

Title: Problems faced by migrant women labourers.

SHRIMATI C.S. SUJATHA (MAVELIKARA): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the House. The migration of labour force is a result of the uneven development of our economy. Our development pattern gives importance to certain areas while many areas remain neglected or not being given adequate preference. The result is that the labour force from the under-developed areas is forced to move to the developed areas to seek employment for their sustenance. People from rural areas migrate to the industrially developed cities. This has been happening for many decades.

The post-reforms period has seen an unprecedented increase in the migration of rural labour force both within the States and inter-States. This was basically due to the crisis in the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector kept starving for public investment. This period has seen the lowest rate of investment

in agriculture, in rural infrastructure development, and in allied areas by the Government. Coupled with this, the policy of the Government to lift the restrictions on import of agricultural produces opened up the floodgates of imports causing sharp fall in the indigenous produces. The withdrawal of subsidies on fertilisers, and other components increased the overall expenditure on agriculture.

Put together, all these factors made agriculture unaffordable for large number of small and medium size farmers in the country. Besides, the drought situation experienced in consecutive years played havoc with this sector. The situation pushed many of the medium and small size farmers to the level of agricultural labourers as they do not have any other skills. This means, the number of labour increased tremendously while the opportunities actually shrunk further. The existing agricultural infrastructure was unable to absorb the increased numbers which forced the labour force to migrate to other areas to locate work.

The condition of the migrant labour is pathetic. They are subjected to cruel exploitation. They are forced to work longer hour with wages lower than normal. They enjoy no security, no benefits. They suffer silently the brutal oppression. The conditions of the women migrant workers are the worst. The migrants working in the most hazardous areas like brick kilns and quarries work for just Rs. 20 to 30 a day. The brick kilns in Andhra Pradesh are mostly run by migrant workers from Orissa. In the agricultural sector too, a number of women workers are working for a pittance. They have no ration cards. They cannot even exercise their democratic right of voting; for, most of them are not included in the voters' list. The irony is that even the Government has no data on the volume of migrant workers in the country, leave alone formulating schemes for their welfare. Therefore, it is most important to undertake a survey to ascertain the magnitude of this problem. The Government should evolve adequate steps to improve the situation, ensure that at least they are given proper wages, and end the brutal oppression they are subjected to.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Shandil, your matter has been dealt with already and an answer has been given on VAT on CSD canteen purchases. You know that. So, let it not be raised again. I am sure, being a very attentive Member, you have got the answer already.