

RAJYA SABHA

*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

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

OBITUARY REFERENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of **Shri Shivajirao Giridhar Patil**, a former Member of this House, on the 22nd of July, 2017, at the age of 92 years.

Born in March, 1925, in Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, Shri Patil was educated at the Pratap College, Maharashtra and the Christian College, Lucknow.

An agriculturist, industrialist and businessman, Shri Patil participated in the freedom struggle and underwent imprisonment. He served as the President of the National Federation of Co-operative Sugar Factories Ltd. and of the World Association of Beet and Cane Growers, Paris, France. He was also the Chairman of the Maharashtra State Co-operative Bank, and the Maharashtra Co-operative Sugar Factories Federation.

Shri Patil started his legislative career as a Member of Maharashtra Legislative Council in 1960 and was a Member of the Council from 1960 to 1967. He was also a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1967 to 1980. He served as a

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

Minister of State and as Cabinet Minister in the Government of Maharashtra from 1968 to 1972 and from 1976 to 1978.

Shri Shivajirao Giridhar Patil represented the State of Maharashtra in this House from July, 1992 to July, 1998.

In the passing away of Shri Shivajirao Giridhar Patil, the country has lost a veteran freedom fighter, a distinguished parliamentarian and an able administrator. We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri Shivajirao Giridhar Patil.

(One Minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.)

MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

1. Need to stop Live Telecast of Operations against Terrorists

SHRI NARESH AGRAWAL: We are all proud of our army which is the best army in the world. But now a new fashion is in trend that army operations are openly telecast on T.V. channels. I do remember that when Mumbai was under terror attack on 26/11 T.V. channels were showing each and every moment of our army. Later, it was accepted as a mistake. How are the journalists being allowed there? There is no need to disclose quantity of ammunition. Secrecy of the country should be maintained.

SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Just for the sake of talk shows, defence-related sensitive matters are discussed on T.V. channels.

2. Rally Organised by University and College Teachers at Jantar Mantar, Delhi

SHRI D. RAJA: Yesterday, thousands of college teachers and university teachers came to New Delhi. They wanted to express their resentment towards the Government's apathy to the State-funded, public-funded educational system in our country. The teachers of our country have a great concern that the existence of distinguished institutions, like, the UGC, AICTE, etc., is at a great uncertainty.

They also fear that these institutions will be dismantled and will be replaced by the EERA and EFFA. The teaching community wants more budgetary allocations on education. We should think to invest more on our education. You must discuss the problems which are being faced by our educational system. This is what we expect from the Government in a democracy.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

The Minister of Human Resource Development (Shri Prakash Javadekar), responding to the matter, said: I give time to every organization, which seeks time. We are not dismantling anything. We are reforming the regulators in order to give more autonomy to the institutes.

3. Concern over Dismal Picture of Defence and Army's Preparedness as Reported by C&AG

SHRI RIPUN BORA: The recent report of CAG is very alarming. CAG has pointed out that there is an acute scarcity of defence ammunitions. Earlier, major decisions were taken for defence procurements but after a lapse of four years, the Government has not even given approval for those procurements. The Defence Ministry had prepared a plan of Rs. 16,500 crores to fulfil the deficit of arms and ammunitions. But that has also not yet been implemented. The CAG has also reported a very bad condition of navy. But, due to non-approval of the Government, it is yet to be made functional.

(Shri Ananda Bhaskar Rapolu associated)

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Farmers' Distress Leading to Rise in the Incidents of their Suicide in the Country

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH, initiating the discussion, said: Today the farmers are in great distress due to the policies of the present government. They are not only being exploited but also comes under police fire during protest as happened in Piplya Mandi in

Madhya Pradesh. The concerned Government is still clueless about the person responsible for it. The farming is not profitable today which is evident from the fact that contribution of agriculture in GDP of the country has reduced to 16-17 percent. The wards of farmers no longer indulge in farming now. When the Government is making anti farmer policies today, I fail to understand how the income of a farmer will be doubled. This Government had formed a committee with regard to Minimum Support Price in 2015 and the report of this committee has been pending with the Government for more than one year. The states like, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh had started giving bonus to the farmers, but now this Government has decided not to procure the produce from such states. As a result of this the procurement has reduced to 23 million ton from the previous average of 28 million ton.

We used to export the wheat, but today we are importing it at the price of Rs. 1300-1500 per quintal whereas our Minimum Support Price is Rs.1,625 per quintal. The Import and Export Policy of agricultural produce is a very relevant subject to the interest of the farmers, so we must look into it and the Ministry of Commerce should consult with the Ministry of Agriculture in this regard. Despite having no shortage of food grains in the country its import has increased to a great extent. It is but natural that as a result of it in the first instance our farmers suffered loss. I urge upon the commerce minister to extend the scope of the commission which decides the Minimum Support Price as per the recommendation of the committee. Our production of pulses has almost doubled in this year and you have kept the zero percent of import duty in this regard. The FCI and NAFED has become a den of corruption in the procurement of food grains. The farmers deal in cash for their produce and other related issues but demonetisation caused them many hardships in the last year. The Government has also made new strong rules for sale-purchase of animals, especially of milching cattle. The crop insurance helped a lot to the insurance companies instead of farmers. Only 32 per cent claims approved by the companies have been paid by the insurance companies and there is no Grievance Redressal Mechanism in this regard. As per the report of your committee Minimum Support

Price should be fixed for the 22 crops. The Government should encourage integrated farming. The farmers are demanding loan waiver, so I urge upon the Government to waive the full loan provided by cooperative banks at least and strengthen these banks again. The moneylenders are charging a hefty interest and the farmers being unable to repay the loan are committing suicides. Over-exploitation of groundwater is one of the major reasons of farmers' distress in this country. Eight to ten per cent of our total crop is wasted in poor storage. There is a need of cold-storage chain for perishable fruits and vegetables. I strongly advocate the practice of sustainable agriculture, which is only organic agriculture. We have to fight for the interest of the farmers, then only they can be benefited.

SHRI PRABHAT JHA: The Prime Minister has changed the name of the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare. No Chief Minister or Prime Minister can be so cruel that he would kill farmers. In the last three years, we have started many schemes. In these three years, there was a record production of crops. Even coarse grains are produced in good quantity. Now, farmers have produced pulses and the Government of India came forward for the interest of the farmers in terms of support price. Oilseeds have also registered record production. A sizeable increase has been made in MSP to ensure continuous income of farmers by agricultural products. If anyone is responsible for the deplorable condition of the farmers in the country, it is the people who ruled this country for maximum years. The Prime Minister took care of farmers. Kisan-Channel is arousing a new awareness amongst the farmers. For the first time, New Crops Insurance Scheme would be introduced for the benefit of the farmers. Now, the money of crops insurance is not deducted from the loan of the farmer. Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh States are providing money to the farmers at Zero Percent interest. Government of MP recovers only Rs. 90,000/- on the loan of Rs. 1 lakh. Government of MP purchased onion at the rate of Rs. 8 per Kg. Our Government has purchased Moong and Urad at good prices. Farmers are being paid 50 Percent in cash and rest by RTGS/NEFT every day. BJP ruled States have taken a decision that Price Stabilization Fund would be set up. There, farmers are

telling that they want reasonable prices, not the loan waiving. The Government of Madhya Pradesh has provided crores of rupees to the farmers as compensation. Our Government has stated that land of the farmers will not be acquired forcibly. We have provided Pattas for the forests and distributed other Pattas also. BJP is a sympathizing party of farmers. The Government of MP has accepted most of the recommendations of Swaminathan Commission. Today, India is one amongst the leading countries of the world in the production of milk, fruits and vegetables, rice, fish and eggs. There is a great potentiality of food processing in the country. Keeping them in view, Modi Government has taken new policy decisions in the last years and their results are as per the expectations. Modi Government has promised the farmers to double their income by giving them co-operation at every level. The Government of India is working at a large scale for the development of Bio-agriculture. Keeping in view, the geographical conditions of the North-Eastern States, special attention is being paid on Bio-agriculture. In all the Cabinet Meetings in the last three years, decision were taken in the interest of the farmers. The nation has given us as a mandate. We would take every decision to fructify that mandate.

PROF. RAM GOPAL YADAV: Earlier, there were Government Companies under Crop Insurance Company, but now you have brought Private Companies in this and they are paying only 15 Percent to the farmers. I would like to know the amount of premium going to the companies and the amount going to the farmers. Every year, fruits, vegetables and meat of thousands crores rupees are either get rotten or thrown away in this country. Even after maximum farm output, farmers are poor and committing suicides. Loan waiving is not going to do any good to the farmers. Farmers can only be benefited only when the Government provides them necessary facilities.

In 1970, the share of agriculture in GDP was 43 per cent, which has now come down to 11- 12 per cent, although it is also because the other sectors have grown. Still approximately 58 to 60 per cent people are dependent on the agriculture. The financial position of the farmers has deteriorated. The seeds based on new

technology are also costly. Till sufficient budget arrangements are not made for the agriculture sector, till that time no benefit can be received. In the Union Budget for the last year only 2.3 per cent allocation was made for the agriculture. This budget is too meagre for the sector which is providing employment to 58-60 per cent of the people. Import liberalization has also harmed the farmers.

We indulge in import instead of paying more to our producers, and when we have higher production, we still go for import. This year also we have a bumper crop of potatoes; however no one is ready to buy the potatoes. It is feared that the farmers will be compelled to commit the suicide because of it. The owners of the cold storages and farmers both will suffer because of it. Till recently, the farmers were even not able to get the cost of the production of their vegetables.

In Azadpur Mandi, Delhi, if actual sales amounts to Rs. 100 or 200 crores per day, whereas in actual it is Rs. 5000 crores on the basis of forward trading. We recommended through the Agriculture Committee to ban the forward trading. Due to forward trading, the inflation cannot be controlled. One of the reasons of the inflation is forward trading; however it has never been banned. Due to this reason, till the farmer holds his produce, he suffers and as soon as he sells the produce, its price goes up.

The agriculture growth rate during the last 25-30 years hovered around 1 per cent to 4 per cent. Till a sustained growth rate is achieved, the economic condition of this country cannot be improved. The economic condition of the farmers cannot be improved. Except wavering of the loan, nothing has been done. The farmers themselves have to buy the tractors, tube-wells and fertilizers, as there is no systemic way for it. The water table is going down continuously, and no system exists to prevent and recharge it. The farmers in India use 2 to 4 times more water in comparison to their counterparts in other countries. The modern techniques related to water have not been developed. After so many of independence, 65 per cent of the land in the country still remains non-irrigated. If the said non-irrigated land is converted to the irrigated land, then we will become self-sufficient

and we don't have to depend on the import in spite of growth in the population. The Government has increased the GST on tractors and pumping sets to 28 per cent. In the manifesto, you mentioned that the farmers would be given one and half times of their cost of production.

The farmers have to suffer a lot of because of pesticides. ICAR has not been able to develop any seed which needs lesser amount of water for harvesting. It is also a fact that the same amount of revenue is received from milk and meat, as received from wheat and paddy. The livestock contributes to a large amount of revenue. It is also being neglected, and this matter is also related to the farmers. Due to this, the economic condition of the farmers does not improve. An order has been issued against tying the livestock which actually causes a lot of loss to the farmers. It is an unpractical order. Prosperity of the country is dependent on prosperity of the farmers.

***SHRI K. R. ARJUNAN: (Spoke in Tamil.)**

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN: I am reading BJP's manifesto now. It is good to read because then you get to know what were the promises made and where we are today. "Within three years, increase the profit of farmers up to 50 per cent over the input cost. Strengthen and expand the rural credit facilities". Today, I am trying to tell you where the BJP Government has reached in the last three years. I have also read the Trinamool's manifesto of 2011 and where we have reached in six years in Bengal. Shri Digvijaya Singh and Shri Prabhat Jha both spent some time on the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Yojana and tried to explain that. I would request look at the West Bengal model which nobody has tried. It is working very well in West Bengal. The farmer gives 50 per cent. The Government gives 50 per cent. But what is unique in West Bengal is that the farmer does not give a single rupee, it is paid by State Government and rest of the money is paid by Central Government. This is a good model and I would urge many more States to follow this model. Now, let us come to the issue of the announcement of demonetization. On the cashless economy what did

*** Synopsis of speech delivered by Hon'ble Member in Tamil will be published separately as supplement.**

the farmers do? They went back to the old system. As there was no cash available, they went back to the barter system. RBI called the 'fire sale' of crops whether it is potato, tomato or onion, all prices have shown a considerable drop.

There is too much of talk happening on MSP. How do you calculate this Minimum Support Price? We have done it in a different way in West Bengal because we have done this through actually paying for the farmer's part of the premium in the Fasal Bima Yojana, and I am saying that this is not a problem in West Bengal because the State Government is covering for the farmer.

I heard a lot of rhetoric from the speaker from the BJP but I want to tell you what was done for farmers in 2006 during Singur agitation. That was truly fighting for farmers' rights when a big corporate company like TATA wanted to snatch away 1,000 acres of land from the farmers. Mamata di and the Trinomool Congress said that the 400 acres of land, which was belonging to the farmers who were unwilling to give, must not be snatched away. Supreme Court of India passed the judgement that 400 acres of land, which was usurped from the farmers, had to be given back to the farmers, and, now, farming is happening there. We talk about bullet trains, smart cities, kisan channels but the life of the farmer is still the same.

SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR: Children and widows of farmers from Maharashtra gathered at Jantar Mantar to demand loan waivers and fixing of standard prices. They had joined the on going 'Kisan Mukti Yatra'. Agrarian suicides are a shameful feature on India's social scene. Demonetisation also contributed to farm crisis. Though some States have decided to wave off farm loans, the Central Government has not supported any of the States. Big corporates are given crores of rupees as loans by public sector banks at minimal interest. You will get loans on a low interest to buy a luxury car. But, to buy a tractor, which is for his livelihood, a farmer has to give ten to twelve per cent interest on loan. Central government is ignoring the agricultural sector. Centrally-sponsored schemes have been reduced.

Demonetisation was extremely harmful to the cooperative sector. Our so-called experts refuse to support farm loan waive-off. India's global-centered policy has brought loss to this country than gains. Import of rice, palm oil, tea, coffee, pepper, fish and rubber from ASEAN countries has become a challenge to our farm economy. More concession to import duty will cause more suicides among them. During free trade agreements, Government should seek the opinion of State Governments on products to be put in negative lists. Losses to the farmers due to GST have to be evaluated and necessary steps must be taken to compensate it.

SHRI K.K. RAGESH: A lot of promises were made in NDA's election manifesto. If, at least 20 per cent of these promises were being met, we should have certainly avoided the present devastating situation so far as the agriculture sector is concerned. You had promised acche din for farmers. In 2015-16, there have been 12,602 farmers suicides. This is the highest figure ever in our country's history. What is your response? We have got a State Minister saying that those farmers committing suicide are cowards and criminals. Do not put the blame on farmers. You have promised 50 per cent profit over and above the cost of production. What is the answer? It was an emphatic 'No'. Are you concerned about the farmers who are committing suicides. We are talking about the price rise, on the other side, farmers are saying, we are not getting any prices'. It means that prices are there for the commodities but, at the same time those prices are not going to the farmers. These prices are being looted by the middlemen. Your futures trading and speculative trading pave way for price rise which ultimately denies the right of the farmers. Your import policy that leads to the farmers not getting even the remunerative prices. At a time when there is a bumper production of wheat, why did you allow the foreign players, to import and dump wheat in our country? Did you make any arrangement to procure wheat at that time when farmers were compelled to sell wheat at a distress price? Unfortunately, their policies are serving the corporates only and not the farmers. That is one of the important reasons for suicides. You have said that you are going to link MNREGS with

agricultural sector but unfortunately, you have slashed budgetary allocation for MNREGS.

Farmers are committing suicides irrespective of 11-12 yojnas in place. Rubber farmers of Kerala are getting less price for their produce because of import duty and import policy whereas tyre manufacturers are making huge profits day- by- day. Government is ready to write-off non-performing assets of corporates instead of going in for waiving farmers' loans. Hence, I request the Government to see the agony of farmers and come with a loan waiver and a change in its policies.

SHRI PRASANNA ACHARYA: It seems that the whole country is engulfed with an agrarian crisis. Thousands of farmers in various parts of the country are getting frustrated, committing suicides and resorting to agitations despite registering a growth of 4.9 per cent in the agriculture sector. The basic reason is that they are not even getting MSP of their produce. Certain promises made by the Government have yet not been fulfilled. Farmers could not get any buyer due to the demonetisation drive. Government should implement the 'Swaminathan Committee' report in this regard in respect of the fixation of the MSP. Insurance companies should be made accountable to the district administration to bring stability. Hence, Government should fulfil the three basic demands-prestige, price and pension to the farmers of the country.

SHRI MUNQUAD ALI: The toiling farming community of the country is known as 'food givers' for taking care of 1.5 billion people. But it is very unfortunate that around 12,000 farmers are committing suicides due to their indebtedness, not getting remunerative prices for their produce and crops getting destroyed due to natural calamities like floods, rains and drought. Agriculture is no more a profit- making business. Not even a single loan of farmers has been waived off despite an announcement made by the Government at the time of elections. Consequently, they are forced to live a miserable life and are becoming agricultural labourers. Hence, the Government should formulate a concrete policy in this regard, provide seeds, manure, water and electricity on subsidised rates, make

arrangements for selling produce of farmers directly in grain markets, eradicate the system of middlemen and waive all kinds of loans taken by farmers.

SHRI PRAFUL PATEL: Today, modern India is witnessing progress in every field still farmers of the country are deprived of such progress. Their contribution to the total GDP of the country is mere 15 per cent. They are dying of hunger, committing suicides and toiling hard for the prosperity of the country. Today, the country has turned the largest producer of rice, wheat, cotton, sugar, milk, flowers and vegetables due to these farmers despite all odds. Government needs to focus on irrigation facility, encourage crops that can be grown with less water, use of indigenous seeds and proper use of research work in the field of science and technology to change economic conditions of farmers. Unfortunately, several projects are launched simultaneously and they are not completed even after a long time resulting in a huge cost overrun. This must be paid attention to. Nowadays, farmers have been agitating across the country in support of their various demands. A comprehensive view must be taken here about it. A universal scheme with zero percent interest on the loan up to one lakh should be launched for all the states. Unfortunately, Crop Insurance Scheme for the farmers has been entrusted with private companies leading to a number of complaints against them. It needs any suitable monitoring mechanism. I also request to adopt new technologies in the farming sector. Farmers are the greatest custodian of our country. Therefore they must be helped beyond any politics.

SHRI V. VIJAYASAI REDDY: Despite Government's several schemes launched in the interest of farmers, the number of their suicides is increasing ever year. The lack of bank credit is a great problem. 90 per cent of the farmers in this country are either small farmers or marginal farmers or tenant farmers. They don't have access to the bank facility. I urge to introduce an scheme with easy access of loan in all the States just like 'Pavala Vaddi' that was introduced in Andhra Pradesh between 2004 and 2009 and recovery of the loans should be made from the farmers instead of leaving it to the bankers. The Electronic National Agricultural Market which aims at providing

better prices for farmers' produce should be implemented in other states in the country like Karnataka. Entrusting the responsibility of implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojana to private insurance companies is not serving its purpose properly as there is a great imbalance in claims paid and premiums collected. I suggest to the Government to ensure that farmers' claims must be settled within 15 days' time by the insurance companies. Many State Governments in the country have promised farmers to waive off their loans, but it is not being fulfilled in letter and spirit. So there must be a concrete plan for their loan waiver and budgetary allocation made for the same because denial of loan waiver is another reason for farmers' suicides. They should be made self-dependent. I also suggest to set up special agricultural zones just like Special Economic Zones for better realization of prices for their crops. The problem of droughts and floods prevailing in different parts of the country can only be solved by inter-linking of river waters. Government should think about it.

SHRI R.S. BHARATHI: I rise to bring to the attention of the Government the plight of the Indian farmers. Across the States, the farmers are constantly agitating for their problems. This is the worst draught in our history since Independence. These are extraordinary circumstances and, therefore, I appeal to this House that we should take some extraordinary measures as well. On behalf of my Party, I would request the Prime Minister to meet the agitating farmers for solution of their various genuine problems being face by them for long. I would like to mention that banks in Tamil Nadu are threatening the farmers. The reason for suicide by farmers in Tamil Nadu is that they are treated like criminals. Their loans should also be waived off just like the farmers of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The deteriorating soil health due to continued farming and indiscriminate use of chemicals and fertilizers, over-dependence on monsoons and depleting water resources and acute farm labour scarcity are great challenges before today's farming. I urge the Government to call a special Session of Parliament to solve the challenges being faced by the farmers. I would also mention the problems being faced by the agriculturists in Neduvasal village

because of the hydrocarbon project, the problems being faced by the farmers of Kadiramangalam due to ONGC in Tamil Nadu. The Government should take a serious note of these issues.

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****Supplement covering rest of the proceedings is being issued separately.

**ERRATA TO THE SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE DATED
24th July, 2017**

Page No.	Line No.	Correction
76	24	Read "leather" for "leader".
80	21	Delete "in" after "that".
80	35	Add "legal" after "long-standing".
81	1	Delete "legal" after "maritime".