

SHRI RAM NAIK : That is for your friends to decide.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : I am sorry, I was confused. I through, you wanted the United Front Government, before it goes, to leave something behind it.

SHRIMATI KRISHNA BOSE : Sir, it seems that politicians may not agree even in the second meeting that they are proposing to have. So, may i know from the Home Minister it he would consider having an Advisory Committee of constitutional experts who are the best persons to give any view on this ? And they can also suggest what safeguards can there be in case Article 356 is either abolished or amended. What safeguards can be there in case a situation that we are facing in U.P. now arises ? Will they think of having an Advisory Committee of constitutional experts ?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : As far as this question of Article 356 is concerned, I do not feel that at the moment there is any need for an Advisory Committee of constitutional experts. If such a necessity arises, we can discuss that. But I would say one thing. As far as U.P. is concerned where the President's rule is in force, personally I am of the view that we should have an Advisory Committee here at the Centre as generally is the practice. Whenever any State is brought under the President's rule, an Advisory Committee consisting of representative of the different political parties is constituted for acting during the period of the President's rule. Unfortunately, in the case of U.P. such a committee has not yet been constituted as there is some technical and legal hitch. We are trying to overcome that as soon as possible so that an Advisory Committee is set up.

MR. SPEAKER : Now Question Number 44.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Sir, you do not look straight. You look either to left or to right.

MR. SPEAKER : I first look straight before I look this side or that side.

Import of wheat

+
*44. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI :
SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE :

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

- (a) the reasons for import of wheat in 1996-97;
- (b) the quantity contracted to be imported, country-wise;
- (c) the rate at which the contracted wheat is being imported vis-a-vis the prices in the domestic and international markets;
- (d) the total expenditure incurred/to be incurred on the import of wheat;
- (e) the total quantity of wheat arrived in the country till date; and

(f) the overall impact on the domestic price structure of wheat after importing the same ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) to (f) A statement is being placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) In view of the decline in production and consequent lower procurement of wheat during 1996-97 and the increasing trend in the prices of wheat and wheat products in the domestic market, Government decided to import upto 2 million tonnes of wheat to augment availability in the country.

(b) Country-wise quantity of wheat contracted for import upto 14.2.1997 is as under :-

	(in lakh MTs)
Australia	13.25
Canada	2.50
Argentina	1.00
Total	16.75

(c) So far, only Australian wheat contracted in December, 1996 at an F.O.B. price of US \$ 148 per MT has arrived in India.

The international prices and the wholesale prices of wheat in India were as under:-

	Prices in the international market per M.T.	Avg. wholesale price in India as on 1.1.97 (in Rs.)
Australia	\$ 199.50 to 205 FOB	Rs. 6100 to Rs. 10660 per M.T.
Canada	\$ 101.00 FOB	
Argentina	\$ 144.00 FOB	

(d) The total expenditure on import of 16.75 lakh tonnes on cost and freight basis at Indian ports works out to about Rs. 1043 crores approximately.

(e) The quantity of wheat arrived at Indian ports as on 20.2.1997 is 4.36 lakh tonnes.

(f) The increased availability of wheat is expected to have a sobering effect in containing the open market prices of wheat.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : The statement laid on the table of the House does not contain a complete reply to my question. An attempt has been made to conceal

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : rather than reveal the facts. In the reply, hon'ble Minister has stated that foodgrains have had to be imported due to three reasons. I would like to know from the Government whether it has formulated any long term policy. Whether the Government are aware about the quantity of foodgrain required to be produced; the quantity actually being produced; the estimated production of Rabi crop during 1996-97; the anticipated requirement of foodgrains during the next year; the quantity required for human consumption; the quantity required for the livestock and how much out of it would be misappropriated in the fodder scam. Has the government made any such evaluation ? Secondly, you have cited certain reasons for decline in production. When did you come to know about it ? The new crop comes into the market by March. When did the Government come to know that there has been a shortfall in production ? You have stated that it is being imported. By when will the imported foodgrains arrive in the country ? If it arrives in March - April, what benefits would be there it won't have any balanced impact on the market. Has the government made any estimate about its adverse impact on the revenue position of our country, the loss likely to be incurred by the nation and its impact on the farmers? I have asked about the overall impact on the farmers. Therefore, please state whether any long-term policy has been formulated regarding foodgrains and especially wheat.

MR. SPEAKER : Dr. Joshi, I think you are asking the same thing again and again. I think it is good enough.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question has been asked specifically with regard to the wheat. Hon'ble Shri Joshi has mentioned that also. The reasons that have been cited that the production has fallen by 31 lakh tonnes in comparison to the last year's production and procurement has fallen by 41 lakh tonnes. In view of this shortfall, imports were made. We wish to curb the prices. The price rise has been unexpected. There were several reasons for it. Some reasons are justified from economic point of view; for example, we wish to increase the minimum support price (MSP) every year and it should be increased. If the farmer does not produce foodgrain, the requirements of the nation would not be met. Food security is our prime responsibility.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Please confine your speech to replying my question. We know all this.

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : You have asked about the imports. You have enquired about the farmers.

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Please tell us about the impact of imports. You are talking about the M.S.P. What are the sources of your import ?

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : I'll reply all the questions one-by-one.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Please do not tell about the M.S.P. We know all that. Please reply properly.

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : I'll reply to each and every point. If I leave out anything, you may ask me again. You have asked as to where was the need to resort to imports at such a time. In reply, I have told you that the production was less, and hence the procurement was less, and there had been an unprecedented rise in prices. We want to curb the prices.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Why was there a shortfall in procurement ? Production of foodgrains fell by 31 lakh tonnes whereas the procurement has fallen by 41 lakh tonnes. So why was there a shortfall in procurement?

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : As there has been a shortfall in production, that is why procurement was also less, when the yield of the farmer goes down, the procurement will also go down consequently.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Please. You cannot go on exchanging words like this. Mr. Minister, please be brief in your answers.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI CHHATRAPAL SINGH : The Minister is misleading the House.

MR. SPEAKER : That is not true.

SHRI CHHATRAPAL SINGH : The figures regarding production and procurement are not correct.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You are not supposed to give answer to him. You please give answer to Dr. Joshi.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Some people were reading something else into it. If I go into details, I'll clarify everything. The Prime Minister has also spoken on this matter. People have approached High Court. It has been converted into a political matter. People have distorted the facts. There is no middleman and no private company is involved in imports. The imports have taken place on a government to government basis and such a thing has happened for the very first time. It happened at such a time when the farmers had finished sowing their crops. It has not affected the production. I have got the papers wherein it is stated :

[English]

"a plea against free amount of wheat import dismissed."

DR MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this

is not the way. I have asked a very specific and an important question which relates to the farming community. It is a very specific and simple question. I seek your protection.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Hon'ble Joshi Ji has asked about the likely fallout of import of wheat from the international market and its consequent impact on the domestic prices, Indian wheat or the farmers? I would like to tell you that imported wheat is being provided at Indian port. If you want the relevant figures in Indian currency, I can tell you the figure in Indian currency, otherwise I can also mention the foreign currency figure \$ 148(Interruptions)

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Poor farmer or labourer does not understand all this talk about dollars. Please give us the figures in rupees.

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : All right I'll give you the figures in rupees. The imported wheat will be available in India @ Rs. 6227 per quintal and(Interruptions) it was a slip of tongue. The rate is Rs. 6227 per tonne and at this rate the imported wheat will be available in India and the average price of Indian wheat including all economic costs comes to Rs. 6500 per tonne.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know the rate at which it will be made available in the market.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I do not think you can go on adding questions like that. I will have to go to the next question. Mr. Minister, please conclude your answer. That is not the way. What is this questioning before he gives the answer?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : You have to restrain the Minister and not me, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : But you are also adding more and more questions.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : I am not adding questions, Sir,

I am trying to clarify.

MR. SPEAKER : Please ask the next question.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Let him finish it, Sir. This is a very important question.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the imported wheat is being provided at Indian port at a cheaper rate. It is cheaper by Rs. 332 per tonne and Indian wheat(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : All right. That is sufficient.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is totally wrong. The price at port and the market price are never the same. You should add the charges of carrying the grains from port to stock and from stock to the market and then tell us the price. Please do not mislead the House. Secondly, I would like to ask you whether you have got the foodgrains tested before importing it so as to rule out the possibility of presence of such toxins which could harm our crops. You should keep in mind that such an incident had already occurred in 1980 and even now so far as I know, there is a substance by the name of aflatoxin and its presence in the foodgrains denotes that the grain is poisonous and it could cause harm to the crops in the country. Whether the Canadian Wheat Board has refused to issue any such certificate that the quantity of toxins present in the foodgrains stock are less than the prescribed limit and that the toxin element is within the tolerable limit. Whether you have got any such certificate from all the countries from where the wheat has been imported that it fulfils the phyto-sanitary conditions and it you have procured any such certificate regarding the toxin limits, would you lay all these documents on the Table of the House ? Would you assure the House that the imported foodgrains is free from Chemicals and that it does not contain any such poisonous chemical substances which could be harmful for human beings and the crops ?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : You are not only capable of confusing the Minister, I think, you are capable of confusing the Speaker himself now;

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : That I cannot do, Sir. All along my life nobody has charged me of this.

MR. SPEAKER : My goodness; I cannot follow your question - very fast and long.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : The question is very simple, whether phyto-sanitary conditions have been observed or whether the whole amount of wheat imported is free from toxins.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, out of the wheat procured on contract i.e. the imported wheat, about 4,36,000 tonnes of wheat has been received so far. By next month, additional six lakh tonnes of wheat is likely to be received. The feed back reports received so far do not indicate the presence of any poisonous substances or toxins.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Would you lay those certificates on the Table of the House ? I would like to know whether you would table the certificates received from boards and from whichever agency it has been exported alongwith the certificates pertaining to tests carried out.

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : The wheat being received is as per our specifications. The procedures regarding testing the grains and issuing certificates are being followed ... *(Interruptions)*. There is no remedy for the doubts although there is factually no reason for doubt in this case.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : Would you give information to the House or not ? I have not asked whether there is any doubt or not.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : I would request Shri Joshi that if he has got any information, he should lay it on the Table of the House so that the nation is benefitted*(Interruptions)*

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI : "Wheat quality compromised." Canadian Board has declined and has clearly stated it. I am asking this question in that very context*(Interruptions)*

When wheat was imported earlier in 1980, the crops in Punjab had been destroyed by fungus.

[English]

The country will suffer immensely. If there is toxin in this, people will also suffer immensely. What is the harm if the Minister kindly produced those certificates and presented them to the House ? This is the certificate, the statement of assurance by the Canadian Board; it is not there.

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Sir, the Minister just now told us about what the price of imported wheat is going to be. It is going to be closer to Rs. 8 per kilogram approximately and exported at a much lower price. Obviously the country is going to loss about Rs. 400 crore in this transaction. That is pretty clear. The consumer would have to pay through his nose. Very briefly, I would ask the Minister when and by whom was this decision to export taken and what were the factors that made the Government conclude that we were very well able to meet our food needs and therefore could export even if it meant selling at a lower price.

I have asked two very clear questions. He can reply to those two questions.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was decided to import up to 20 lakh tonnes of wheat.

[English]

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : I am talking about exports.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Sir, after June 25, not even a grain of wheat has been exported by F.C.I.

[English]

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Sir, he has not answered my questions*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I said, you are responsible for that.

[Translation]

PROF. RITA VERMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we seek your protection. The Minister is not giving the reply*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Sir, it is obvious that he has not answered my question.

MR. SPEAKER : The answer will come after Shri Barnala puts his question. Just one more minute.

[Translation]

SARDAR SURJIT SINGH BARNALA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the import price is being quoted as Rs. 622 and procurement price would be Rs. 415 or may be lesser than this price.

[English]

How does the Minister justify this ? Also, how would he be able to procure sufficient quantity of foodgrains this time ?

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, last year, the Minimum Support price was Rs. 380 per quintal. This year it has been raised to Rs. 415 per quintal in view of the interests of the farmers*(Interruptions)* This year the procurement price is Rs. 415 per quintal. We have had a substantial yield of wheat and we are expecting a good yield. The Government would definitely take a decision regarding the measures required to be adopted for providing remunerative price of farmers.

[English]

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Sir, the hon. Member, Dr. Joshi has raised an apprehension that the wheat contains toxic elements and the hon. Minister says that indications are that there is no such toxic element. Why do you not conduct an inquiry ? As it is a serious apprehension that has been raised, I want the Minister to inform this House whether he is prepared to conduct an inquiry into it. The toxic element is dangerous. I would like to know his reaction.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I stated that the issuance or certificate of purity of the grain is one of the specifications laid down for procurement of wheat. I have mentioned earlier that the Government would not accept even a small quantity of wheat if it does not meet our specifications. The wheat is being imported under this condition and India will not import wheat at higher rate.