

(a) the total number of blind persons in the country as per the latest available data;

(b) the number of blind persons anticipated to be brought down by 2000 AD as per the Government's National Programme for the prevention and control of blindness'

(c) the major thrust areas under the programme; and

(d) the anticipated success rate, area-wise?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI A.R. ANTULAY) : (a) As per survey conducted in 1989 there are approximately 12 million blind persons in India.

(b) It is targetted to reduce prevalence of blindness from 1.49% to 0.3% by 2000 A.D. To achieve this target it is proposed to perform 25 to 30 lakh cataract operations per year.

(c) Major thrust areas of the programme are :

1. Control of contract blindness by surgery.
2. Upgradation of the diagnostic and surgical facilities in the various eye care units.
3. Identification of children with refractive errors and their treatment.
4. Eye Banking and treatment of people with corneal blindness by corneal grafting.
5. Eye Health education to create awareness about the facilities for eye care.

A World Bank assisted Cataract Blindness control Project is being implemented in 7 states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu. In addition Government of India intensified programme in Jammu & Kashmir and a pilot project with assistance from Danish Government in Karnataka, is being implemented.

(d) Regionwise percentage of achievement of targets for 1994-95 are as follows :-

Region	Target	Achievement	%
Western	404500	448304	111
Central	550000	456301	83
Southern	644050	630227	98
Eastern	465300	279288	60
Northern	385250	347860	90
	2449100	2161980	88

Benefit to Consumers

*180. SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU :

SHRI SURENDRA PAL PATHAK :

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

(a) whether there has been a fall in the wholesale prices of the essential commodities during recent months;

(b) whether the Union Government are aware that the benefit of reduction in the wholesale prices of the essential commodities is not being passed on to the consumers; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS) (SHRI VENOD SHARMA) (a) Percentage variation in the Wholesale Price Indices of selected essential commodities during November, 1995, December, 1995, January, 1996 and February, 1996 upto 17.2.1996 is given in the enclosed statement

(b) and (c) It takes time for the decline in wholesale prices of essential commodities to get reflected in decline in retail prices. The retail prices are also influenced by the availability of commodities at local level at a particular time, demand and supply management, hoardings by private trade and the existing delivery system.

The Government accords utmost priority to control the prices of all commodities in general and essential commodities in particular. Apart from taking certain long-term measures to increase the production of various commodities, other measures taken by the Government to contain the rise in the prices include open market sale operations of rice and wheat at below market prices by Food Corporation of India and Supply of grains at subsidised prices to remote and inaccessible areas through the Revamped Public Distribution System. The import of edible oils excluding coconut oil, palm kernel oil, RBD Palm oil, RBD Palmstearin has been allowed under OGL at reduced customs duty of 30%. The National Dairy Development Board has also been authorised to import palmolein at a concessional customs duty of 20%. In the case of pulses, the import of pulses has been placed under OGL. The customs duty on import of pulses has been reduced from 10% to 5%. The Pulses, Edible Oilseeds and Edible Oils (Storage Control) Order, 1977 has been amended to exclude imported pulses from the purview of storage limits prescribed under the said order. The State/UT Governments have been directed to initiate strict action against hoarders and blackmarketers under Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980.

STATEMENT

Trend in the wholesale price indices of selected essential commodities during Nov., 1995 Dec., 1995, Jan., 1996 and Feb., 1996

Percentage Variation

	Nov., 1995	Dec., 1995	Jan., 1996	Feb., 1996
Rice	+0.4	+0.3	-0.5	-2.6
Wheat	+1.4	+1.8	+0.5	+0.4
Gram	-2.1	-2.5	+2.0	1.4
Arhar	+0.4	+3.1	+0.3	-6.3
Potatoes	+0.6	-21.8	-27.0	-17.5
Onions	+8.8	+11.8	-6.5	-22.0
Tea	+10.0	-4.7	-9.6	-3.1
Sugar	+0.2	-0.2	+0.4	-0.1
Salt	+23.1	+12.2	+7.2	+2.1
Vanaspati	-0.1	-0.5	-2.1	-1.2
Mustard Oil	+0.7	Steady	+0.5	-0.6
Groundnut Oil	-2.0	-0.6	-1.1	-0.8
All Commodities	+0.5	-0.1	-0.2	Steady

Hazardous Chemical Accidents

1372. SHRI RAM NAIK : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether accidents involving hazardous chemicals have increased with the rapid growth of chemical industries;

(b) if so, the details of such accidents during the last three years;

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken to prevent these accidents;

(d) whether the Government propose to consider collaborative efforts to prevent and check such accidents in cooperation with the chemical industries; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS: (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) As per information made available by the State Governments and Administrations of Union Territories, based on the last ten years data, no increasing trend is discernable in respect of major accidents involving hazardous chemicals.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The steps required for prevention of accidents due to the handling of hazardous chemicals have been laid down in relevant sections of the Factories Act, 1948, as amended in 1987 and the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals Rules, 1989, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 notified with a view to prevent accidents and minimise effects of accidents both on man and the environment. A yearly inspection of the industries by the concerned authority, the State Inspectorate of Factories, conduct of mock drill of the on-site plan every six months and submission of the report of the trial by the occupier is also mandatory. Preparation of safety report and conduct of periodic safety audit is also laid down in the rules. A series of six workshops were held through out the country during 1991-92 to draw the attention of the major accident hazard installations to the various provisions of the rules. A comprehensive guide to the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals Rules, 1989 and a Manual on Emergency Preparedness for Chemical Hazards have been brought out to facilitate better compliance by the concerned industries and regulatory agencies.

A scheme of training of personnel on accident prevention, preparedness and mitigation at seven identified institutions is in operation during the current five year plan. A draft of the amendments, to the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemicals Rules, enhancing the scope by way of redefining hazardous chemicals based on UN definition, is under discussion.

(d) and (e) Rules have been framed in consultation with experts from the chemical industries and Industries' Association. A set of rules, entitled "Chemical Accidents (Emergency Planning, Preparedness and Response) Rules, 1996" has been finalised. These rules envisages a 4-tier system of checking of such accidents in cooperation with chemical industries.

Municipal Solid Waste

1373. DR. VASANT NIWRUTTI PAWAR : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Central Road Research Institute has done some research on the use of Municipal solid waste in the road development;

(b) if so, whether any report has been prepared and submitted in this regard; and

(c) if so, the salient features thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT) : (a) Yes, Sir. Central Road Research Institute has taken up a project for utilisation of municipal waste in road construction financed by Ministry of Environment and Forests.

(b) and (c) Two interim reports have been submitted. The salient features are as follows :