

RAJYA SABHA

***SUPPLEMENT**

TO

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Tuesday, July 25, 2017/ Shravana 3, 1939 (Saka)

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

**Farmers' Distress Leading to Rise in the Incidents of their Suicide
in the Country - *Contd.***

***SHRI K. R. ARJUNAN:** The farmers in Tamil Nadu committing suicide in increasing number as their crops have failed. Tamil Nadu is facing unprecedented drought. It was mentioned in our Party's Election Manifesto that loans given to small, marginal and medium farmers from cooperative banks will be waived off. The Tamil Nadu Government is asking the Government for the drought relief and compensation for the providing the relief to the persons affected by the Vardha Cyclone last year. In Tamil Nadu, 70 per cent of the population is engaged in agriculture in one capacity or the other. But now, farming activities have virtually come to a standstill in the State as a result of drought. The farm loans provided to all the farmers in the country should be waived-off. Failure of Northwest Monsoon and lack of Cauvery water caused crop losses and acute distress. The repeated failure of the monsoons resulted in crop loss and a fall in farm incomes and a bulging debt burden led the farmers

***This Synopsis is not an authoritative record of the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha.**

*** Synopsis of speech delivered by hon'ble Member in Tamil.**

to take his own life. All districts in Tamil Nadu have been badly affected by this prevailing drought situation. In Tamil Nadu, all crops have been badly affected including floriculture. All the districts are in the grip of a drinking water famine. There is scarcity of fodder for the cattle. All source of water have gone dry in Tamil Nadu.

Every dam and reservoir has reached dead storage level. Even the borewells has either drying up or they have to be drilled to a depth of a few hundred feet. On seeing the parched fields and the withered paddy crops, many farmers had collapsed in their fields. The Tamil Nadu Government declared the State as “drought-hit” and dispatched its Minsiters to the districts to assess the situation. After assessing the situation It released over Rs.2,000 crore as relief. What are the steps taken by the Central Government?

Agitating farmers from Tamil Nadu demand Rs.40,000 crore drought relief package, all the crop loans and agricultural loans taken by farmers have to be waived off by Nationalised banks. The government must come forward to implement the recommendations of the M.S. Swaminathan Commission report. Many measures were promised in your Election Manifesto. When are you going to implement them? Drastic relief measures have to be taken by the Government, as expeditiously as possible to save them.

SHRIMATI RAJANI PATIL: Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of most of our country men but Government's approach towards the farmers has left them to the mercy of the Almighty. Unless Government take any concrete steps their suicides will not stop. Rural cooperative was the backbone of Maharashtra Economy but it is being intentionally ruined by this Government resulting in pitiable condition of the farmers, women and agricultural labourers. The decision of demonetization further worsened their plight. Unfortunately, the benefit of farmers' loan waiver has been provided to several unentitled persons also in Maharashtra. Farmers' loan must be waived off completely. The scheme therefore should be made accessible for the farmers

and provided even to those farmers' families with any member in government job. Farmers engaged in horticulture, husbandry or having tractor should also be provided relief. Prime Minister must visit the areas with pitiable situation of the farmers. The Report of the Swaminathan Committee must be implemented in letter and spirit.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI PARSHOTTAM RUPALA): Earlier to our Government, the benefit of loan waiver was provided only to rich farmers and several farmers had committed suicides even then. Our Government have been sensitive and serious enough to uplift the condition of farmers. I would like to know about the action taken by the previous Government for betterment of farmers.

The farmer goes for farming to feed the people of the country. There, he may be bitten by scorpion or snake, his hand is cut in thrasher and he may die too. Is there any provision for compensation in such cases? Earlier there was no provision. Our present Prime Minister made a provision to give him Rs. one lakh in Gujarat. Different states have introduced good practices whether they are related to waiving off of loans or providing relief to farmers. This House should form its opinion how these can be combined and launched in all states. The Members of Parliament who were telling about problems of farmers, mostly talked about use of pesticides, health of agriculture and giving loans to farmers. Honourable Members told about these problems in relation to their respective states. They were sharing their experiences with the House.

Public participation and Government, both worked together to make check dams in Gujarat which helped very much in increasing the level of ground water. Honourable Prime Minister has made many announcements to make it a nationwide scheme. One of these schemes is "PMKSY". For the dams which were incomplete for some reasons for the last 5 to 25 years in the country, Government of India has provided Rs. 50 thousand crores to complete them. 22 projects have been completed under this scheme so far.

Prime Minister has given special emphasis on 'Drip Irrigation' in his speeches. Under this scheme farmers should make proper use of water and take benefit of the help being extended by the Centre and the States. Therefore, it is our duty to make farmers aware to take benefit of this scheme.

SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Earlier, 30000 farmers in Vidharbha and 8000 farmers in Marathwada had committed suicides. It is true that suicides by farmers has not stopped till now. But I believe that present Government is trying to save farmers and their families.

If farmer builds the nation, why he has reached to such a state in 60 years that farming has become a risky task for him. He is leaving farming. Secondly, it never happened in Maharashtra that farmers went on strike. Farmers did not do any work for 20-25 days in Maharashtra whether it is grains or milk, fruits or vegetables. Who brought farmers to this situation. This is not a new thing. We should raise a discussion in this regard in this House. Whether farmer gets remunerative prices for his crops, should be discussed here. There should be a debate on how much farmer earns every month.

It is our obligation, our duty but death of the farmers is also akin to killing. The families of the farmers are dying, the farmers are committing suicide, so farmers also need to be protected along with the cows. Our Prime Minister recently visited Israel. Israel is a progressive nation and despite shortage of water, the advances they have made in agriculture is something we need to learn. Secondly, farmers in Israel are not as helpless and do not commit suicides whereas our farmers live on mercy. We should deliberate and discuss as to why the farmers of Israel are not forced to take the extreme step of ending their lives. We also need to look into the causes which have turned our agriculture into a loss-making business. I salute and appreciate the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath who announced waiver of loan on just the second day of his swearing-in as Chief Minister. Maharashtra also followed suit in the light of such decision. And Shiv Sena and BJP think on the same lines as far as waiver of loans with regard to the farmers is concerned. Maharashtra has been the seat of cooperative movement but the movement now

seems to have taken a beating. We should all rise above politics as far as the larger issues concerning the farmers are concerned. We must bear in mind that the country will survive only when our farmers live.

SHRI D. RAJA: Today, we had the opportunity to listen to the address given by the newly-elected President after he took oath in the Central Hall of the Parliament. Here I would like to refer to one former President. The former President is none other than Mr. K.R. Narayanan. In his one Republic Day address, Mr. K.R. Narayanan had said that on the three way fast lane of liberalization, privatization and globalization, we must provide safe pedestrian crossings for the unempowered India so that it too can move forward towards equality of status and opportunity. Beware the fury of the patient man, says the old adage. One could say, beware the fury of the patient and long suffering people. They are the Indian farmers. Agrarian crisis is real and it is acute also. While even one farmer committing suicide out of increased indebtedness or from lack of remunerative prices should sadden us, it should be unacceptable to every one. How are we going to address these issues? It is a fact that agriculture output has been volatile and eighty-six per cent of holdings are less than two acres. Government should seriously think of loan waiver, interest waiver. Several states have done it, and why can't the centre take such initiative? There is a demand to constitute a Debt Relief Commission. Can you think of constituting a Debt Relief Commission? It is there in states like Kerala. Increasingly, there is a decline in cultivable agricultural land for various reasons. There is continuous dependence on monsoon. There is inadequate access to irrigation, imbalanced use of soil nutrients, uneven access to modern technology, lack of access to formal agricultural credit, limited procurement of foodgrains by Government agencies and failure to provide remunerative price to the farmers. These are the key issues which we should address. What about Ramesh Chand Committee Report which has been constituted for MSP fixing methodology? If you think Parliament is supreme, then why can't you implement those recommendations and ensure remunerative price for the farmers? As Members of Parliament, we may belong to different parties, but we should think of our people. Our people should have decent living, our people should have food

and should not starve. Is there any Farmers' Income Commission in this country? Another serious issue is that we are having water problem.

Whatever Awards tribunals gave in the past are not being implemented. The Kaveri Management Board has not been constituted. The inter-State river disputes must be settled and the time has come we should think of interlinking of rivers. The size of cultivable land is declining. Thanjavur, Tiruchirapalli, Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam should be declared as an exclusive agricultural zone. The Government should take short and long-term measures to save agriculture, farmers, agriculture workers and India.

DR. SANJAY SINH: If you look at data, you will find more suicides now than earlier times. Loan waiving is benefitting only a few farmers. Today, the farmers of India are the biggest unorganised sector. The farmers are dependent on rain god for water. Today, we are expressing concern about only that section of the farmers who are having less land holding. If the Government provides the price of the produce of the farmers within a week, the condition of the nation would be improved. Farmers are not getting electricity, water and fertilizers on time. In spite of that they are doing agriculture. Not even one percent of sale-purchase is being done through e-NAM in Mandis. In various States different agricultural products are not purchased at reasonable prices. Demonetization has caused a great loss. The Government should think seriously over import duty. Private companies have been benefitted more by crop insurance scheme. In the regime the Congress export was increased seven fold. The cold shoulder treatment is meted out to agriculture by the Modi Government. Farms would be there, but not agriculture. Industries would be there, but not profitable business. The atmosphere in universities and colleges is deteriorating. The Government would have to make the situation good and this is the biggest problem for them.

SHRI RAM NARAIN DUDI: The policies of Congress have only weakened farmers. Farmers have made this country self-sufficient in the field of foodgrains. These suicides are taking place because farmers are not getting fair price for their crops. He

commits suicide under compulsion. The financial condition of farmers has continuously deteriorated due to non fixation of fair rates for the crops. Waiving off loans is a different matter. This is a facility. Our Prime Minister wants to double the income of farmers. To meet that objective the Prime Minister has launched various types of schemes. Until and unless there is a feeling of sympathy in our hearts for the farmers, their welfare is not possible.

SHRI RAM KUMAR KASHYAP: Agriculture has become a work of loss for farmers today. On the one hand, the expenses of farmers are increasing everyday, while on the other hand their income has shrunk because they are not getting fair remuneration for their crops. They have to take loans from moneylenders and banks to meet this loss. Besides, the farmer falls victims to untimely rains and drought also.

When a farmer fails to repay the loan, such a situation compels him to commit suicide. It is a matter of concern that nearly 12,000 farmers are committing suicide every year in the country. The Government must look into the matter as to why the wards of our farmers are not interesting in farming today. Our aware farmer knows the fact that farming has no longer remained a profitable occupation. Some of them have left the farming and are migrating towards the cities and landless farmers have become labourers. We will face the problem of food grains in the country which will lead to importing the same. Our research work is getting affected due to a number of posts of agricultural scientists are lying vacant in the universities. In my state only a lot of applications for new tube well are pending for approval, so I request that farmers be provided proper irrigation facilities. The Government must have some mechanism to let a farmer know that his crop will be beneficial in the next season or not.

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU: This issue relates to the present agricultural crisis in the country. Though many farmers from Tamil Nadu are protesting in Delhi for some time, but our Prime Minister has not bothered to listen them yet. It is strange that when our Prime Minister can extend help to neighbour countries during flood

why he is not responding to the people of north-east part of the country. The people of J&K are still awaiting relief however they had faced flood in the 2014. The Northern part of the country is facing flood situation whereas most of the Southern part, including Tamil Nadu and Telangana, is facing drought. At the time of independence 75 per cent of the population was dependent on agriculture. Their contribution to the GDP was 61 per cent. As per the latest data 58 per cent of the population is dependent on agriculture; however their contribution to the GDP is only 19 per cent. A huge gap has taken place since then. You intend to double the income of the agriculturists by 2022. In this regard, a separate agricultural budget should be considered, which will have irrigation, cooperation, food processing and agriculture into it. It will help in envisaging certain projects, programmes and policies. Then you can expect to double the income of the farmers. Telangana Government intends to have an agricultural budget from the next year.

SARDAR BALWINDER SINGH BHUNDER: At the time of Independence, 80 per cent of the people were engaged in the agriculture sector; however now it has come down to the 60 per cent. The situation has deteriorated. All States of the Country are facing the phenomenon of the suicide by the farmers be it Southern States or Northern States. Now we not only indulge in importing the food grains when we are having surplus production, even we ban the export. When the prices are high in the international market, we ban the export and when the internal price is high, then we ban the interstate trading in the grains. Our policy is anti-farmer. It has happened in the case of onion, potato, tomato and basmati rice and as a result the farmers have been ruined.

Food parks, food processing system, large godowns and cold chain must be in place to check wastage of food grains, vegetables and fruits. Farmers of the country are consumers as well as producers. But such producers suffer as consumer when they fail to get remunerative prices for their produce. They also pay indirect taxes on whatever they purchase. Implementation of high GST from 5 per cent to 28 per cent on farm implements has hit the farmers of the country very badly. I

request the Government to roll back such hike on farm implements. Farmers should be paid subsidy for farming activities on the lines of subsidy being provided in countries like USA and Australia.

SHRIMATI CHHAYA VERMA: India is an agricultural country. It is very unfortunate that farmers of this country are forced to live a miserable life due to rise in prices of farm implements be it pumps or fertilizer. They are not getting even the minimum support price for their produce. Around 954 farmers have committed suicides in a year in the state of Chattisgarh which was once known as "The rice bowl" of the country. The demonetisation drive has also hit them most. They are not getting water even for their unirrigated lands. I would only like to say that the prosperity of India largely depends on the prosperity of its farmers.

SHRI LA. GANESAN: Practically, two-thirds of the income of the farmers, on an average, according to the survey, goes for the debt. This is the situation prevailing. It is a very serious thing that the indebted farmers are from states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. According to the survey, around 60 per cent of the suicides are clearly for farming-related issues, bankruptcy or indebtedness. Simply a loan waiver cannot solve the problem. Repayment of loans taken by farmers is proving difficult for them. It is easy to repay to the banks because the interest rates are comparatively lower. But there, the interest rate is more. That is why the farmers are not able to repay. The Government of India, especially the hon. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, has taken steps in this regard like agricultural credit flow has considerably increased, kisan credit card system has been introduced and availability of agricultural credit at reduced interest rate has been ensured. Reserve Bank of India has issued guidelines for relief measures by banks in areas affected by natural calamities. The banks were directed to take a view on re-scheduling of loans, if the crop loss was 30 per cent or more. Harassment of farmers is more from the non-conventional, non institutional financial institutions. Measures like loan waivers can provide only a temporary relief, but long-term solutions are needed to solve farmers' woes. For that, the only solution is increasing the

income of the farmers. For that, the Government is already making efforts. Finally, we will unanimously request the farmers that they should not indulge in suicide activity. We are here to protect them.

SHRI VISHAMBHAR PRASAD NISHAD: Farmers who produce food grains and feed whole country, their condition is worst because they do not have any union. They are compelled to commit suicide. MSP for crops should be determined and loss of it, if any, must be borne by the Central Government. Farmers of Bundelkhand are suffering. They are committing suicide, the Prime Minister and Hon'ble Agriculture Minister must look into it and this problem should be addressed. Food Security Act has been implemented and we are trying to make available food grains to every citizen of the country. But farmers, who are running in agricultural loss, committing suicide, enact law for them so that they do not commit suicide. If the prices of agricultural product are determined and their crop is purchased from the field itself, then they will not have any problem.

Discussion concluded and the Minister to reply later.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

1. Demand to handover the Responsibility of Conducting the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) to a Professional Body

SHRI K. C. RAMAMURTHY: Every common entrance examination such NEET, CAT etc. is conducted with high caution. But CLAT, which is conducted by one out of 18 National Law Universities, is under controversies. So, CLAT may be conducted by a professional body like Bar Council of India.

(Shri Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu associated)

2. Demand to reconsider the Policy to involve Private Sector in Defence Procurements, Adversely Affecting Livelihood of People Employed in Ordnance Factories

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: The defence sector is with the government but now a decision is taken to procure non-core items

from other sources, whereas efficiency of Ordnance factories is good. But government is planning to privatise ordnance factories. The Government has also approved disinvestment in Bharat Earth Movers Ltd. Due to such privatisation employees will lose their jobs also. Apart from this, it will affect the security of our country. I request the government to reconsider the same.

(Shri Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu associated)

3. Demand to restart the Broadcast of National News Bulletins by Regional Language Units of Aakashvani from Delhi

SHRIMATI KAHKASHAN PERWEEN: The All India Radio broadcast national bulletins apart from regional news. The Prasar Bharti has closed regional language news units of AIR, Delhi and these are sent to regional language news units of the respective states. This move is causing unemployment. I urge upon the government to restart national news bulletins of regional language units of AIR in Delhi.

(Shri Derek O'Brien associated)

4. Demand to withdraw the Proposal of Privatization of Ordnance Factory Tiruchirapalli

SHRI T. RATHINAVEL: Ordnance Factory of Tiruchirapali (OFT) is a well equipped factory. The government propose to privatize four such factories including OFT. It's employees have played vital role in small arms production. I request government to stop this privatization of the Ordnance Factory, Tiruchirapalli.

SHUMSHER K. SHERIFF,
Secretary-General.

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ERRATA TO THE SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE DATED

25th July, 2017

Page No.	Line No.	Correction
94	33	Add 'years' after 'many'.
95	25	Add 'you to' after 'request'.
97	26	Read 'futures' as 'future'.