

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) No, Sir. FCI and State Government agencies have procured 61.20 lakh tonnes of paddy upto 4.12.98 in the current Kharif Marketing Season 1998-99. In terms of rice total procurement is 46.45 lakh tonnes as against 69.53 lakh tonnes procured during the corresponding period last year. The shortfall in procurement is due to lower production, delayed arrivals, unseasonal rains/cyclone in some parts of Punjab, Haryana, U.P., Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh. The rice millers were exempted from contributing levy rice upto 31.10.98 in Haryana and upto 10.10.98 in Punjab.

The Government has allowed relaxation in the uniform specifications for purchase of paddy on account of unseasonal rains/cyclone in Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh in the interest of farmers.

[English]

#### Conversion of Religion

1429. SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of persons converted to Christianity in North-East during the last ten years; and

(b) the reason for such conversion of religion at a large scale?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) and (b) Such details are not maintained by the Government.

#### Enhancement of Foodgrains under TPDS

1430. SHRI K.P. MOHAN: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the information regarding the enhancement of foodgrains supplied under the Targeted Public Distribution System Scheme from 10 kilos to 15 kilos per family has since been collected as recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the total number of families is likely to be benefited by the said revision, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Standing Committee on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution has recommended that the monthly allocation under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) should be increased from the present level of 10 kg. per family Below Poverty Line (BPL) to a minimum of 15 kg., if monthly allocation of 20 kg. per BPL family is not possible at this juncture.

In the present form of PDS/TPDS in which non-BPL population is also extended the benefit of subsidised foodgrains, if the quantum of foodgrains for families Below Poverty Line (BPL) is increased from 10 kg. to 15 kg. per family per month, the additional requirement of foodgrains will be about 36 lakh metric tonnes. The additional subsidy required is estimated to be about Rs. 2150 crores per annum. The year to year stock position of foodgrains in Central Pool as well as the budgetary constraints at present may not permit increase of entitlement for BPL population from 10 kg. to 15 kg. per family per month.

[Translation]

#### Minimum Wages Act

1431. SHRI THAWAR CHAND GEHLOT:  
DR. ASIM BALA:  
SHRI PRASAD BABURAO TANPURE:  
SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK:  
SHRI S.S. OWAISI:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to restructure the labour welfare and minimum wages Act for beedi workers and other labourers;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the time by which it is likely to be laid on the table?