

SHRI K.P. REDDIAH YADAV: Your department has eaten away 50 per cent of the World Bank aid.

MR. SPEAKER : This is not allowed.

[Translation]

Public Distribution System

*664. SHRI NITISH KUMAR:
SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have constituted any Study Team for conducting survey of the existing Public Distribution system;

(b) if so, the composition of the team; and

(c) the time by which the report of the said team is likely to be submitted?

[English]

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 (c). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) to (c). No Sir.

A committee of State Ministers of Food and Civil Supplies has however been set up to go into various issues involved in the formulation of a National Policy on Public Distribution System (PDS). The Committee has been asked to be guided by the resolution adopted by the Advisory Council on Public Distribution System (PDS), at its 15th

meeting held on 21.3.93 that "a National Policy may be evolved which should focus on the need to allocate larger and more meaningful quantities to the needy and deserving sections of the society".

The Committee comprises the Minister in charge of Food and Civil Supplies from the States of Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Haryana and is headed by the Tamil Nadu Minister. The Committee has been requested to submit its report by April 30, 1993.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am developed habit of asking short questions. If the hon. Minister is affected by it, he should forgive me. The Committee, which has been set up for the formulation of a National Policy on Public Distribution System, has been asked to submit its report by April end. But from the statement given by a Member of the Committee, i.e. a Minister of West Bengal, it appears that the report cannot be submitted before July.

In regard to the second question, the hon. Minister has replied that only two meetings had so far been held. It is not proper to delay this important issue. The Committee has been asked to go into the issue of allocating larger and more meaningful quantities of foodgrains and other commodities to the needy and deserving sections of the society through the Public Distribution System. The rich will not be covered under this scheme. Not one is opposing this, but there are only 5 crore ration—card holders under P.D.S. and near-about 40 percent people are covered under this system. If the rich are excluded from it, their maximum number will be 30 lakhs. The amount of subsidy will not come down as a result of it. The Government is concerned about reducing the amount of subsidy being given in this area. A Subsidy of Rs. 3000 crores was given this year. By the end of this year, this subsidy will go up to Rs. 4700 crores. This can be a matter of concern for the Government. Last year, the off-take in the period between April, 92 and January, 93

was 14.55 metric tonne, whereas in the period between April, 91 and January, 92 the off-take was 15.80 metric tonnes. These off-takes had taken place from the F.C.I. godowns. It means that last year the off-take was comparatively less and there was less distribution through PDS. Despite this fact, the amount of subsidy given in that period had gone up. The Government on the one hand wants to reduce the subsidy and on the other hand it wants to remove the affluent section from the public distribution system. It is not known as to how the Government will be able to do that. In Delhi, it is essential to possess ration card. It is needed for many purposes such as for taking and L.P.G. connection. Will for purchasing a vehicle or for getting telephone connection the hon. Minister say something in this regard? It is said that subsidy is given to provide foodgrains on cheaper rates to the people. But actually the F.C.I. is being subsidised for its inefficiency... (*Interruptions*).. My question is related to policy. I want to bring it to the notice of Government. For its inefficient handling, the F.C.I. charges more from the Government which in turn increases the amount of subsidy. The small shopkeepers get very little subsidy to take foodgrains to their shops from the godowns. As a result, the rural people do not get foodgrains from the P.D.S. shops situated in their areas. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question. Otherwise I will disallow it.

[*Translation*]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: There is nothing to disallow. They get foodgrains from these shops only on some special occasions such as Id, Holi and Diwali etc. The rural people must get essential commodities from the P.D.S. shops. Does the Government propose to reduce the amount of subsidy by removing corruption and inefficiency prevalent in F.C.I. or it wants to reduce it by depriving some sections of the people of this facility?

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): Mr. Speaker, Sir there is no delay in the functioning of the Committee. The decision to appoint a Committee of Ministers was taken only recently. It was taken on the 21st of March in the 15th meeting of the Advisory Committee. So, this Committee was appointed only on 21st of March. After that, within a month they have held two meetings, one in Delhi and another in Bangalore. They have decided to hold two more meetings, one in Guwahati and another in some other place in the eastern sector. So, the Committee is proceeding according to the schedule, but it seems, some of the members feel that they need some more time. However, the Government would like to take a decision very soon, as far as possible, because this question of targeting is being considered for a long time. I agree with the hon. Member that we have to increase the quantity of foodgrains to the really needy people of this country. The present difficulty is, we are now distributing nearly 19 million tonnes of foodgrains and it is enough only for 12 to 15 per cent requirement of our population. As per the present public distribution system the entire population is entitled for PDS articles and the present system is universal. The entire population, whether they are rich or poor, is entitled, by law, to get the PDS articles. Now, we want to take a change and that is why, the Government, with the cooperation of all the State Governments, is trying to target it. (*Interruptions*) But, at the same time, I would like to clarify one thing. The Government's idea is not to reduce the food subsidy from the present level. In the last year's Budget, it was only Rs. 2,500 crores. In this Year's Budget, food subsidy is Rs. 3,000 crores. So, there is substantial increase. It may go further in the year end. Government is not thinking in terms of reducing the food subsidy. What the Government wants is that food articles should be available to the common people. For that, we want to target it, In that targetting also, Central Government do not want to take a unilateral

decision because PDS is the joint responsibility of the Centre and the State Governments. We want some targeting. Otherwise, we will not be able to increase the present allotment to the common people. But, at the same time, we do not want to take a unilateral decision.

My difficulty is the question is a long one

I told you that it is the joint responsibility. Central Government alone cannot take a decision. We have to know the views of all the State Governments and of all political parties. We want a national consensus. We want an open mind. Then only, we will take a decision about that. I agree with the hon. Members that there are some complaints about non-availability. We are trying to deal with those complaints.

Regarding LPG also, there are some problems. It is difficult to answer that problem at present because it is with the Ministry of Petroleum. But our Ministry is trying to take up with the Ministry of Petroleum regarding this problems.

MR. SPEAKER: You had put a long question and you had a very substantially long answer. Now you put a short question.

[*Translation*]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, you must have noticed that I have not got the reply of what I have asked. He only repeated his old lecture. I would like to ask another question. I never repeat my question. Kindly bear with me.

The total population of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar constitute 52 per cent of the total population of our country, whereas, the allocation by the Centre to the P.D.S. shops in these states is only 20 per cent of the total allocation. These States do not get enough to meet their needs. This allocation is made through F.C.I. Several State Government want that they should be authorised to procure themselves. At present, this pro-

cedure is done in some areas of Western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan only. Procurement is not done in some states such as Bihar etc. I would like to know from the Government through you, whether Government instead of supplying foodgrains through F.C.I. godowns to the P.D.S. shops, propose to authorise the states to directly procure the foodgrains and supply to the P.D.S. shops on the same rate as is charged by the F.C.I. godowns? In this way, the role of F.C.I. as middleman will be eliminated and the State Governments will be able to directly procure the foodgrains from the farmers and will supply them to the P.D.S. shops on the same rates as given by the F.C.I. Definitely, attention will also be apaid toward quality. As National Policy is being formulated in regard to the Public Distribution System, whether the Committee will also consider this issue? No doubt, the State Government will have to spend on procurement so the Central Government should provide to the States the amount earmarked for procurement plus the subsidy being given by it to the F.C.I. so that State Governments are able to procure from the farmers and supply them in adequate quantity directly to the P.D.S. shops. They will also take care of quality. Will this issue also be considered while formulating the National Policy?

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Because of historical reasons, in certain States, the PDS started much earlier - 40 years ago. They are now getting a little more quantity of PDS articles. In certain other States, especially in the Hindi-belt, the PDS started of late. There is a real complaint from the State of Uttar Pradesh saying that they are not getting their due. I can assure you that when the Government studies the report of the Committee, we will examine all these things thoroughly. At present, I cannot say anything.

Regarding the other suggestion, it is a valuable suggestion. We will examine that.

[*Translation*]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Mr.

Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has given a long statement on P.D.S. and has also given reference of a sub-committee. I would like to say that as the children are shown biscope....

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question. The time is very limited.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: This sub-committee has been formed just to provide essential commodities to the poor through the P.D.S. This is an illusion like biscope. Neither the sub-committee, nor the hon. Minister seem to be serious and in April....

MR. SPEAKER: This is the reason why we could do only four questions.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the point directly.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: I am coming to the question. Some times it happens that a person who has pneumonia, is treated for malaria. This Sub-Committee seems to be functioning on the similar lines. I would like to submit to the hon. Minister through you that during 1992-93, wheat was procured from the farmers at a rate of Rs. 280 per quintal and under the Public Distribution System, this wheat was given to the poor at a rate of Rs. 325 per quintal. There is a difference of Rs. 45/- between the two rates. On one hand, the farmers were.....

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: If you do not come to the question, I am disallowing it. Please come to the point. If you have a question, put the question. You cannot do like this.

[Translation]

Others also want to speak.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: I am coming to the question. There is a difference of Rs. 45/- between the two rates. The sum of Rs. 300 crores is likely to increase to Rs. 1700 crores during the current financial year. (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: This question is disallowed. I am disallowing it. Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

SHRI HARISH NARAYAN PRABHU ZANTYE: Sir, the Government wants to put the PDS in a proper form. But the main reason why blackmarketing, smuggling of these foodgrains is going on is because of the bogus cards. Nobody is looking into the bogus cards.

The second issue is that some strict penalty has to be given.

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question. The time is very limited. We have hardly got two minutes time.

SHRI HARISH NARAYAN PRABHU ZANTYE: Some remedy has to be worked out regarding the bogus cards. There are so many other things which I want to express.

MR. SPEAKER: No need. You have to put the question.

SHRI HARISH NARAYAN PRABHU ZANTYE: I am putting the question. About smuggling, there should be strict penalty. Curtailing of blackmarketing has to be done. Will the Central Government look at it?

MR. SPEAKER: The operation is with the State Government. This question is disallowed.

[*Translation*]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask a question in one sentence. Last year, the Government had promised in this House that the Public Distribution System will be brought upto the village panchayat level. I would like to know whether it has been done? If not, what are the reasons for it? If it is proposed to be done, whether he will again make a false promise?

[*English*]

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: Already, in 1700 blocks all over the country, there is the revamped system. That system is really to help the village people.

SHRI ANBARASU ERA: Sir, the answer given by the hon. Minister is that the responsibility of the Central Government is only to supply the foodgrains to every State and it is only for the State Government to ensure the distribution of it. We know it. But at the same time, even the ration cards are not distributed in Tamil Nadu**

(Interruptions)

SHRI M.R.KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN: He is making charges.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Unnecessary allegations will not form part of record.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ANBARASU ERA: And the foodgrains supplied by the Central Government are not properly distributed to the public and the public are not getting it through the public distribution system. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI M.R.KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN: He is making allegations. *(Interruptions)*

** Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: It has gone off the record. Please sit down.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ANBARASU ERA: I therefore, ask the hon. Minister whether there is any proposal to appoint a monitoring agency about the foodgrains so that people get the benefit out of it.

SHRI A.K. ANTONY: The issue of ration card is entirely with the State Government.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

River Pollution In Uttar Pradesh

665. SHRI LAKSHMI NARAIN
MANI TRIPATHI:
SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any reports that the rivers in Uttar Pradesh, particularly, Saryu and Gomti are heavily polluted;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the measures contemplated by the Government to control this pollution?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The rivers are polluted mainly due to the discharge of untreated domestic wastes and partially treated industrial effluents. In addition, agricultural run-off containing pes-