

*Surinam Parliamentary Delegation*

like to know whether such a demand was made earlier and if so, whether Government gave the reasons for not granting the subsidy.

[English]

SHRI K. C. LENKA: I thank Shri Ram Naik. He has pleaded for this Railways and we have been pleading since long with the Government to give these subsidies but the Government has not been agreeing to it.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK : Please tell us what did the Government say in the regard.

[English]

What is the reason? We should get a clear reply. What is the reason given by the Finance Ministry for not subsidising the loss which you are incurring?

SHRI K.C. LENKA: Still we are pursuing this matter with the Finance Ministry.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I go to the next question I have to make an announcement.

11.17 hrs.

WELCOME TO THE SURINAM PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Hon'ble Members, at the outset I have to make an announcement.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the Hon'ble Members of the House, I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Jaggernath Lachmon, Speaker of the National Assembly who is on a visit to India as our honoured guest.

He attended the recently concluded 89th Inter Parliamentary Conference from 12 to 17 April, 1993.

He is now seated in the special box. We wish him a happy and fruitful stay in our country. Through him we convey our greetings and best wishes to the President, National Assembly, Government, and the friendly people of Republic of Surinam.

11.18 hrs.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS -  
CONTD

[English]

National Policy on P.D.S.

\*662. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 122 on February 23, 1993 regarding withdrawal of Ration Cards from tax payers and state:

(a) the States which have decided to exclude certain categories of the population from the benefits of Public Distribution System;

(b) the categories of population which have been so excluded;

(c) whether these State Governments have sought permission of the Union Government before taking such a decision;

(d) if not, the reaction of the Union Government thereto;

(e) whether the Union Government propose to evolve a National Policy on Public Distribution System; and

(f) if so when and the salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) to (f). A state-

ment is laid on the Table of the House.

[English]

(a) to (d). The State Governments of Gujarat and Rajasthan have decided to exclude certain categories of population from eligibility to PDS wheat and rice. The Government of Rajasthan excludes income tax payers. Government of Gujarat excludes income tax payers, sales tax payers, farmers others than small and marginal farmers and persons having an annual income exceeding Rs. 28000/- Government of Haryana has also taken a decision for exclusion of certain categories viz. Income tax payers State Government Ministers and MLAs and Class I and II Officers of Government from entitlement to wheat, rice and sugar. Decision on criteria of eligibility for PDS can be taken by State Governments.

(e) and (f). The Central Government has set up a Committee comprising Food and Civil Supplies Ministers of three States which is examining the relevant issues.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN RAWALE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, exclusion of any section from PDS is a moral and undemocratic. The PDS is at present faulty. The Government has formulated a national policy in this regard. Earlier 21-30 kg. of wheat, sugar and rice used to be supplied through PDS to the beneficiaries. However, at present 7.5 kg. of wheat or rice is being supplied and that too of inferior quality. The Government has endeavoured to remove all these flaws. Another problems is of non-availability of goods due to which the consumers have to visit the PDS shops again and again. If all the goods like wheat, rice and kerosene and available at a point of time then consumers will not have to make round of the shops again and again. If goods are not supplied by the Centre to the State Governments time then the latter cannot supply these to the consumers. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister monitors all this or not and whether some improvements are being made?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): First of all, I would like to inform the hon. Member that no decision has been taken to eliminate any section from the benefit of PDS. What we have done is, we have appointed a Committee consisting of Food and Civil Supplies Ministers. We will take a decision any after getting the report. (*Interruptions*)

We have appointed a Committee. They have started their sitting. Already two sittings were over, one in Delhi and the other in Bangalore. They have been asked to submit the report before 30th of April. Only after getting a report from the Sub Committee of the Ministers of the State, we will take a decision about targeing of P.D.S. But, at the same time I would like to inform the House that as far as Government of India is concerned, we have an open mind about targetting. We do not want to impose only decision on the States or in the country.

The implementation of P.D.S. is a joint responsibility of the Central Government and the State Governments. So, whatever decision we want to take, we will fully involve the State Governments, not only the State Governments but also we would like to know the views of all the political parties at the national level and at the State level. After getting somehow national consensus only, we will try to target the P.D.S. But at the same time, I would like to inform the House that if you want to improve the P.D.S. and if you want to increase the allotment of P.D.S. articles to the really needs sections, the poor sections, of the community at some point of time we have to make a fresh look about the P.D.S. At present even though we are allotting nearly 18 to 19 million tonnes of foodgrains, it will be sufficient only to meet 12 to 15 per cent requirements of the people. So, even for this 18 to 19 million tonnes, the food subsidy according to this year's Budget is Rs. 3,000 crore. But our forecast is, by the year end, it will be more than Rs. 3,000 crore. So, we have our own financial difficulties,

and we will not be able to increase the food subsidy like anything. We can increase to a limited extent. So, we have to keep in mind the financial restraint and at the same time we have to keep in mind that people should be given food. That is why the Government is trying to evolve a policy.

Regarding reduction of quantities, the Central Government is only giving bulk supply to the State Governments. The entitlement and the scale of allotment are decided by the State Government. There is some complaint about poor quality. We are now trying to find out the solutions. Our Ministry and the Ministry of Food will try to improve the quality.

[*Translation*]

SHRIMOHAN RAWALE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, what has the Government done in this regard? There is collusion between officials and shopkeepers and goods are diverted and sold in blackmarket and bogus ration cards are also issued. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government has taken any remedial measures?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would also like to ask one more question. Has the Government investigated the issuing of bogus ration cards to 1.5 crore Bangladeshis? I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any action has been initiated against these bogus ration cards holders and whether these have been cancelled?

[*English*]

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Regarding diversion of P.D.S. articles, we are getting some complaints. To avoid that, we have requested the State Governments as far as possible to try to introduce a system of door delivery of P.D.S. articles. The main complaint is that the articles are diverted by FPS owners on tway from the wholesalers. That is why, we are requesting the State Governments to introduce door delivery system. In most of the States, already this decision has been taken. In some of the States, the door delivery system has been introduced. In

other States also we are now compelling them to introduce that. We will see that this kind of diversion of PDS articles will be stopped. We will try to take all steps so that we will be able to stop this kind of diversion of PDS articles.

As far as quality is concerned, we are trying to verify and FCI is making serious efforts to prevent all sorts of complaints about substitution of good quality items with a bad quality items. (*Interruptions*)

About the bogus cards with Bangladeshis, I cannot give a reply off hand because we are directly responsible for the procurement, storage and transportation of food particles in bulk to the State Governments and implementation part; operational part is the responsibility of the State Governments and Union Territories.

As far as the issue of ration cards is concerned, it is entirely and responsibility of the State Governments and Union Territories, (*Interruptions*). If there is any serious complaint, he can put a separate question., I can collect the answer and given it to him.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA: After taking charge of this important Ministry, the hon. Minister had conducted an extensive tour to the backward areas of our country. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what is the assessment of the working of the PDS in these backward areas and what are the steps taken by the Government for the effective functioning of the PDS.

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: After taking charge, I have visited, so far, Assam, Nagland, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. My feeling is that PDS needs streamlining because a lot of complaints are coming from many areas. It has to be looked into; it has to be streamlined. That is why, after getting the report of the Sub-Committee, of Ministers, we will go through systematically to streamline the PDS system. What I find in RPDS areas in many States is that they are doing well. But, in some States, there is still scope for further improvement.

As far as rice and wheat are concerned, at present, we are not getting many complaints about availability. The main complaint is about kerosene availability. Actually, there is a shortage of kerosene in the county. There is some restraint. There is some universal complaint about shortage of kerosene. Our Ministry is continuously taking up this matters with the Ministry of Petroleum. They have said that because of financial constraints, it will be difficult for them to increase it substantially.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA CHIKHLIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated in the reply that in Gujarat and Rajasthan people with income of more than Rs. 28,000 per annum have been excluded from PDS. In the question it was asked whether the State Governments had sought the permission of the Central Government regarding this exclusion? Further, I would like to know whether exclusion of people with income of over Rs. 28,000 per annum, but having handicapped children and aged in the families was given due consideration or not?

[English]

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Regarding elimination of any categories by any State Governments, they need not take the sanction of the Central Government. At present, the State Governments are fully entitled to take a decision about these things because implementation is fully with the State Governments. The Central Government is responsible only for transportation, procurement and storage and all other things. The implementation is with the State Governments. They are fully empowered to take a decision for eliminating anything.

SHRI GUMAN MAL LODHA: Have you given any guidelines for categorisation?

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Please allow me to complete my answer. First I was ex-

plaining the legal position. As per the present legal status, every State Government is entitled to take a decision regarding elimination. But now what we are trying to do is to have a national policy for PDS. That national policy we cannot take up unilaterally because PDS is a joint responsibility of the Union Government and the State Governments. That is why we have appointed a Committee. That Committee will consult all the State Governments and all the political parties. After getting a national consensus, we shall work out a national policy. Even that national policy will be advisory only. Ultimately, the State Governments are entitled to take a decision regarding implementation. That is the law as per our federal system.

[Translation]

#### Storage Facilities for Foodgrains

\*663. SHRI SATTYA DEO SINGH:  
SHRI BRIJ BHUSHAN  
SHARAN SINGH:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the absence of adequate proper storage facilities large quantity of foodgrains are damaged every year;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken or proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard including scientific methods of storage;

(c) the quantity of foodgrains damaged during transportation, rotting and decaying in the godowns of the Food Corporation of India and the Central Warehousing Corporation during each of the last two years;

(d) the amount earmarked by the Government in 1993-94 for providing proper storage facilities; and

(e) the remedial measures taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?