

he is aware of the fact that the Government of India had given an assurance to the people of Kerala that the statutory ration would be maintained and rice and wheat, adequately required for maintaining the statutory ration meant for the entire people, would be supplied by the Government of India. It is on that assurance that Kerala switched over to cash crops. It is the Government of India which wanted us to switch over to rubber and other cash crops in order to save foreign exchange. Mr. Minister, are you aware of this assurance? If so, will you ensure that adequate rice and wheat is supplied to the State Government to maintain the PDS in full measure in order to take care of the entire people of Kerala?

SARDAR SURJIT SINGH BARNALA : Earlier, there was a legislation in Kerala that any land that came under food crops, particularly rice, should not be diverted to cash crops. There was a legislation...*(Interruptions)*

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : No. I am talking of the assurance. You have not understood my question...*(Interruptions)*

SARDAR SURJIT SINGH BARNALA : Let me answer.

MR. SPEAKER : Prof. Kurien, let him complete first.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : There was an assurance from the Government of India.

SARDAR SURJIT SINGH BARNALA : That is what I am saying...*(Interruptions)*

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : There was an assurance from the Government of India that PDS would be maintained in the State of Kerala and rice would be supplied by the Government of India. Mr. Minister, are you aware of that assurance?

SARDAR SURJIT SINGH BARNALA : It is not only a question of being aware of it but I was a part of it. As I said earlier, there was a legislation that any land that came under food crop should not be diverted. So, I was a part of it. I asked them: "Why do you not grow food crops?" When I was the Agriculture Minister earlier, I had gone to Kerala discussed the matter with them and had assured them that any foodgrain that was required would be supplied by the Central Government.

I was a part of it. So, that assurance has always been complied with. Whenever there is a requirement from the Government of Kerala, we supply whatever type of food they need. They sometimes need rice from Andhra Pradesh and we try to supply it from Andhra Pradesh. Earlier they were asking only part-boiled rice and we supplied that. Similarly, as regards

wheat, whenever they need and whatever quantity they need, we are in a position to supply.

Conversion of Tribals to Christianity

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*3. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN AHAMED :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of tribals and other people converted to Christianity in various States, during the last one year, State-wise;

(b) the number of tribal Christians and other members of Christian community reconverted from Christianity into Hindus recently, State-wise;

(c) whether the Government are aware that there are some instances in which conversions or reconversions were done forcibly;

(d) whether in view of the attacks on Christians, the Government propose to make changes in the law to prevent forcible conversions in the country; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to check the instances of such conversions?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI) : (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) The Central Government does not maintain any data in this regard.

(c) to (e) Some States have enacted legislation providing for prohibition of conversion from one religion to another by use of force or allurement/inducement or by fraudulent means. No proposal to enact a Central legislation in this regard is under consideration.

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN AHAMED : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have seen from the reply that the Government of India does not maintain any data in this regard. I would like to know specifically from the hon. Minister as to how many people have changed their religion from Hindu to Christianity at Manoharpur in Orissa.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as has been answered in the principal text given to the Member, the Government or the country comes to know of the religion-wise population in various areas on the occasion of a Census, not otherwise. During that period if anyone converts from one religion to

another, the local people and the local authorities may be having a record of it particularly in States where there are laws relating to conversion. But in the rest of the country, this is a voluntary matter and, therefore, so far as the Central Government is concerned, it would not know how many people have been converted in Manoharpur or any other part of the country.

As I have said in the course of my reply to the principal question, there are three States in the country where there are laws relating to conversion, there is a prohibition for converting from one religion to another by use of force or allurement or inducement or by fraudulent means.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : It is not a fundamental right.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI : Yes, it is not a fundamental right and there is a Supreme Court verdict on this. There is a fundamental right to practise, preach and propagate any religion and there is a fundamental right of conscience but the right of conversion is not a fundamental right. This is the Supreme Court judgment. I would only like to say that as far as his specific question as to how many people have been converted, the Government does not keep any record in this regard.

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN AHAMED : Sir, I came to know from the newspaper that one of the senior Cabinet Minister said that the incidents of Gujarat and Orissa were an outcome of mass conversion. I would like to know whether the Government, the Cabinet as a whole belongs to the same view.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI : Sir, so far as the incidents in Gujarat are concerned, I have already replied in response to my earlier question. In this particular case, what has been dealt with is how many Christians are there; how many have become converted; and how many have been re-converted. As I have said, the Central Government does not maintain any data in this regard.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the last 50 years after our Independence, Christians have been attacked by some sections only now and rumours are also being spread that conversions have been forced on the people. Then, some responsible people and voluntary organisations have also provoked the people. I would like to know whether it is not a serious matter. Why is the Government thinking that they would take action? The Government must order a special inquiry to find out as to how rumours have been spread. If we take 100 years of our history, India has always been immune to conversion, that is, from Hindu to Christianity and vice-versa.

12.00 hrs.

Now, why has this problem arisen? In the name of conversions, these attacks have been taking place in India. It had never happened previously. Therefore, I want to know what steps are being taken to immediately stop the confusion and rumours about conversions and lack of communication.

MR. SPEAKER : There is no time. Unless you complete, you cannot get any reply.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY (Visakhapatnam) : The Minister of Home Affairs must assure the House about the specific arrangements being made to solve this problem.

MR. SPEAKER : Does the hon. Minister have any objection?

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : We will have an Half-an-Hour Discussion.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I will allow Half-an-Hour Discussion please.

(Interruptions)

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Employment Generation Programme

*4. SHRI NRIPEN GOSWAMI : Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) the details of funds allocated under Urban Wage Employment Programme (UWEP) component and Urban Self Employment Programme (USEP) in the country during 1998-99, State-wise; and

(b) the number of persons benefited in the country during the said period, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI) : (a) and (b) Statement showing State-wise funds allocated under Urban Wage Employment Programme (UWEP) and Urban Self Employment Programme (USEP) during 1998-99 and number of persons benefited since inception of the programme in December 1997 is attached.