

SHRI C.P.N. SINGH : Regarding North-Eastern States, will he try and find out whether those sets are working or not ?

SHRI V.N. GADGIL : Regarding North-East, I will certainly find out, but as far as other States are concerned, I cannot.

PROF. N.G. RANGA : Even in my State, none of the sets is working.

Minimum Wages for Bidi Workers

***250. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL :** Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether different States have fixed different minimum wages for the bidi workers;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and Government's reaction thereto;

(c) when the latest rates of wages were revised and the States that are not paying the revised uniform wages to the bidi workers;

(d) the names of States which have arbitrarily fixed different rates of wages for bidi workers together with the reasons therefor; and

(e) whether Government propose to bring uniformity in rates of wages for bidi workers; if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 the various State Governments are the appropriate Governments for fixation and revision of minimum wages. Each State assesses its local conditions and follows its own criteria while deciding the minimum wages. This leads to disparity in rates of minimum wages notified by the States.

(c) A Statement is given below.

The Central Government has no information as to which States are not paying the revised wages to bidi workers.

(d) The Ministry is not aware of any State having fixed the wages of the Bidi workers arbitrarily.

(e) The State Governments have been advised on different occasions to make efforts to reduce the disparity while fixing the minimum wages.

Statement

According to the information available, the following States have revised the minimum wages in employment in Bidi on the dates shown against each state.

S. No.	Name of the State	Date from which revised
1.	Andhra Pradesh	26-8-85
2.	Assam	12-3-84
3.	Bihar	29-4-85
4.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1-9-83
5.	Gujarat	29-9-84
6.	Karnataka	2-12-81
7.	Kerala	4-9-84
8.	Madhya Pradesh	10-10-84
9.	Maharashtra	5-3-84
10.	Orissa	15-7-85
11.	Rajasthan	16-1-85
12.	Tamil Nadu	1-4-85
13.	Tripura	18-5-82
14.	Uttar Pradesh	21-7-84

[Translation]

SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to deal with the last part of the question first. The Central Government has told the States from time to time that there should be

parity in the wages. The Labour Minister's Conference held in 1985 had appointed a committee. I would like to know what suggestions that committee has given and what steps have been taken by the Government to implement those suggestions? Those suggestions have not so far been implemented. This question was also raised in 1985 and in reply to that question it was stated that there had been no particular progress.

The second thing that I want to know is whether Government considers bidi workers as skilled labourers or not? If they consider them as skilled labourers, are they satisfied with the wages that are being paid to them; if not, what steps are proposed to be taken in this regard?

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): Sir, the Labour Minister's Conference of 1985 took a very important decision of trying to work out a system on regional concept. Since the uniform rate on minimum wages throughout the country was not found feasible, this Conference decided that we should at least try on a regional basis. The Central Government was asked to have some model regulation on that. We have formed that and circulated to the State Governments and we contemplate to have six regional minimum wage Advisory Boards, say, Eastern Region, Northern Region, Southern Region, Western Region, Central Region, like that, I can read out the names of the States. The whole country has been divided into six zones. We are trying to see, as an experiment, whether we can achieve some sort of uniform minimum wages, region-wise or not.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Now I want to ask my second supplementary. The hon. Minister has stated that the Central Government have not received any complaints regarding non-payment of stipulated wages to the workers. My experience is that the trade unions send complaints to them and they forward these complaints to the concerned State Governments. I do not consider the statement of

the Government that there are no complaints as correct. Will the Government re-consider the matter and inform the concerned State Governments about the complaints that have been received?

The other point that I want to ask is that in some of the States, the workers are paid dearness allowance whereas in some State no dearness allowance is paid. Will the Government take steps to ensure that dearness allowance is paid to the workers in all the States?

[*English*]

SHRI P.A. SANGMA : When we talk about parity, and when I talk about the regional concept, they are supposed to undertake all this into consideration. It has not started functioning. That is the whole thing. The disparity still continues. This is an experiment which we are going to do; it has not started.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Is the Minister aware of the fact that there is a widespread evasion of payment of the stipulated minimum wages by the employers? I know he will say that implementation and enforcement is not his job; it is the job of the State Governments. Nevertheless, since there are Central laws governing minimum wages, and governing certain other benefits and facilities also for the bidi workers, is he aware of the fact that unless the bidi workers can be identified in terms of the law as a bidi worker, he can be cheated out of the stipulated wages? Nowadays, the owners are neither giving them the identity cards which have been prescribed under the Central law, nor are they allowing them to work in any identifiable premises. More and more, the work is being given to them, and they are made to do it at home, so that the owner can always say that such-and-such a man is not a bidi worker under him. In this way, evasion is being practised on a wide scale. Will the hon. Minister consider at least having some consultation with the State Governments, the State Labour Ministers, collect more comprehensive reports about the methods of evasion, and work out some means by which it can be prevented?

SHRI P.A. SANGMA : The hon. Member has asked a very pertinent

question. Identification of bidi workers is the most important thing before we undertake any other welfare measures. From the 1st of January this year, we have launched a vigorous campaign on this front; and out of the estimated 30 lakhs of bidi workers all over the country, I am happy to inform the House that 20 lakh bidi workers have been identified, and identity cards have been issued to 20 lakhs of them, including people in West Bengal. I have myself gone to distribute some of them.

SHRI BHADRESWAR TANTI : I am surprised to hear from the hon. Minister that the Government is going to make an experiment in connection with the Minimum Wages Act now, after 38 years of independence. There is a specific law called the Minimum Wages Act, and Government is duty-bound to implement it.

So far as my personal knowledge is concerned, there are as many as 775 tea estates in Assam. Out of these tea estates, owners of 100 tea gardens are not following the said Act. They are also not paying the minimum wages to their workers. They pay only Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 per worker per day.

Will the Minister of Labour take immediate steps to see that this Act is immediately implemented, so far as tea garden labourers in Assam are concerned ?

SHRI P.A. SANGMA : The question pertains to bidi workers, and not to tea garden workers.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : Among the bidi workers, there are self-employed workers another category. I am bringing to the notice of the Minister that these self-employed workers are organized on a cooperative basis—which has been done by the Kerala Government, under the name Kerala Venus Beedi. If this is done on a national scale, and a national monitoring programme is conducted, it will be very helpful, because much more than 30 lakhs of people are involved. I would like to ask whether the Central Government will moot a monitoring scheme to bring these self-employed workers under a national level cooperative scheme, or something like that ?

SHRI P.A. SANGMA : Under the Centre, we do not have such a scheme. I must congratulate the Kerala Government for having done that; and I will inform the other States and request them to follow the Kerala Government in this regard.

Setting up of a HPT Centre in Nellore

*253. **SHRI P. PENCHALLIAH :** Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a proposal to set up a high power T.V. Transmitter Centre in Nellore, Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the time by which it will be done; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI V.N. GADGIL) :
(a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) A low power (100 W) TV transmitter is already functioning at Nellore. Within the resources available for the VII Plan, it is not possible to instal a high power transmitter there.

SHRI P. PENCHALLIAH : Sir, Andhra Pradesh is neglected in the expansion of high power transmitters. In the other States there are a very good number of high power transmitters whereas in Andhra Pradesh there are only two high power transmitters, one at Visakhapatnam and another at Vijayawada. Those two high power transmitters are not covering the whole area. The coastal districts are not covered; Nellore is a business centre, a cultural centre and also an industrial centre. In view of its growing importance, if the high power transmitter is set up at Nellore it serves the whole of the area. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will consider setting up a high power transmitter at Nellore at least in this year.

SHRI V.N. GADGIL : Sir, let me start with Andhra Pradesh. The allocation