

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, September 21, 1965/Bhadra
30, 1887 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Ten of the
Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Supply of Rice and Wheat

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- *749. { Shri Subodh Hansda:
Dr. P. N. Khan:
Shri S. C. Samanta:
Shri M. L. Dwivedi:
Shri Indrajit Gupta:
Shrimati Renu Chakravartty:

Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is already a short supply of rice and wheat in the Eastern States of India;

(b) whether this has pushed up the prices of foodgrains in the recent months in these areas;

(c) whether State Governments are also facing the difficulty to check the rising tendencies; and

(d) if so, whether the request of the States for larger supply of wheat and rice will be acceded to with a view to checking the rising prices of foodgrains?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Shri D. R. Chavan): (a) and (d). All the Eastern States are mainly rice producing and rice consuming States. This is the fag end of the rice crop season and the supply position in the open market is not very satisfactory

in the deficit States like Bihar and West Bengal.

As regards wheat, Bihar is the only State producing any significant quantity of wheat. All the States are supplied with imported wheat including Bihar. The supply of imported wheat as also of rice from Central reserve to all the Eastern States is being maintained at a level compatible with the overall availability and the requirements of all the States in the country.

(b) and (c). Prices of rice in all the Eastern States, except Bihar, are statutorily controlled and no open market quotations are available. In Bihar, the prices of rice have gone up recently with the approach of the lean season. Open market prices of wheat in Bihar have also gone up in sympathy. However, there is large scale distribution of imported wheat at reasonable prices through fair price shops. The fair price shops in almost all the Eastern States have been increased considerably to avoid hardship to the poorer sections of the population.

Shri Subodh Hansda: As the Minister has conceded short supply of foodgrains to the eastern States, I would like to know whether the policy of fixing prices of foodgrains in the country is also responsible for non-availability of foodgrains in the eastern States and whether this policy has helped in creating a black-market?

Shri D. R. Chavan: As I have explained in the reply, practically rice prices in all the eastern States have been controlled. I have stated that open market quotations are not available.

Shri Subodh Hansda: Is it a fact that the modified rationing system, particularly in West Bengal, did not work satisfactorily, due to which the prices of foodgrains have shot up?

Shri D. B. Chavan: No, the modified rationing and also statutory rationing in the industrial area of Calcutta city are working very satisfactorily.

Shri S. C. Samanta: Has the Chief Minister of West Bengal informed the Union Government that unless 30,000 tonnes are supplied by the 30th September, they will not be able to carry on the rationing that is in operation there?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri C. Subramaniam): That is not correct. As a matter of fact, in order to meet this emergency, and to carry stocks as long as possible, we have appealed to all State Governments to cut down the rations from 12 ounces to 10 ounces. It is in pursuance of that that this action is being taken in West Bengal, not because we have not supplied stocks.

श्री स० ला० द्विवेदी : मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस बात में कहां तक सत्यता है कि पश्चिमी बंगाल राज्य में चावल की कमी के कारण सरकार यह निर्णय लेने जा रही है कि वहां राशन में दो घंसे की कमी कर दी जाये। क्या दिल्ली में भी चावल बहुत दिनों से उपलब्ध नहीं है सिवा सेला चावल के।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : दिल्ली ईस्टर्न स्टेट्स में तो नहीं है।

Shri C. Subramaniam: Not only in West Bengal but in all States, this action will have to be taken to cut down the ration because import is still uncertain and the khariff crop is not as promising as it would have been with a normal monsoon. Therefore, this action is being taken not merely in West Bengal, but throughout the country.

Shri Kapur Singh: As I have understood from what the hon. Minister

has stated, the question which has been really put has not been answered. The question that has been put is whether there are short supplies and whether the prices have shot up, and the reply given is that the supplies are being made in accordance with availability and that the prices are reasonably controlled. These are not replies to the questions that have been really put. I want to know whether all the demand of the people to eat is being met, and secondly whether the prices have gone up suddenly after this emergency?

Shri C. Subramaniam: The demands of the people are being met to the extent possible. We cannot produce grains overnight. So, whatever we have with the Central Government we are distributing to the various States. I may also say that because of the emergency particularly recently, the people have responded, the traders have responded everywhere, and the price is on the downward trend rather than on the upward trend.

Shri Kapur Singh: They do not give a straight answer to any question.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: The hon. Minister stated that because of the emergency and uncertainty in the matter of imports of rice, a 2 oz. cut has been suggested in the quota of rice in West Bengal and other places in the eastern sector. I would like to know whether this cut is actually due to non-availability of more imported rice or lack of supply or inadequate supply from the Centre which the Chief Minister has pointed out.

Shri C. Subramaniam: We have agreed to supply 3 lakh tons to West Bengal during this year. That 3 lakhs would be supplied, but we have suggested to the States that there are likely to be difficulties later on, particularly if the emergency continues, and therefore we should stretch as far as possible with the available stocks. That is why the ration is being cut.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: Is it not a fact that with the passing of every day it is not only the common people or the Members of Parliament but even experts like Dr. Raj Krishen, a former member of the Agricultural Prices Commission, are of the opinion that one of the effective ways to check the imbalance in the high prices of foodgrains in the country is to remove the food zones. If so, may I know what stands in the way of Government removing them and not sticking to them?

Shri C. Subramaniam: As against Mr. Raj Krishen's opinion, there are other weighty opinions of other economists that in the present . . .

Shri Ranga: What about the poor peasants? They do not count, is it?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Kindly wait, I am answering. In the present context of shortages, it will be dangerous to open the zones. What is the implication of opening the zones? Particularly those who plead for opening the zones want free trade to function, movement on the basis of traders moving from one State to another. We have had experience, particularly when there are shortages, how the trade behaves. That is why it has become necessary particularly to make inter-State movements on a State-to-State basis. We are assessing the surpluses available in each State and procuring them and making them available to the deficit States.

Shri B. K. Das: I understand that ration in Calcutta and the industrial area has been cut down. May I know whether it has also been cut in the M. R. shops?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Yes, in the M. R. shops also.

Shri Ranga: In view of the fact that all the big cities are going to be placed on rations, in every place fair price shops are being provided and all the industrial centres are also being assured of their rations, what dangerous or risks are there to be run by the Government or by the

people if these zones are removed, what particular or special purpose is the Government serving, especially when State Governments like Maharashtra want these instructions to go? They are not irresponsible people.

Shri C. Subramaniam: There are equally responsible people pleading for the retention of the zones. The point for consideration is this. If we have to meet the ration requirements of all cities with one lakh and above of population, this will have to be procured within the country, and procurement cannot take place if there is free movement without control, with traders taking them away from one place to another without control. That is why it has become necessary to have the State zonal restrictions also for the purpose of procurement.

श्री बागड़ी : चावल की कमी को ध्यान में रखते हुए क्या पंजाब के सरहद्दी इलाके में, जहाँ धान की फसल तैयार खड़ी है और उसका कोई भी खरीदार नहीं है जिससे कि फसल भी तबाह होगी, धान भी तबाह होगा और किसान भी तबाह होगा, सरकार उस की खरीदारी के बारे में कोई उचित कार्रवाई कर रही है। धरकर कर रही है तो क्या?

Shri C. Subramaniam: We are aware of the situation. As a matter of fact we are trying to get even mechanical harvesters and thrashers so that it can be quickly harvested and the Government would be prepared to purchase the available quantity, which is offered to Government.

Shri P. Venkatasubbaiah: Before supplying foodgrains to eastern States may I know whether the Government has got any statistics before it of the internal procurement in those States and how far they were able to reach the targets so that they need not always depend upon the Centre?

Shri C. Subramaniam: I have the figures with regard to targets of pro-

curement. Except two States of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, all the other States have almost reached the targets.

Shri P. E. Chakraverti: In consideration of the important role that is likely to be played by the States of Bihar and West Bengal in this period of emergency, has the Government taken into account the seriousness of the situation if foodgrains are not made available to Bihar which has got most of the industrial plants?

Shri C. Subramaniam: We have taken that into account and we shall ensure that there is no breakdown.

Shri K. N. Tiwary: The hon. Minister stated that the market prices have fallen. May I know whether any study has been made of the reasons for that? Is it due to more arrival in the market or other reasons?

Shri C. Subramaniam: It is due to more arrivals in the market. But because of the situation those who have been holding on to the stocks have patriotically come forward to unload them in the market.

श्री गुलशन : भिन्न भिन्न राज्यों ने किसानों से गेहूँ और चावल के भण्डार इस मुल्क में इकट्ठे किए थे। अब राज्यों को इस चावल और गेहूँ की जरूरत है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि जिस राज्य ने ये भण्डार जमा किए थे क्या उसी राज्य को प्राय दे रहे हैं या उससे मुनाफा कमा रहे हैं ?

Shri C. Subramaniam: We have fixed the prices and there is no question of profiteering. Of course they have to be paid the storage and transport charges and various other incidentals.

श्री जगदीश सिंह सिद्धान्ती : आज जबकि कुछ परिवारों के बहादुर युद्ध में लड़ रहे हैं तो उनके परिवारों को प्रनाज देने में मुनाफा-खोर दाम बढ़ा कर मुनाफा कमा रहे हैं। क्या सरकार उन व्यापारियों के विरुद्ध

राष्ट्रद्रोह का अपराध घोषित करके कार्रवाई करेगी ?

Shri C. Subramaniam: My answer was that, on the other hand, the price line has been held to a certain extent and that people and traders have co-operated.

Elections in Kerala

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*75L. { **Shri S. M. Banerjee:**
Shri Mohammed Koya:
Shri Warrior:
Shri Vasudevan Nair:
Shri Prabhat Kar:
Dr. L. M. Singhvi:

Will the Minister of Law be pleased to state:

(a) whether a final decision has been taken to hold elections in Kerala; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Law (Shri Jaganatha Rao): (a) and (b). No, Sir. Necessary action will be taken at the appropriate time.

Shri Kapur Singh: Part (b) of the question has not been answered; the reasons have not been given.

Mr. Speaker: Part (b) says 'if not, the reasons therefor'; the answer reads 'Necessary action will be taken at the appropriate time'.

Shri Jaganatha Rao: The Proclamation was approved by both Houses of Parliament. The Rajya Sabha approved it on the 11th of May, 1965 under article 356(4). Six months' period will expire only on 11th November, 1965. It is too early to decide about future elections now.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: He said that elections become due in November 1965. I would like to know whether elections are going to take place after the lapse of six months' period or it will be delayed further for political considerations?