाधान निकालना होगा। रहा मात्र इसका सवाल **â€** (व्यवधान) आप पहले मेरी बात सुन लीजिए। **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री धर्म राज सिंह पटेल (फूलपुर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं चाहता हूँ कि उर्वरक में छूट दी जाये और कार के उत्पादन में जो छूट दी गयी है, वह वापिस ली जाये। वह पैसा आपको मिल जायेगा। **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : जो देना था, वह दे दिया है। **â€** (व्यवधान) मैं एक चीज, सदन में मैं ऐसी बात नहीं कहता क्योंकि अब अवसर है, बार-बार ऐसी बात मैं नहीं कहूँगा। कई माननीय सदस्यों को मेरे बारे में भ्रान्तियाँ हैं। **â€** (व्यवधान) कुछ ऐसे ही कहने लगे। अब मार्गेट अल्ट्रा जी मेरी बहुत पुरानी मित्र हैं। उन्होंने भी बहुत सारी बातें कहीं। मैंने बहुत साधारण घर में जन्म लिया है। **â€** (व्यवधान)

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह : आपके प्रति हमारा बहुत आदर है। **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : मैंने बहुत साधारण घर में जन्म लिया है। मैंने अपने हाथों से बैलों के पीछे हल खड़े किये हैं। आप यह मत कहिये। मैंने बचपन में अरज पर बैठकर कुंआ से पानी निकाला है। यह आप हमको मत कहिये। मेरे भाई श्री किशन सिंह जी ने हमें पहचाना। वे कहां गये ? मैं भी गांव में रहने वाला हूँ। गांव में ही मैंने जन्म लिया है। अब मैं क्या कहूँ। किस-किस प्रकार की संज्ञायें राजनीति में सुनने को आती हैं, चलो यही सही। मुझे इस विषय में और कुछ नहीं कहना। मेरा माननीय सदस्यों से यही निवेदन है कि उर्वरक को लेकर आप फिजूल की आग न लगायें। उर्वरक का गलत प्रयोग जमीन में आग लगाता है। जहां पानी नहीं है, सूखा है, उस सूखे में कौन यूरिया डालेगा ? आप हमें बताइये कि वहां कौन यूरिया डालेगा। इसलिए उर्वरक को देखें। **â€** (व्यवधान)

SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA (KOLAR): An individual who is purchasing a car will get the benefit of Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 30,000/-. But, at the same time, what benefit will an individual farmer or an agricultural labourer get out of this Budget? The farmers are the backbone of this country. This is the only point I want to say. **â€**

(Interruptions)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : उर्वरक को लेकर इस बहस को यहीं समाप्त किया जाये। मुझे और कुछ नहीं कहना। धन्यवाद। **â€** (व्यवधान)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन (फिरोजाबाद) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री जी ने जो कहा, उसका कोई अर्थ नहीं है। â€ (व्यवधान)

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह : अध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय मंत्री जी स्पष्ट घोणा करें। वे बढ़ी हुई कीमतें वापिस लें। â€ (व्यवधान)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री जी यूरिया, खाद की बढ़ी हुई कीमतें वापिस लें। घुमा-फिराकर बात करने की आवश्यकता नहीं है। â€ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. I will go for voting.

...(Interruptions)

श्री जसवंत सिंह : माननीय अध्यक्ष महोदय, हम भ्रमित हैं। क्या होता है कि जब भ्रम की परछाई हमारे दिमाग में आ जाती है तो वह परछाई बार-बार दिखती है। मैंने उर्वरक पर जो रेट बढ़ाया है, वह वापिस ले लिया है।

MR. SPEAKER: I am proceeding with the voting now.

...(Interruptions)

श्री रामजीलाल सुमन : अध्यक्ष महोदय, डीजल के दाम का क्या हुआ ? â€ (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय, डीजल का क्या हुआ? â€ (व्यवधान)

श्री प्रकाश परांजपे (ठाणे) : एम.पी. लैंड का क्या हुआ। â€ (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri S. Jaipal Reddy.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (MIRYALGUDA): Sir, the Finance Minister. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Jaipal Reddy, it seems that the House is very happy and the House is not in a mood to listen to anything else.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, we are not at all happy. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: It seems that the House is very happy with the decision given by the Minister.

...(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA (CANARA): What about interest rate on small savings?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, I would appeal to the Finance Minister to give a clarification on a micro point. I am not making a macro point. There was a scheme called Rural Infrastructure Development Fund, RIDF. It has been withdrawn. Will he kindly reconsider that? It is meant for infrastructure development in rural sector. The fund is not huge. Why is he niggardly and stingy in this matter?

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I would like to clarify that it is not as if it has been withdrawn. The Fund is not withdrawn. ...(Interruptions) Sir, I will answer. ...(Interruptions) Let me answer. ...(Interruptions)

श्री सुरेश रामराव जाधव (परभनी) : हम विनती करते हैं कि मंत्री जी एम.पी. लैंड की घोणा कर दें। â€ (व्यवधान)

कुंवर अखिलेश सिंह : एम.पी. लैंड को खत्म कीजिए। â€ (व्यवधान)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, so far as Rural Infrastructure Development Fund is concerned, please let me assure you that it is not withdrawn. The alert Official Gallery has quickly slipped me a slip to say that it continues and now has Rs. 600 crore.

जहां तक एम.पी. लैंड का सवाल है, मैं माननीय सदस्य को बता दूँ कि यह मेरा विभाग नहीं है, यह पार्लियामेंट्री अफेयर्स मिनिस्ट्री का विभाग है। यह स्पीकर और पार्लियामेंट्री अफेयर्स â€ (व्यवधान)

श्री प्रकाश परांजपे : छः साल से यही हो रहा है। â€ (व्यवधान) They are just putting the ball from one Ministry to the other Ministry. What is this happening? ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri H.D. Deve Gowda.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri H.D. Deve Gowda.

...(Interruptions)

श्री प्रकाश परांजपे : हमको पागल बना रहे हैं, यहां से वहां घुमा रहे हैं। (व्यवधान)

श्री मोहन रावले (मुम्बई दक्षिण मध्य) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, इनके 28 लाख वोटर हैं। (व्यवधान) यह कौन सा न्याय है। (व्यवधान)

SHRI PRAKASH PARANJPE : Sir, there is such a disparity in the MPLADS. I am raising this point for the last six years and they are putting the ball from one court to the other. Is this the way to treat the MPs? I am trying for the last six years. ...(Interruptions) Sir, I want a reply. Otherwise, I will take strong action. It is nothing but insulting an MP from the Ruling Party.

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI PRAKASH PARANJPE : Every year, they are saying the same thing. When Shri Pramod Mahajan was there, he asked me to talk to the Finance Minister. Then, the Finance Minister asked me to talk to the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. Then, they will ask me to talk to the Prime Minister. What is this going on? It has been going on for a long time. ...(Interruptions) Still, they are not considering it. ...(Interruptions)

श्री सुरेश रामराव जाधव : यह सबके मन में है लेकिन बोलते नहीं हैं। (व्यवधान)

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA (KANAKPURA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I did not intervene when the hon. Finance Minister was replying to the debate. I was listening to him sitting on the backbench. He referred to some of the points which I raised. I express my thanks to him for that.

I have only one request to make to the hon. Finance Minister. The House has set the 13th of this month exclusively for the discussion on problems of farmers. I am not confining to the issue of urea only. There are several problems. Several Members have given notices for the discussion. I request the hon. Minister to be present on that day in the House.

The Minister has shown a lot of interest, while replying to the debate, in the issues we had raised. He also said that he himself was a cultivator. I am happy to hear that. I never knew that he was a cultivator. The Agriculture Minister cannot give any assurance. Even the Food Minister cannot reply to the problems of sugarcane growers. Therefore, the hon. Finance Minister should be present in the House on that day.

MR. SPEAKER: I have to go for voting. Please ask your question. You can just ask him a question.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : If the hon. Finance Minister is present in the House during that discussion, it will be more helpful.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Absolutely! I would be very happy to be present. I have only one difficulty which is that on the 13th of March, I will have to reply to the Budget debate in the other House. If I am required to reply to that, I cannot be present here. Otherwise, I will be here.

MR. SPEAKER: I shall now put the Demands for Grants on Account (General) for 2003-2004 to vote.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL : Sir, to protest the attitude of the Government towards the small investors, we walk out of the House.

16.17 hrs

*(At this stage, Shri Rupchand Pal and some other
hon. Members left the House.)*

MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the respective sums not exceeding the amounts on Revenue Account and Capital Account shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India, on account, for or towards defraying the charges during the year ending on the 31st day of March, 2004 in respect of the heads of Demands entered in the second column thereof against Demand Nos. 1 to 33, 35 and 36, 38 to 62, 64 to 70, 72 and 73, 75 to 103. "

The motion was adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: I shall now put the Supplementary Demands for Grants (General) for 2002-2003 to vote.

The question is:

"That the respective Supplementary sums not exceeding the amounts on Revenue Account and Capital Account shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending 31st day of March, 2003 in respect of the following demands entered in the second column thereof – Demand Nos. 1, 3 to 15, 28, 30, 35 and 36, 38 to 40, 42, 45, 47 to 51, 54 to 58, 60, 63, 66 and 67, 73 to 80, 82 and 83, 85 to 88, 90, 94 and 98 to 102."

The motion was adopted.

SHRI P.H. PANDIAN (TIRUNELVELI): Sir, regarding the MPLAD Scheme, all the Members of Parliament have asked me to represent this to the House, as a member on the Panel of Chairman. You had a meeting with the Prime Minister. You had expressed your wish to raise this from Rs.2 crore to Rs.3 crore. We are all with you. We want that the amount of Rs.2 crore be enhanced to Rs.3 crore for all Members. MPLAD Scheme is catering to the needs of the people in the constituency. The electorate expects, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that you take up the matter again with the Prime Minister.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY : Sir, we extend full support to you in this.

MR. SPEAKER: I have already started the voting process.

I shall now put the Demands for Excess Grants (General) for 2000-2001 to vote.

The question is:

"That the respective excess sums not exceeding the amounts shown in the third column of the Order Paper be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of India to make good the excess on the respective grants during the year ended 31st day of March, 2001 in respect of the following demands entered in the second column thereof – Demand Nos. 1 and 21."

The motion was adopted.

प्रो. रासा सिंह रावत (अजमेर) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, एम.पी. लैंड के बारे में आपने कहा था। आपने प्रधान मंत्री जी से भी बात की थी। हम सबकी इच्छा है कि सांसद क्षेत्र विकास निधि की राशि बढ़नी चाहिए।â€ (व्यवधान)
