

this situation for Navodaya Vidyalayas.

Uniform Policy on PDS

*462 SHRI MANJAY LAL:
DR. CHINTA MOHAN:

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

(a) whether the Government have formulated a uniform policy at national level with a view to make public distribution system more comprehensive and effective in the country;

(b) if so, the main features thereof; and

(c) the time by which the policy is likely to be implemented?

[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

As per the present policy of the Central Government, entitlement to benefits of the Public Distribution System (PDS) is universal. However, at the 15th meeting of the Advisory Council on PDS held on 21st March, 1993, it was resolved that "a National Policy on PDS may be evolved, which should focus on the need to ensure supply of larger and more meaningful quantities of foodgrains through PDS to the really needy and poorer sections of the Society". The implementation of PDS is a joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments. Any change in the existing policy can be made only in

consultation with the State Governments. Therefore, it may not be possible to set any definite time limit for a decision in this regard.

[Translation]

SHRI MANJAY LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reply given by the Government is evasive. The hon. Minister has stated that the meeting of the Advisory Council on the Public Distribution system was held on March 2, 1993. The members in that meeting decided to evolve a policy to ensure supply of foodgrains to the poor people. I would like to place before you some figures. If you compare the figures of October, 1991 and October, 1992, you would know the real position. The total foodgrains supplied in 1991 was about 17.10 lakh tonne while that in 1992 13.99 lakh tonne foodgrains was supplied. In November, 1991, the total quantity of foodgrains supplied was 15.29 lakh tonne while in 1992 it was 13.76 lakh tonne. Similarly in December, 1991 the total quantity of foodgrains supplied was about 15.81 lakh tonne while in December, 1992 it was 14.57 lakh tonne. 25 per cent reduction has been enforced in just four months and the Government proposes to adopt a new policy to supply foodgrains to the poor people. It also proposes to curtail about 30 lakh tonne of foodgrains during the year 1993-94. Foodgrains supply has been curtailed in each month. The Government may please make it clear whether it proposes to supply foodgrains to the people living below poverty line through PDS.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: Mr. Speaker, Sir, no curtailment has been made nor it is intended to curtail foodgrains supply. I would like to state with regard to the point to which the hon. Member has drawn attention that owing to lower procurement, reduction at some places was certainly made during the last several months. But on the whole I do not think that the Government has

either made any drastic reduction on the whole or propose to do so. As regards the hon. Member's question about the national policy, I have furnished this information. Recently, a meeting of the advisory council was held in which a resolution was adopted. I have given information about all that in my statement.

SHRI MANJAY LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, my question is that the Government propose to adopt a new policy to cancel the cards of people of higher income so as to supply foodgrains to the needy persons and thus run the PDS efficiently. I doubt that if the cards of upper class people are cancelled, the lower class card-holders may also be deprived of the benefits of PDS, they will also have to purchase foodgrains at higher prices in black market. The Government purchases foodgrains from the farmers at lower rate and supplies it at higher rate. The amount of subsidy that the Government gives is going to increase three times this year than that of last ten years, and the Government has to bear most of this burden particularly in connection with PDS. Keeping this fact in view I would like to know what measures the Government propose to take to check the extravagant expenditure on PDS.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: The central issue price has been increased just a few days back and provision of about Rs. 3000 crore has been made in the Budget. Therefore, there is no question of any reduction in it.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Government propose to adopt a policy to reduce the expenditure on distribution?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: There is no such policy. It is the job of the Food Corporation to ensure that the allocated foodgrains reaches the state. So far as the internal distribution is concerned, it is the

responsibility of the State Government.

[English]

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: Recently, we are hearing certain alarming reports about starvation deaths, particularly in tribal and backward areas. While this may be due to several factors, one reason for this is surely the failure of the public Distribution System. So, the claims that are being made about the revamped Public Distribution System can surely be called into question. This becomes a very important issue. We find that the off take of the PDS this year has been much lower than in the earlier years. No clear data regarding the actual allocation of foodgrains in the 1700 blocks identified for the revamped PDS are available. So, what is the total allocation for these 1700 blocks and also what is the per capita allocation in these blocks?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: For the revamped PDS, an additional quantity of two million tonnes has been provided and this is being issued from 1st June 1992. This is in addition to the normal allocation for the entire year.

Coming to the scarcity matter, whenever such incidents are brought to the notice of the Government, we inquire into them. Even yesterday, there was a discussion in Rajya Sabha about Palamau District in Bihar. We have sent our officer from the Ministry. So, whenever such matters are brought to our notice, we immediately act and send our officers and we also try to see that the State Government acts immediately, because the internal distribution is the responsibility of the State Government. From our side, we can only persuade the State Government and we can only request them to make the arrangements immediately.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: That is no answer to my question. I have

asked about the total allocation as also the allocation per had.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: It is difficult to give information with regard to per head allocation. I have given all the other information.

[*Translation*]

KUMARI FRIDA TOPNO: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the poor people living in slum in urban areas have not been issued ration cards. People living in the interior parts of rural areas have also not been issued ration cards. When the district administration is asked to take measures in this regard they say that since the Central Government has not been supplying the foodgrains in required quantity, they are unable to issue ration cards to people, thus depriving the people residing in interior villages and in slums of the ration cards. In the light of the prevailing circumstances what measures are being taken by the Government so that Orissa may get adequate foodgrains supply. All the hon. Members are aware that a large number of starvation deaths are taking place there. Therefore, special care should be taken with regard to supplying ration to Orissa. What measures the Central Government is taking in this regard?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: Mr. Speaker, Sir, foodgrains are allocated to the state on the whole. If at all there is any specific area of a village, or a village it may kindly be brought to my notice. I would contact the state Government and set it right.

DR. CHATTRAPAL SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, under the food policy, the Central Ministry entrusts the responsibility of the distribution of specific items to the dealers which has led to exploitation of the consumers. I would like to know whether wheat flour is being distributed in Delhi

under this scheme, whether the dealers are being forced to distribute it to the consumers?

MR. SPEAKER: This is a separate question.

SHRI HARADHAN ROY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there are two rationing systems in our country - one is statutory Rationing and the other is modified Rationing. Due to the modified rationing system in rural areas, the people in those areas do not get regular ration supply. Distribution of ration depends on supply of foodgrains. My submission is that as per the policy, the rural people must be provided ration regularly, whereas under the modified ration system, sometimes they get it and sometimes they do not get it. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to why a uniform system is not applied throughout the country?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the universal village policy is meant for the entire country. The resolution regarding the new policy to which the hon. Member has indicated, was passed in the PDS advisory Council. I have stated that new suggestions are being made and the Government is thinking over them.

[*English*]

PROF. K.V. THOMAS: Sir, Kerala is a State where we have got the statutory rationing system which is one of the modern systems of the country. Both the Central Government and the State Government spend a lot of amount on subsidy for distributing these essential items. So, my question to the Government is whether the affluent lot will be exempted from this subsidy which is being given through this PDS

MR. SPEAKER: The question is disallowed.

[Translation]

SHRI TARACHAND KHANDELWAL : (chandni Chowk) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether Essential Commodities Act under the public distribution system passed by the Government applies to the Fair Price shops or not. The wheat, rice etc. supplies by the warehouse of the Government is of low quality. If at all the Act applies to fair price shops, then how many cases have been registered so far, and if not, what are the reasons for not applying the act to such shops?

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Mr. Speaker, Sir, so far as the application of the Act on the fair price shops is concerned, it does apply. But I would like the hon. Member to give me a notice if at all he wants to know the number of cases registered so far, and I would furnish the required information to the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN : Kerala is a State which is 50 percent deficit in food production. At present we have a ration system. I doubt the introduction of this new policy will affect the present rationing system in Kerala. We are exporting so many cash crops and thus contributing to our foreign exchange resources. We are deficit in rice production and by the adoption of the new policy of Government this crop will be affected further.

SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED : Sir, the new policy, which the hon. Member has pointed out, is not a negative policy. If the hon. Member kindly reads through the sentence of the resolution, it is very positive.

For the hon. Member's attention, I would just read from my statement.

" A National Policy on PDS may be evolved, which should focus on the need to ensure supply of larger and

more meaningful quantities of foodgrains through PDS to the really needy and poorer sections of the Society."

So, this is an one sentence Resolution. This is not negative thing but a positive thing.

(Interruptions)

Handicapped Students

*463. **SHRI MANORANJAN BAHKTA:**
SHRI GEORGE FRENANDES

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be please to state:

(a) whether any Committee has been set up by the University Grants Commission to cater to the needs of the handicapped students;

b) if so, the composition of the said Committee;

c) whether the said Committee has submitted its report;

d) if so, the broad features thereof; and

e) the action being taken by the Government thereon?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE) (KUMRI SELJA): (a) to (e). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

a) According to the information fur-