

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI : I am not saying whether there are three or 10 Members to speak on the Bill. Everybody has a right to speak. I do not want to curtail the number of Members who want to speak on this Bill. My only request is that continuity should be there. At least, on the next day the matter should be finished.

SHRI RAM NAIK : Sir, many Members are eager to support the Bill.

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI : I welcome it.

17.09 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Rise in Prices of Essential Commodities

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, let us take Item Number 19. Shri Pinaki Mishra may continue his speech on rise in prices of essential commodities.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA (Puri) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I said yesterday that there was a dismal scenario which confronts us in this country in 1996. I am sure that a vast body of public opinion today shares my viewpoint.

We are all reminded of 1990 and 1991. That, Mr. Chairman, brings us back to the old dictum during the the French Revolution : "The more things change, the more they remain the same." I also said yesterday that there was a general sense of well being in this country for five years between 1991 and 1996 when the Congress Party was in power at the Centre and I said so advisedly. The reason being: What is the barometer of a sense of well being which permeates among the people? These are well known barometers all over the world. The stock market booms are there, there is investor confidence, there is a lot of money being pumped into the stock market, investors are making money, business is booming, consumerism is thriving and foreign investment flows into the country unabated.

AN HON. MEMBER : There are scams.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Some scams do take place. You cannot make omelets without breaking some eggs. But those scams, as I said yesterday, are more in the nature of allegations and in a democracy, everybody has the right to allege without going to jail. That is one of the fruits of democracy which we have inherited.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, in 1995, we had a scenario where we had 21 billion dollars in terms of foreign reserve.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Pinaki Mishra, if you can resume your seat for a minute, this laying of the paper can be finished.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Yes, Sir.

17.13 hrs.

PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE

[English]

Treaty between the Government of the Republic of India and Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on sharing of Ganga/Ganga water at Farakka.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): Sir, on behalf of Shri I.K. Gujral, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of Hindi and English versions of the Treaty between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on sharing of the Ganga water at Farakka.

[Placed in the Library, See No. LT-891/96]

17.14 hrs.

RISE IN PRICES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES-CONTD.

[English]

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, for this general sense of well being, Shakespeare once said: "God is in Heaven and all is right with the world" So, that is what happened with India. God was in heaven and for five years we had wonderful monsoons, we also had good winter rains and we had bumper crops. All this, unfortunately, makes us forget a very important, a very significant fact which has been pointed out time and again by agronomists all over the world, by agricultural experts, by senior authorities of the FAO which is the apex body of the World Food that India, primarily, is simply one bad monsoon away from a famine. Since we have had a succession of good monsoons, we have been flushed with foodgrains and our buffer stocks have risen. But we are basically one bad monsoon away from a famine and unfortunately, I am representing the State of Orissa which, we all know, - we have discussed this issue before in the House - is affected by drought this year.

While in 33 out of 35 agro-climatic divisions in the country there was average and above average rainfall, in just two agro-climatic regions there was no rainfall virtually and Orissa happens to fall in one of those regions. There is a drought situation there which borders on famine and one shudlers to think as to what would have happened to the rest of the country if we had one bad monsoon as we had in Orissa this year.

Sir, essentially, the problem of increase in the prices of essential commodities is really a microcosm of a larger ailment, which we face today in this country and

there are both short term reasons for this ailment and long term reasons. So, the problems are short term as well as long term and therefore, the remedies, naturally, would be short term and long term.

What are the short term problems that we have? For the past five years, we have had bumper crops. The acceptable buffer stock in this country which I am told, had been fixed about a couple of decades back, which is supposed to be about 22 million tonnes of foodgrains, is now way out of date. We are a country - we must remember - which is expanding at the rate of 50000 new mouths a day, at the rate of 15 million a year which is an astronomical growth rate!

After the events of 1977, everybody understands that family planning has basically become a dirty word. It is a politically incorrect statement to make now, to talk in terms of family planning, to talk in terms of sanctions against the growth of population. So, since there is no national consensus on this seminal issue of family planning, we have to think in terms of expanding our production of foodgrains to feed these extra mouths.

This 22 million tonnes of buffer, that is supposed to be maintained by the FCI, is way out of date. They are geared to keep this amount of a buffer, stock but when we had a buffer increase, which went up to, I am told almost 37 million tonnes a couple of years back and which persisted last year, there were huge quantities of damaged grains, and the FCI did not at that stage think it fit to let out this excess grain into the market, which should have been done. It was at that stage that the Government decided to go in for export of wheat. This immediate short term problem that we are facing today is on account of that because once the exports started at a dollar price of 190 dollars or 200 dollars a tonne, which works out to almost Rs. 7000 and when the FCI release price works out to between Rs. 4200 to Rs. 4500 per tonne, we are having a gap of almost Rs. 3000 a tonne; so, the farmers obviously would prefer to give their grains to exporters to the intermediary traders who feed these exports rather than giving it to the FCI.

This year, we have to remember that, we have a shortfall of three million tonnes which is not a very significant shortfall, that is, from 65 million tonnes to 62 million tonnes. But when we have 15 million extra people to feed every year, every tonne of foodgrains counts.

Therefore, in my opinion, the first issue that should be raised and that should be addressed by the Government is as to why adequate emergency steps were not taken at the right time to ensure that the export of wheat was clamped down immediately. The Minister has made a statement which I assume, is a responsible statement which said that after June, there were no further exports. After June, the exports were clamped down, but they continued on the basis of the past LCs. How have these LCs been operated? Major exporters today are sitting on bank credits of Rs. 50 crore or

Rs. 75 crore or Rs. 100 crore worth of cash. They are able to pick up the grains from the farmers at a higher price which is why, these grains are not able to find their way into the PDS. Why should you compel farmers or how can you compel farmers or how can you induce farmers to give it to the FCI at Rs. 4200 or Rs. 4500 a tonne when they would be able to give it to the exporters at Rs. 5000 or Rs. 5500 a tonne, where the exporters are still making a margin of Rs. 2000 or Rs. 3000?

This is the first issue that should have been addressed by the Government and I am sorry that the Government did not address this issue at the right time and it is as a result of this that we today face an acute shortage and an increase in prices. Even today, this lopsided, the short-sighted policy of the Government continues. How? They have clamped down on the export of wheat, but wheat flour continues to be exported. Last month, a release of 150000 tonnes of wheat flour has been made. Ultimately, all this leads to scarcity of foodgrains in the market and I am sorry to say that the Government has not addressed itself to this fundamental and important issue at the threshold itself.

The short term solution as far as I can see, is that any further export of wheat flour should be immediately clamped down. Obviously, all pending LCs cannot be done away with because these are international commitments but no extension of LCs should be allowed. Banks should be told to issue instructions to withdraw all the limits and credits which have been issued to all these exporters so that they are bound to come out up in the market and liquidate their stocks. Large farmers who have now become traders in Northern India have to be induced to somehow part with their stocks because stocks are still lying with them. We have a gestation period of five to six months before the next crop comes in and they are aware of that fact.

Now, the second issue which the Government should have immediately addressed itself to is ESMA. We have read in the newspapers today that the Delhi Government says that they are now invoking ESMA against traders and hoarders. I hardly need to add that the Delhi Government is dependent upon traders because the basic vote bank of the BJP are the traders. The bastion of BJP or the BJP's support bank are the traders. This is a well known fact. Therefore, if action had to be taken against traders and hoarders, it should have been done much earlier. Now they shunt the ball back into the Central Government's court saying that the withdrawal of the decontrol order did not come. They are right; withdrawal of decontrol should also have come earlier. But you should have asked them to make that withdrawal of decontrol order earlier. Now that we have raised it in Parliament, suddenly, the Central Government decides that the decontrol order will be withdrawn and the Delhi Government then decides that ESMA will be invoked. All this should have been done three or four months back. Therefore, all these bank credits, etc. must be withdrawn immediately from the traders as well as

exporters which will ensure that these stocks which are lying in godowns are liquidated immediately.

Apart from this, the House has to understand that basically, the Government policy on agriculture has so far been geared towards 25 per cent or 30 per cent of the rich farmers in this country. The medium farmers and the poorer sections of the farmers never get to see the credit which comes from the banks and never get to see the cutting edge of the Government's policy on agriculture. It is the rich farmers alone who are sharing the benefits. Therefore, somewhere along the line, the Agriculture Policy has to gear towards medium and small farmers because eventually it is their output which is a steady source of supply to the market instead of the rich farmers, because today, in any case, they are becoming traders in their own right.

Mr. Chairman, there are several long term problems in this area and what are those problem? I think everybody understands that they have been trying to address themselves to these during the last two to three years but unfortunately, no consensus has been arrived at and nothing has been done on this issue. What are those problems?

Ultimately, we are all dependent on the output of soil with fertilisers. There has been no cohesive policy and no clear rational thinking on how to enhance the crop output. Today, we have a three million tonne shortage. Why is it so? It is because the ideal soil ratio which has to be N.P.K. 4:2:1, that is four parts of nitrogen, two parts of phosphate and one part of potash has become so lopsided that it is 16:4:1, that is, 16 parts of nitrogen, four parts of phosphate and one part of potash. This soil output is bound to erode on an annual basis unless this is redressed immediately by a better all-rounded fertiliser policy.

The Prime Minister has made some advancement towards this and has given a higher subsidy on DAP. But it is not enough. Even today, if DAP is going to be sold at Rs. 3000 or Rs. 3500 or Rs. 4000 more than urea, which farmer is going to go in for DAP? The farmer has to be educated. Of course, the farmer is well educated on his own. But the Government must educate him by showing that the lopsided use of fertiliser has brought a shortage of three millions this year and next year, this will enhance the shortage further. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Food must sit down and form a nodal body which will work out a cohesive plan in order to ensure that DAP, urea and all phosphatic fertilisers are available to the farmers at some parity of price which would ensure that the farmer makes a right and optimum use of his soil.

This is the key to food security for 950 million people in this country. And with these 950 million - rising at the rate of about on fifteen million a year - we are going to be in a serious difficulty in future unless these long term solutions are attended to immediately. I reiterate my assertion in this House that the Government must

take the responsibility and the blame in a large measure for the kind of inaction which has been seen for the last three to four months. This should have been addressed to much earlier.

There is one other issue. In fact, the farmers in the Punjab and Haryana, due to the entry of the multinationals like Pepsi, etc., are now shifting their crops from wheat and rice to cash crops. Shrimati Sushma Swaraj yesterday made a fancy point with which, with great respect, I think, nobody in this House would agree to. She said that multinational were coming in raising salaries and, therefore, they are ensuring that Indian Industry goes out of competition. I do not think that it is true. The multinationals come in because labour is cheap in India. They do not want to raise labour rates and come into India in order to help labour here. But multinationals are affecting us in another direction, that is, the farmers are basically shifting focus of their crops from crops like wheat and rice to cash crops. So, this is again an area where the Government has to sit down and take a considered view as to how to help farmers focus in the right direction and ensure that the land use policy of the farmer is geared towards optimum cultivation.

With these words I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this Hon'ble House.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (Latur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to be very very brief. I think that this Parliament is doing its important duty in discussing the price rise in the country. It is really necessary for this Parliament to consider the issues of this nature - rise in population, problems of environment, inflation, unemployment, as to how the agriculture can develop, as to how the industry can develop, as to how the research and development in science and technology can take place and things of that nature - rather than discussing the issues which pertain to the institutions at other levels.

It is a fact that the prices are going up. And I do not think that the Government will also deny that the prices are going up. The price rise affects generally the destitute people in the society. It affects the entire population also. It is necessary for the Government to take steps in this respect. It is also true that many of the activities are not within the jurisdiction of the Government. If the agricultural production is not going up we do not have the cooperative farming in India, nor does the land belong to the Government as such; it is in private hands; the Government has to play a catalytic role in encouraging the farmers to increase the production. All the same, it is the responsibility of the Government to lay down policies which can really help in increasing production.

Why are the prices going up? Why do the prices go up? If the commodities and goods are not available in the society, in the market, in the country in adequate quantities, the prices will naturally go up. Now, what is

the situation today in India as far as the essential commodities are concerned? Are they not available in the country in adequate quantities? I think, the hon. Minister has got up and said that we do have foodgrains with us. That means that at least some goods and commodities are available in ample quantities. Even after the availability of the commodities and goods in adequate quantities, if the price are going up, the second reason for it could be that they are not made available to the consumers as and when they want them and at the places they want them. Now, that involves the Transport Policy.

It would be necessary for the Government of India to discuss this matter with the State Governments also and they have to find out as to how the foodgrains which are available with the Government could be transported to the places where they are actually needed. It would be necessary for the Minister in the Department of Supply to discuss this matter with the Railway Minister or the Transport Minister so as to coordinate and see that the foodgrains that are available at one place are also made available to other places. Bottlenecks in transportation have to be overcome.

The third reason, according to me, is hoarding. Shri Mishra has made a very good speech. He has suggested certain steps which could be taken to see that there is no hoarding at all. If we examine the availability of the goods and commodities in the market and if we come to the conclusion that in spite of the fact that goods and commodities being available in adequate and ample quantities the prices are going up, that means somebody is hoarding them. If somebody is hoarding them, how could he do it? He could do it only with the help of the credit which is given to him by the banks. It is here that the Government could take a decision, the Ministry of Finance could take a decision. Money should be made available to those who want to produce; money should be made available to those who want to do trade and business; money should not be made available to those who want to hoard with the help of the credit available to them from the banks. It is here that the Government has the responsibility. The Government has to examine as to what are the goods and commodities that are available in the country in ample quantities and what are the goods and commodities that are not available in ample quantities. If they are not available, they could be imported or we could take some other steps to see that they are made available and after they are made available if they have been hoarded then we could take steps to see that hoarding is not done. We could do that by punishing them or by filing cases against them. But the most effective manner of doing it would be to find out the big business and trading houses who are in these areas and to limit the credit facilities which are made available to them. That would certainly bring down the prices.

The point is, what could be done in this regard? We shall have to produce more. If the agricultural production

has gone down, it is necessary for all of us, not only for the Government alone, in the Parliament and in the Legislative Assemblies to find out as to why the agricultural production has gone down. Is it because credit is not available? Is it because of the hike in fertilizer prices? Is it because new technology is not available? Is it because the producers are not getting remunerative prices and the consumers have to pay more? Now, these are the issues which have to be very carefully examined and policies accordingly have to be laid down. If this is not done then we are responsible for the price rise.

The private sector, the public sector and the Government sector could help in removing the bottlenecks in the matter. One of the things which could be done by the Government is to anticipate things. The Government cannot take action after the things become visible to us. A scientist told me that if you notice a disease in a plant and if you apply medicine to it, you would not be able to save the plant but if you anticipate as to what is going to happen because of weather conditions and apply medicine to the plant, you could save it. So, it is necessary for all of us who are sitting here to anticipate things. If we do not anticipate and if we do not take steps before things happen and before things go out of control, we would not be able to provide the kind of relief which has to be provided to the people. Coordination is most important. In our country, which has adopted the federal system, we have the Union Government, the State Government and also the District Authority. Even the village authority is there. There has to be coordination between the Union Government and the State Government. For instance, somebody was saying that the railway wagons are not available. The question naturally asked by one of the Members sitting here was, why did you not have recourse to the road transportation; what was the difficulty in taking the foodgrains from the godown to the consumers by road transport and why did you not coordinate before. It is not a question of blaming either the Central Government or the State Government. Coordination is certainly necessary in such cases.

While initiating the debate, one of the hon. Members has said that the new Economic Policy is responsible for the price rise. I am not able to understand how the new Economic Policy is responsible for this. The new Economic Policy aims at producing more. You can find fault with the policy if it allows investment by foreigners or anything of the kind. But if you are taking steps to produce more in agriculture, industry, universities or research laboratories, you cannot find fault with it. I think the new Economic Policy, which is adopted in our country, is aimed at producing more. The new Economic Policy cannot be found fault with in this respect.

The Government has to use the new technology. There are people who are opposing the use of technology. When the satellite was launched, people were criticising by saying that when there is no drinking

water why should we have a satellite. They do not understand that satellite is the most advanced technology in the world today which helps the villagers, which helps the man who is living in the forest. If you have to give information about monsoon or to inform him about the disease with which the plants are going to be affected, it is the satellite which will help you. That is why, in this modern world, it is necessary to use the most advanced technology. If you, all the time, day-in-day-out attack the modern methods of management, modern technology or modern science and on the contrary create a psychology against it, how can you produce enough for the country? Take for instance Japan. It is as densely populated as India but what is costly in Japan is not goods but services. If you want to buy a suitcase, you can have it for 10 dollars but if you want somebody to carry that suitcase you shall have to pay 5 dollars. So, what is costly is the human services and not the goods. Why is it so? Japan is the most advanced country. At the same time, it is a most densely populated country. By using the modern methods they have done away with unemployment. They are producing more and they have become one of the most advanced countries of the world. That should be the approach. In our country those people who are speaking against technology, against science or modern methods, maybe they have good of the people at their hearts. We should not find fault with them and we should not say that they do not have good of the people at their hearts. But time has changed. Things are completely different today. It is absolutely necessary for us to understand what is to be done in order to see that we have production at the required level. We should use our intellectual power to see that we do not go in the direction which does not help us to produce more as it is not going to help our country.

I think it has become necessary now for the Government to take steps to see that there is no inflation and no rise in prices. Nobody will allow the Government to say that this is not their responsibility. Probably, they are not going to say also that this is not their responsibility. But if a member of the Government stands up and says that we have enough foodgrains in the country and at the same time if those foodgrains are not available to the consumers at acceptable prices, the responsibility of the Government becomes more onerous. If they do not discharge this responsibility, everybody will be allowed to say that they have not anticipated, they have not planned, they have not applied their mind, and that they have not taken necessary steps.

I do not think the situation has gone out of control. The situation is in control even today. If we wake up and try to take some steps, we will be able to help ourselves.

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE (Berhampore) (WB) : Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity given to me to express my views on this important discussion on price rise in the country.

I have heard a very valuable speech from the former Speaker, Shri Shivraj Patil and I have been enlightened by the speech. No doubt, I welcome this discussion because it is closely related with the mode of production and distribution system which is related with unemployment and poverty in our country. Basically, the economic condition of our country is very bad. Prices of essential commodities have gone so high that they are beyond the reach of the common man. The prices of rice, wheat, pulses, vegetables and other foodgrains have also gone up very high. Even my children do not get milk today because the price of milk has gone high. I cannot support the policy of the Government when they fail to check the rising prices of essential commodities.

But this United Front Government cannot be held entirely responsible for the creation of this economic condition because they are seated in the chair just a few months back, in the month of June. Within this six months' tenure, no Government can change the fate of the situation. Naturally, or consequently it is our observation that the blame for creating such an economic crisis lies with the failures and lapses of the previous Government. It is my observation that the entire economic situation we face today absolutely owes it to the economic policies of the previous Government, that is, the economic policies of liberalisation, the economic policies of globalisation. I cannot understand what our good friend hon. Dr. Manmohan Singh, the ex-Finance Minister, can say in response to the situation of price rise today following the acceptance of the policy of globalisation and privatisation which was formulated by him.

I have heard a very good speech from Mr. Patil. It is a fact that we are living in the age of capitalism. You know well that capitalism today is the sophisticated metropolitan capitalism which is an international economic phenomenon. The mode of production, the mode of distribution, the rise or fall in prices of essential commodities are entirely related with the international economic system. If there is price rise in the international markets, the prices of essential commodities must rise in the markets of underdeveloped countries like India and others, nobody can deny it. So, there are many questions, there are many factors to be considered here. The most important factor is the introduction of market economy in our country.

Nobody can refuse the vices in the market economy. In a socialist system, in a regulated market system, the price rise can be controlled by the State Government because there is a regulated market system, there is a State-controlled market system. But in a market economy, in a social system of market economy, it is very difficult to check the price rise of the essential commodities. In a market system, in a market economy, people's demand is in the geometric proportion and the Government's supply and the public supply is in an arithmetic progression. There is a gulf of difference

between the geometric progression and the arithmetic progression. In between these two things, there are hoarders; there are black marketeers; there are stockists, who kill the country and the society.

With your kind permission, I am quoting Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came out of the jail just after the Second World War and he went to Calcutta and addressed the mammoth gathering in 1945. He saw and addressed the people, 'hang the blackmarketeers from the lamppost; hang the hoarders and stockists from the lamppost and get food and distribute the wealth of the stockists to the people'. This was the speech delivered by the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1945. Fifty years have passed. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister of this country. His successors were the Prime Ministers of this country, but no blackmarketeer has been hanged to death on the lamppost. Here is the failure of the Government. Everybody knows it well.

Sir, in a system in which you live, the system is the factor. Then, what can be done in the parliamentary democratic system? What can the Government do in a sophisticated manner and in a legalised manner? That is to be just addressed by the Government. A welfare state, a popular Government, a Government, just after the unusual and complex mandate of the people, should have the duties to fulfil the task, to fulfil its commitments. The first task of the Government is to adopt the State Trading Policy. Had there been a State Trading Policy, then the difference between the people's demand raising in a geometric progression and the supply in an arithmetic progression could have been avoided. So, in my opinion, State Trading Corporation should be introduced first. Public distribution system should be developed. It should be integrated; it should be revamped. Otherwise, this situation cannot be taken over.

I have something to say. I will conclude within a very limited time. One thing is clear and everybody has told that the Government decides to increase the prices of petroleum products. I am sorry to say that the Government did not take up the simultaneous measures to control the price rise situation just after the increase of the petroleum products. At the same time, I am sorry to mention that our hon. Minister in-charge of the Food Ministry had not taken stock of the foodgrains position while he was entitled to take up this responsibility. This is also there.

Today, we have seen in the speech, we have seen in the Statement made by the hon. Food Minister. What is the Statement? The Statement is that the requirements have been increased; the requirements of mid-day meal, nutrition programme and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana have been increased. The requirements of all these programmes have been increased. But that cannot be the cause for the price rise of the essential commodities like rice, wheat, etc.

He had to check up the stock position. He had to check up all these things. But, this Government could not do it.

Sir, today, there is a question of satellite. There is a question of modern technology. But the most important thing is that land reforms should be done immediately. In many States of our country, we can see land reforms. In the name of land reforms, they just distribute surplus lands to the poor tillers, to the share-croppers and so on. I am not referring to that. What I am saying is that the land reform system should be entirely changed. It should be modernised first. All the surplus land available in the country should be brought under irrigation first. Had the Government taken the opportunity of utilising the lands for irrigation purposes our foodgrains production could have increased and we could have supplied food not only to the 900 million people of our country but we could have supplied food to the other countries also.

Our land is very fertile. But this Government and the previous Governments could not utilise all the fertile lands. They could not adopt this system of land reforms. They could not utilise the modern technology. They could not take full advantage of modern science in respect of lands and their fertility. So, there should be long range measures. The task of the Government should be to accept the land reforms first.

Sir, rapid industrialisation is also a factor, not the heavy engineering industries under the control of the multinational corporations. That can be taken care of. But the basic fact is the rapid industrialisation of our society, and also of our economy. As far as agriculture is concerned, the agro-based industries will contribute to the development of our country.

Sir, in my opinion, the immediate task is to improve and develop the Public Distribution System in order to cater to the needs of the people. Not only the modified rationing system but the entire rationing system should be developed. The Government has also to think about population control. There are many countries which are also suffering from the problem of population explosion but they have tackled their problem. Then comes the problem of economy. Those countries have taken a separate way to solve the economic problem. But it is unfortunate that the Government of India could not adopt all those ways. What did Russia do? What did China do? Just to accept the challenge is not the only way but there are ways which can be adopted by the Government to meet the challenge. Population control is also one of the important factors. We should be careful about all these things. Compulsory sterilisation in the name of population control is not the only measure but the consciousness should be developed. By doing so population control can be accepted. If you start controlling the population now, we will be able to receive benefits only after twenty-five years. So, what I want to say is that immediate measures to cater to the

needs of the people should be taken up first by the Government.

With these few words, I conclude my speech.

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS (Kalahandi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, price rise is a vital issue which concerns the millions of people of the country. In this House, so many times this issue had been discussed. Actually the poor people are affected by price rise. Now, I will go to the statistics. From 1990 to 1995, there has been a constant rise in prices, particularly, in the prices of rice, wheat, sugar, salt, and *dal* which are most essential things to live in.

The poor masses of our country mainly need these essential commodities to sustain and in this hour of crisis there has been a constant increase.

The poor people are used to take coarse rice. If you see the price of the coarse rice, it was Rs. 3.92 per Kg. in 1990 and it was Rs. 7.28 per Kg. in 1995. You are very much aware of the prevailing price. The same is the case with the coarse wheat. In February 1990 the price of coarse wheat was Rs. 2.90 per Kg. and in 1995 it was Rs. 4.65 per Kg. If you take the price of sugar, it was Rs. 8.72 per Kg. in 1990 and it was Rs. 13.35 per Kg. in 1995.

Sir, salt is a very common item. Poor people do not get vegetables, etc. so they use salt as their curry. Millions of our countrymen use salt or whatever things available in their villages as their curry because they cannot afford vegetables, etc. to eat. The price of the salt was 98 paise in 1990 and in 1995 the salt price went up to Rs. 2.06 per Kg. I am talking about the common salt which is used by the common man.

The price of our own common dal, i.e. arhar dal which is used by people by and large, has also gone up. In 1990, its price was Rs. 10.35 per kg. and now its price has gone up to Rs. 24.97 per Kg. If you go through all this, you will come to know how a poor man lives.

Several times, the Price Control Acts are being passed. The Governments, either the State Governments or the Central Government, have shown that they have been vigilant, but the prices could not be checked. What are the reasons for this? The reason might be the rise in population. It may be because of inflation and so on. These reasons are very much discussed by the hon. Members of Parliament here. But the most important point is how effective is our distribution system?

We have been listening slogans since our school days about the black-marketeers and hoarders. But why has there not been a system to check the black-marketeers and hoarders in the market? Why have we failed? I am not blaming any Government. The successive Governments have failed. I think that is the main point which I wanted to say, why we have failed to control the price rise or failed to provide essential commodities to the people at the lower level.

I will now take up the purchasing capacity of the poor people. I will give an example of my constituency, Kalahandi which is the drought affected area of Orissa, where people have lost their purchasing capacity. They cannot even afford to purchase rice at the rate of Rs. 2 per Kg. I am talking of the millions of people who live in the villages. They do not have jobs. We have forgotten to strengthen the land and the manpower in the country. We have only given emphasis on fast development. It is good that we should develop like other countries but not at the cost of our manpower and not utilising our land. Crores of hectares of land are lying unutilised.

18.00 hrs.

Why are we not able to utilise our land even after fifty years of Independence? We do not like to strengthen our farming community and the farming system and unnecessarily we are asking our farmers to go in for cash crop. All the time we had asked our farmers to leave the traditional crop and go in for cash crop so that they would not remain starved and they would earn more. All these slogans are very much popular during the last one decade. That is why, our farmers have lost their capacity.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Bhakta Charan Das please sit down.

I would like to take the sense of the House for extending the time of the House. There are twelve more speakers to participate in this debate. Many hon. Members are coming and saying that they have been waiting here to participate in the discussion for a long time. If you all agree, we shall extend the time of the House by one hour so that we can complete all the speakers today...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH (Rajgarh) : Yes, Sir, we can sit for one more hour today...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA (Kanpur) : No, Sir...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have heard you. Some very senior Members are waiting for a long time to participate in this debate. Let us complete it today.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR (Mumbai North-West) : Sir, my point is, whether the Members are new or senior, how does it concern? If you want to extend the time of the House, you can take the sense of the House...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : I am asking your opinion. I am not giving my opinion. It is not the opinion of the Chair or the Government or the Opposition. A lot of business is pending. This is the second day of this discussion. We are having another discussion under Rule 193. So, let us agree for extension of time by one hour so that we can accommodate all these twelve speakers today.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : In that case, the sense of the House should have been taken in the morning itself and not at 6 p.m. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : No, it is taken at this time only.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : That is all right. If the time is to be extended, it should go before the Business Advisory Committee...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : All are very valid points. At the same time, I am sure that you will also agree that this is also an important discussion.

(Interruptions)

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH (Rajgarh) : Sir, we should sit for one more hour today...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Kindly agree for extending the time of the House by one hour.

(Interruptions)

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Sir, the attendance is very thin when we are having such an important discussion...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) : Mr. Chairman, Sir we have to take up discussion under Rule 193 on foreign affairs, which is pending. Almost twelve parties have given a number of names for participating in that discussion. Shri Vajpayee is also very keen in this discussion and said that two hours time would not be sufficient and it should be extended. We want to include the agreement with Bangladesh and other things, about which Shri Vajpayee has also mentioned.

In the Business Advisory Committee, we had admitted two discussions under Rule 193, that is, one on Sports and the other about the problems of the Union Territories. Then, we had admitted two Calling Attention Notices. We appreciated the difficulty of the Members. Let us continue this discussion today for one more hour, even I would say that the Minister should reply to it if possible. The last date of this Session is 20th. Otherwise, we will not be able to finish all these debates and it would be very difficult. We should see from the 20th backwards and not from here up to the 20th. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Sir, the attendance is very thin when we are discussing such an important discussion today...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY (MANDSAUR) : Sir, several hon'ble members are yet to speak ...*(Interruptions)* The hon'ble Minister should make a reply tomorrow, because many hon'ble members who have already spoken, if they are not present at the time of reply ...*(Interruptions)* ... they will not be able to know as to what reply the Minister has made. The Minister may give a reply tomorrow. If the time is extended by an hour. Hon'ble Members who are present here and waiting for their turn may even after that if some more Members remain to speak then you may take a decision later on.

[English]

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : Shri Pandeyji, please listen to me.

As has been said by Shri Sontosh Mohan Dev, the correct position is that many Calling Attention Notices had been admitted and then the discussion on foreign affairs is also there. If you go on stretching this discussion for another one day, then we cannot accommodate the other debates. Therefore, my request is that you may please accede for extending the time of the House by one hour. There are many Members who would like to participate in this discussion. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : If at all, the time of the House is to be extended, it should have been done in the morning ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : In the morning, the Leader of the Opposition had suggested, which was also accepted by us, that the discussions on 'Ganga water' and 'foreign affairs' could be clubbed together and they need not be discussed today. They may be delinked from today's discussion.

We should complete this discussion today itself. In the morning itself, he has suggested that. Accordingly we are proceeding.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : Who has suggested that?

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee has suggested that...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please sit down. Let the Minister complete his speech. He will clarify that.

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : Therefore, in my opinion, I will request the BJP friends and Shiv Sena leader to please consider this because other business cannot be taken up. The time is limited. Therefore, I request you to please agree to extend the time of the House by another one hour or two hours. Let us discuss this thing.

[Translation]

SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hissar) : All the Members can not be accommodated within an hour.

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : The time may be extended by two hours.

[English]

We are prepared to sit and discuss. Therefore, what I would suggest is as price rise is an important issue, we must discuss it seriously. If the Members are not there, the Members are not there. Even if we list this tomorrow, the Members may not be there. Therefore, let us discuss this matter seriously and finish it today.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : As I had requested that all the hon'ble Members should speak today itself and the hon'ble Minister should make a reply tomorrow.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : The hon'ble Minister has also to make a reply in the Rajya Sabha tomorrow. Rajya Sabha is also equally important. It would be better if all the hon'ble Members speak today and the hon'ble Minister also make his reply today itself no matter whether we have to sit for an hour or two or even for three hours. Secondly, it may be that all the hon'ble Members speak today and the hon'ble Minister give his reply tomorrow after question hour is over. We agree to both the arrangements.

[English]

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : My only contention is that, if at all this was the situation, this should have been discussed before the Business Advisory Committee where we discuss all these matters. If need be, the time of the House should be extended by one or two hours. We should have discussed like that. This was not at all placed before the Business Advisory Committee. This is number one.

Secondly, if any Member in this Parliament is required to sit late, he should get the prior intimation in the morning itself. Accordingly we will manage his programme outside also. This is the second difficulty.

Thirdly, we say that this is a very important matter. But we are just trying to complete discussion as a formality on the subject matter today only. This should not be so. Give them advance intimation saying that, all right we will sit tomorrow two hours late and finish up the matter. That I can understand. Those who are interested will wait and those who are not interested, will go. That is why I am objecting that why at the eleventh hour, this discussion should be taken up. That is not the intention of the House. That is my feeling.

MR. CHAIRMAN : I want to say something from the Chair because this is not the opinion of the Government or my personal opinion. As you know, the business of the House is a matter of concern for all the Members of the House. The Chair is not restricting the Members because this is a very important topic. Today, all the parties have exhausted their time limit. But in spite of that, we have been allowing the Members to speak. We have not been restricting any of the Members. The list of the names of Members is coming in. Names are coming in even now. We are adding all those names. So if such a discussion is dragged on, it is not the responsibility of the Government or any party. So we are allowing. The Chair has used its discretion to allow all the Members. You please understand this. It is because of the seriousness of the matter which we are discussing that we have allowed all the Members. We did not apply the time restriction; You might have noticed

that. Otherwise, when one party is allowed only one minute or two minutes time, they are taking five minutes or 10 minutes. It is only fair to allow them to speak because this is an important topic. I request all the hon. Members to please allow, maybe, to extend the time of the House by one hour or at the most one-and-a-half hours by which time we will be able to complete the listed speakers. Some of them are absent. So you may speak in a restricted manner.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : Do we want to complete the formality? I consider that way.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This is not the formality because we used to take this kind of decision in the House. We have always taken this type of decisions in the House. You are right in saying that we should anticipate this and we should have discussed this matter earlier. But such things happen in the House.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : Let us have their impression.

MR. CHAIRMAN : This is why, we are taking the opinion of the House.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Quorum is there.

SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI : Only 46 Members are here. If I am still here, I will be raising this quorum issue.

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : If this is the seriousness of ours, then I have nothing to say. There is a certain agreement when we normally do not on the microphone.

SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI : We are not agreeing... (Interruptions)

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : If you do not agree to Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then I have nothing to say. That was the suggestion given by him in the morning. You all have been sincere and serious about the discussion on price rise and now you are saying that it should be taken up tomorrow... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, let us not enter into an argument.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI SRIKANT JENA : Please listen to all and discuss it with them. Finish it within one or one and a half hour.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, we have heard all the Members. All are valid points. But in the interests of the business of the House, let us agree. We will extend the time.

Shri Bhakta Charan Das may continue and conclude as early as possible... (Interruptions)

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS : Sir, I will conclude as early as possible...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Sir, please do not extend the time of the House by one hour or two hours, but extend it till all the Members participate in the discussion and the hon. Minister replies to it...*(Interruptions)* You have taken a decision. That is binding on us. ...*(Interruptions)* Members have other engagements in the evening. They did not know that you are going to extend the time. That is the problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN : As far as Minister's reply is concerned, we can fix the time, but for the Members we cannot. Members' speeches will go on. So, we will conclude the speeches today and the Minister's reply can be immediately after the Question Hour.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : Mr Chairman, Sir, you have already allowed Shri Bhakta Charan Das ji to speak.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please do not raise such technical issues.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let us come to a consensus.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR : The Members who sit in the House regularly should have some respect. That is equally important...*(Interruptions)*.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Sir, I have no problem. My submission is that the former Speaker and a very senior Member of this House, Shri Shivraj V. Patil spoke for thirteen or fourteen minutes. Members keep on speaking for an unlimited time and they consume the time of the House. I think, you will have to lay down some restrictions...*(Interruptions)*.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Self-imposed restriction is what we want. If that is not there, then the Chair will be forced to restrict. So, let us complete it now.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : Please ensure that the reply will be given tomorrow itself...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no difficulty for the Minister to reply even today. Let so not argue like this. The thing is that the Minister is ready with his reply even today. So, we will complete the discussion today and we can schedule the Minister's reply at 12 Noon tomorrow. So, let us finish the discussion today.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : How many speakers are left?

MR. CHAIRMAN : We have 12 more speaker. Some of them may not be here.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS : Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have not made efforts as to how to utilise the manpower to grow more or to produce more. We have also not made efforts for going for traditional cultivation like paddy and wheat, etc. In the land which is being abandoned. We have crores of acres of abandoned land in our country. Our country is famous for the traditional crop since the beginning of the age.

I would like to say that the most drought affected district, Kalahandi used to produce surplus paddy and rice. In 1936, we had supplied rice to Bengal and to the coastal areas of the State of Orissa. However, now, it is going through the drought situation. Why? It is not because of the fault of nature but it is because of the fault that we have failed to administer and provides benefits to the farmers to strengthen the infrastructural facilities to grow more crop.

If there were sufficient irrigation facilities in these areas, then there would not have been any drought. In 1936, we had produced more and by now the production would have been much more than in the past. But our production of paddy in that area has receded like anything. Similar is the situation in the country also. So, I would request the Government to take sufficient steps to grow crops on the abandoned land. There are vast sections of the people in the country who are unemployed, whose hands are not being utilised. So, their hands should be utilised for cultivation on this kind of lands. The manpower should be properly utilised. There should be more and more irrigation facilities provided for the land so that we can grow more paddy, more wheat and more and more traditional crops. Our farmers should be given sufficient incentives to go in for the traditional crops. Instead of inducing them to go in for the cash crops, they should be asked to go in for paddy and wheat which are the most vital foodgrains to be used by the poor people of the country.

With regard to distribution and checking the hoarders and black-marketeers completely from top to bottom, from the fundamental or the small unit of the country to the top unit of the nation, we should have a total revamping programme. Otherwise we cannot distribute the commodities properly amongst the people of this country, and there will be smugglers and there will be black-marketeers. In spite of all kinds of slogans, we have failed to check the black-marketeers and hoarders.

I have given you the example of the Kalahandi district where we produced more in 1936. Before Independence, we used to produce more and now we are affected by drought. So, these kind of problems should be identified by the Government. Nature has

given us all kinds of resources. Our land is fertile and the water resources are sufficient in the country. We should tap these resources and make a long term plan in such a way that we produce more and more in our country in the coming years. Thank you.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV (Patna) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Chairman Sir, today we all are concerned about the rising prices of essential commodities...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : We have agreed to sit until the discussion is over. So, we have an understanding that we will not raise the question of quorum.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : The Chief Whips and the Government and all Members may take note of the point. He has raised a very valid point. Let us continue the discussion. At the same time, if any Members are around here, please ask them to come and sit in the House. Let us continue the discussion. We have an understanding to continue the discussion until it is over. So, please do not raise any issue now.

Shri Yadav may continue.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Mr. Chairman Sir, today the problem of price rise is a national problem and the entire House and the country is concerned about it. We will have to look into the reasons of like in prices of essential commodities. The United Front Government is committed that it would not let the prices soar high and would check price rise. The six months old government has made good efforts and I particularly thanks Mr. Devendra Prasad Yadav, Minister of Food for the tremendous efforts he has made to provide foodgrains to the commonman at reasonable rates.

Mr. Chairman Sir, our population is more than 90 crores out of which more than fifty percent people are living below poverty line. 70 percent people are earning their livelihood by working in the field. Fifty years of independence have already been completed and even after such a long period of our independence majority of our population constitutes agricultural labourers and farmers, we are not paying attention towards them and this is the reason why we have been unable to keep prices under control, though, we wish to do so. Unless we increase agricultural production and prevent rapidly increasing population which are the root causes of price rise in the country we cannot check it. Several hon'ble members have expressed their views in this regard, I don't want to repeat them. The people here will have to

think irrespective of their party affiliations. It is our collective responsibility. We will have to find out the solution of this problem rising above party lines. Today we are sitting on the treasury benches and our colleagues sitting in the opposition. In a democratic set up there is a way where we can highlight the lacunae of the functioning of the Government but at the same time this is our duty to make constructive suggestions to solve the problems and the entire House will have to consider as to how we can increase our agricultural production and control the population the population growth. If these things are not kept under control whichever Government may be it will not be able to check the price rise. So, there is a need to increase the agricultural production. We will have to see whether the people working in the fields are being provided adequate facilities; whether proper arrangements for irrigation have been made or not. Whether proper facilities to the labourers working in the fields are being provided or not. If we don't pay attention to these things certainly we shall not be able to check price rise.

18.24 hrs.

(Shri Basudeb Acharia in the Chair)

Hon'ble Chairman Sir, I would like to draw your attention towards the prevailing situation. I agree to the fact that there has been a steep rise in price during the last twenty to twenty five days. The price hike is an outcome of a conspiracy. The United Front Government is a popular Government so, a conspiracy is being hatched to tarnish its image and this is being done by the hoarders and blackmarketeers. Through hoarders and blackmarketeers it is being planned to increase the prices of the poor. This artificial scarcity is being created under a conspiracy. I would like to know as to who are encouraging blackmarketeers and hoarders. Some people are trying to shield them.

There has been a considerable price hike in four or five States due to hoarding and black marketing though the States are already vested with powers to check such things provided we have the determination to do so and at the same time we are in the Government at the Centre. It is evident from the price-hike of the food grains in four or five States such as Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. That the concerned Government in the States had failed to fulfill their responsibilities. Hoarding and black marketing were encouraged and patronised in these State in one way or the other and that is why today efforts are being made to malign the United Front Government in the name of these mishappenings.

SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hissar) : The Government in Delhi is ruled by your party.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Mr. Chairman Sir, the Government is ours but you are controlling it. You and we all are in the Delhi Government.

SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA (Udhampur) : You can compare the price of wheat being sold in Bihar and Calcutta. You have mentioned about four Governments ...(*Interruptions*) You are giving a wrong statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It is alright, you may speak he is speaking all that he knows.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : I am saying confidently that you would not find the price hike in any other State which these four-five States have witnessed. They might have faced hardships. I had already said that we would have to consider these issues above politics only then, every common man of Hindustan. Can be benefitted.

SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Did the Central Government ever consulted these four States while permitting for exporting and sale of wheat in the black market?

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Honourable Minister had explained his views on the very first day and you will try to oppose the Minister when he will give his statement. Mr. Chairman Sir, I would like urge through you that Honourable Minister has categorically mentioned that the price hike, particularly the price hike of wheat was only due to its low production. Production of wheat was amounted to 31 lakh tons and less than 41 lakh ton was realised through the farmers. Then naturally production would be less and there would be shortage of it in the market. Even then the Government had put its efforts at every possible level to provide sufficient quantity of wheat, rice and sugar to the States. Honourable Minister had mentioned in his statement that many states did not lift the ration allocated to them then in such a situation it would certainly result into scarcity. Therefore there is a need to consider all these things.

Mr. Chairman Sir, we provide ration to the poor people through the public distribution system. But there is a need to have a check on the corruption prevailing in Fair Price Shops under public distribution system. We all come from common background and we are one among the common people. We also avail the ration facility being provided through the public distribution system. But large number of bogus units are being maintained by every shopkeeper. There are 30-40 percent bogus units in every state, until any action is taken to do away this bogus unit system we cannot hope for betterment.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have been given 10 minutes to speak. There are many members and they would be given 10 minutes each to speak.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Sir, I have started my speech just now. I have to speak a lot. Therefore I humbly request you to kindly give me some more time to present my points.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You will have to conclude your speech in 10 minutes. We do not have unlimited time. You please conclude your speech.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : I would like to say that stern action should be taken against the bogus ration card holders and let the honourable Minister please order an enquiry in such cases so as to have a check on bogus ration cards. If we fail to take such steps, the foodgrains would not reach the poor people at all...(*Interruptions*)

I would like to urge through you that on one hand our Government had provided wheat to the small traders, small hour mill operators, small dealers because they are all small traders at the lower level and on the other hand, had a check on the big traders who were earning profit in illegal manner by hoarding the items. Our Government had put a check on these things which resulted into massive protest. Earlier the big traders were provided unlimited foodgrains now the Government had stopped it and I would like to thank the Government and the honourable Minister for this action. Previously, there was no hoarding and any trader was free to stock any amount of foodgrains but in order to prevent hoarding of foodgrains certain limit was prescribed for it during 1993. Now our honourable Minister had taken many steps and I think hoarding would be eliminated completely as a result thereof and it will yield very good results. Apart from this the Government would conduct hoarders and blackmarketers and would made arrangements for supply of foodgrains to the poor people.

The time is short but cannot help saying that it is unprecedent incident in our history when a Minister had himself offered any agency such as C.B.I. to take action to prevent corruption in his department. It is for the first time in history that we witnessing are such an incident and we give the whole credit for this to honourable Minister. It is evident from this fact that our United Front Government is committed to check the corruption at all cost so as to ensure the supply of essential food items to the poor people including slum dwellers and labourers working in the fields - it is the intention of our Government and I think that it would prove to be helpful in bringing down and control the prices in future. Besides the Government would ensure maximum relief to the poor people who are about 70 percent of our population. With these few words regarding the steps taken by our Minister and as well as the Government I would request all the Chief Ministers to co-operate with our Government so as to check the hoarding of foodgrains and help in providing all the food items to the common person. With these words I thank the honourable Minister and the Government.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH (Meerut) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, there are many reasons for price hike in our country but the Government's policy is one of the main reason for it. Now I give an example before you where ban on transportation of agricultural products and the products of agriculture based on industries in our country has been lifted only in record. The Government have given assurance several times in the House that there is

complete freedom for transportation of agricultural products in the whole country but in fact on the borders of every state collections are being made in the name of business tax, Mandi parished and at some places as sales tax. In order to bring parity regarding the prices of every agricultural product as well as products of agro-based industries all the barriers at the State borders should necessarily be removed.

Mr. Chairman Sir, the State Governments have set up these barriers for the collection of taxes. Were the State Governments not collecting these taxes before 1974. Excluding Jammu and Kashmir there was no barrier on any State border. This is why today basmati rice which is being sold at the rate of 25 rupees to 30 rupees per kilogram in the whole country but in Bangalore basmati rice is being sold @ of Rs. 50 to 55 per kilogram.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Amarpalji you are not supposed to read out but instead you are expected to speak.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am not reading out anything. I am just looking for some points. As far as the hike in the price of wheat is concerned even today wheat does not lost more than 600 rupees per quintal in Etah and Mainpuri but in Delhi it costs 1000 rupees per quintal. There are several other reasons for the hike in the price of wheat, because of its low production the farmers do not have wheat to sell. Besides wheat is either stored in the godowns of F.C.I. or lying in the godowns of mega traders. The Government's policy is responsible for the lack of wheat with the farmers.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the sugarcane mills had started crushing of sugarcane from the first week of October for the year 1994-95. And as a result thereof the sugarcane growers after cutting off the sugarcane from the fields have sown wheat at large scale. The Minister of Food had offered a relief programme for entire sugar mills of country commencing the crushing of sugarcane at the earliest. Levy sugar will not be taken from the mills in October and November who will start the crushing of sugarcane in the first week of October. Because sugar is less extracted from sugarcane during this period. That is why during this year there has been a record production of wheat worth 65.5 million metric tonne. But in 1995-96 the Food Ministry remained indifferent to it and did not implement this relief scheme. Due to this, the production of wheat in 1995-96 as compared to 1994-95 went down instead of increasing and the sugarcane farmers had to face distress on account of financial loss. Because in this season sugar mills started crushing in the last week of October or in the first week of November.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, this time during 1996-97 the Government did not make any provision for relief plan in the beginning of the sugarcane season. Due to this and the arbitrary acts of mill owners, mills started functioning in the last week of November. This year sugarcane farmers could not sow the wheat at all.

Therefore, in the coming year of 1996-97 there is a great likelihood of fall in the production of wheat in the open market. So far as sugar is concerned, in 1994-95 the rate of sugar in the open market was 20 rupees per kilogram as a result of which this year sugar had to be imported. This time the rate of sugar in the open market is 12 to 13 rupees per kilo because during the year of 1995-96 there was a record production of sugar. But during this year the farmer of sugar has faced many economic hardships. They have not received even the last year's arrear. Barring this year, in 1997-98 the sugar may again be sold at 20 rupees per kilogram.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Amar Pal Singh ji, this is not the proper way of reading out papers in the House. You hand over the written paper to the Minister. He will give the reply to it.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : No, Mr. Chairman Sir, I am not reading it out. I am just quoting the main points written in it.

This year farmers are not getting even the price fixed by the Government and in connivance with the Union and the State Governments, the mill owners have approached the High Court with an intention to deny payment of sugarcane price to the farmers. If the Government wants to stop the arbitrariness of mill owners and really wants to benefit the sugarcane growers, the Government of India should immediately allow the small khandsari units to set up vacuum Pan so that their recovery should increase from six percent to nine percent and a small unit may crush sugarcane upto five thousand quintal per day. These small units should be exempted from license and levy sugar. Barring this year i.e. 1997-98 if the condition of Sugarcane farmers do not improve, sugar prices may shoot upto 20 rupees per kilo.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is an irony that is our country whenever the farmers want to increase their production, they have to face financial loss instead of getting any encouragement. Because of the policy of our Government, such a plight of the farmers take place. If farmers produce potato too much, its price goes down considerably. The same thing happens with the farmers while increasing the production of cotton and Union. If the farmers produce too much of quantity of paddy, the purchasing agencies of the Government exploit the farmers.

Instead of purchasing it from farmers, purchasing of agencies the Government starts purchasing paddy from the middlemen and the farmers of paddy get exploited by them. I would like to say when the farmers increase their production in a particular year the Government should come forward to give protection to prevent them from any sort of loss.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You please conclude now.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : Two minutes more is left for me to finish. The farmers of this country is not only

capable of meeting the demands of 100 crores of people of this country but at the same time it can also cater to the requirements of 30% of the world's population. India's farmers will be of great help in increasing export and earning foreign exchange reserve. I want to know from the Government regarding the price rise of pulses. Now, in the open market pulse is selling from 25 to 30 rupees per killo, which is the only source of protein for our vegetarian people so what is the justification for giving 840 rupees per quintal as the minimum support price for pulses to the farmers? If the Government increases the support price from 840 rupees to 1100 rupees per quintal, this will not only make the country self-sufficient in regard to pulses but of the same time consumers will get the pulse at rupees 15 per kilo instead of rupees of 30 per killo.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have already taken 12 minutes.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : I have got a point. I will speak for two minute more.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You are raising so many points. You have not repeated any point. The points which you have got to raise you may hand them over to Minister Saheb.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH (Meerut) : Mr Chairman, Sir, I am the third Member speaking on behalf of my party. You should give me time keeping in the view the time allotted to my party.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The others from your party have still to speak. Whatever you have to speak, please finish quickly.

SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH : I would like to put two examples of government policies before you and the House which have led to the downfall of cottage industries. Some years back, there was a shortage of papers in the country but new paper mills in the country were started and the shortfall of papers was compensated by it. This year the Government of India relaxed the import duty on it from 20 percent to 10 percent. Because of this a crisis has arisen for the domestic paper industry. The bagasse of cane farmers which used to be purchased by the paper industry at 80 rupees per quintal has gone down to 30 rupees per quintal. These paper mills are on the verge of closure. If the Government does not increase the import duty on paper immediately, in the coming years paper industry may go to ruins, which may again lead to shortage of paper in the country.

The second example is that of a factory of synthetic rubber and chemical factory running in Bareilly. 'Butadien' and 'Stairyn' is used in its production. The Government has allowed its import. This factory is importing 'Butadien' and 'Stairyn' from Hong-Kong, Singapore and South Korea. But 'Butadien' and 'Stairyn' can be produced in the country itself. For the use of this factory, in place of 'Butadien' and 'Stairyn', three lakh litres of

alcohol would be required per day. If the Government stops the import of 'Butadien' and 'Stairyn' then the problem of molasses of sugar industry, the molasses which is not being sold in the market, that will be solved because alcohol is made from the molasses. This will benefit farmers.

SHRI JAI PRAKASH : Mr. Chairman Sir, because of the increasing price rise the whole country is concerned, and we are equally concerned about it. The Minister has said in his statement that production is low. We all agree with this that if the production is low, there will be price-rise. But who is responsible for this? This is also a responsibility of the Government. Today the National Front Government says that they are doing many things for the farmers, they are doing many things for *dalits* and the down trodden. In order to increase the production of the farmers, I would not be able to ask this question because it is not related with the food supplies Ministry. But why there has been a price-rise, this is related with the Ministry of agriculture. When the farmers of this country were sowing paddy, sowing sugarcane, I know that DAP fertilizers were not made available to Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, by the Union Government.

Now, we talk about wheat. I live in Haryana. I know that the production of wheat has been higher as compared to the past. Why has there been shortfall? F.C.I. is responsible for shortfall. It does not procure wheat from Haryana and Punjab before 20th April. During this period crop of the farmer comes in the market and traders purchase it. Is it not wrong on the part of the Government? When F.C.I. has to purchase it, central agency has to do it, so why they do not purchase it on time. I would hold F.C.I. responsible for this. I would like to request Hon'ble Minister, as he was saying that he would get F.C.I. investigated by the C.B.I. otherwise, during the last five years only C.B.I., politicians and bureaucrats used to be viewed on televisions and heard on radio now here also they have stated to come I would like to request the hon'ble Minister that by coordinating with the agricultural ministry the Government should undertake a number of measures to increase the production of farmers, so that production should go up and the consumer of the country should get enough foodgrains, enough pulses.

Wheat was purchased from farmers at the rate of 300 rupees per quintal and today flour is selling at 1200 rupees per quintal in the market. Who are responsible for this? This is said that State Governments are responsible for this. I would like to ask from Ram Kripaljee only one thing. Is there inflation in Bombay, Delhi, Rajasthan, Ahmedabad or other States of the country? The Government should not shirk of its responsibility. The Chief Minister of Haryana Chaudhari Bansi Lal had written a letter to the Food and Civil Supply Minister three months ago that crores of rupee of wheat in Haryana is being usurped through FCI. Today sugar worth of millions of rupee sugar has

accumulated in sugar Mills of Haryana. The Chief Minister of Haryana has written to the Union Government several times that either it should take all sugar or allow the State Government to sell it in the open market. About Rs. 10 crore of farmers is due against sugar mills. but the Prime Minister is saying that if State Government does not pay the price of sugarcane then the Union Government will make some arrangements for this. But I want to say to the Minister that several months have passed since second season began but sugar has not been procured by the Central Govt. That's why there is increase in the rates of sugar. Public Distribution System is totally defective. Today what is the condition of sugarcane in U.P.? The farmers of Uttar Pradesh sell his sugarcane at different rates varying from Rs. 30-35 to 50 per quintal.

Now I come on cotton. Today in Haryana the condition of cotton is very bad. The officials of Cotton Corporation daily go and meet the mill owners and that is why the farmers' cotton is not being procured due to nexus of officers and mill owners.

Today the cotton is being looted from farmers by paying them Rs. 900 to 1100 per quintal. Look the cloth its prices are going up day by day. Is it the responsibility of opposition or the the responsibility of those States where there are Governments of Bhartiya Janata Party or Haryana Vikas Party? Today farmers are crying in Haryana. Farmers' cotton is not being procured, it is looted. Central Govt. is not ready to procure its responsibility. At least the Central Government should have done it in time. Cotton is in excess and it should be exported so that farmers are paid reasonable prices. Our colleague Mr. Ram Kripal was saying that Central Government does not own this responsibility. If Centre Govt. had done anything good in time then I must have supported her. We must have been grateful to the Centre Government if it had taken action on the letter of the Chief Minister of Haryana. If the Regional Manager of FCI had been put in check then it must have been a good step. One person was given only 5-6 thousand bags while others were given 200 bags. They hoarded the foodgrain and exported it to foreign countries while it was to be distributed among public. Is Centre Government not responsible for this?

It has been said regarding F.C.I. that they will make a C.B.I. enquiry. I welcome this. But I desire that cotton should be purchased in Haryana and the sugar which is stored there worth of crores of rupees, should be procured from there by Central Government, other-wise allow the State Government to procure up and sell it at market rates.

Lastly, I would say one thing more, this argument of Govt. or Opposition will not do that the Government has done a good job. I am not stood up to criticise the Govt. The Government claims to be sympathiser of farmers. Had it been so. There would have been timely supply of urea, DAP, timely availability of loans from co-

operative societies and subsidy on tractors would have been ensured. Take the case of pesticide. Wheat has been sown in my area and pesticides are sprinkled to control weed. Sprinkling of pesticides costs one thousand rupees per acre, still that remains ineffective. We have written several times to the Agriculture Minister that such factories and pesticides should be brought under control. If there is more weed, there will be less wheat leading to price rise. What is the condition of pulses, what is the condition of onion. Potato crop has been harvested in my area. Fresh crop is available in the market. But the farmers sell their potato crop in the market at a price per quintal which is equal to the price of per kilo gram in Delhi. I think the Government should have control over distribution of all these things. You have adopted such an attitude that in Haryana there is the Government of opposition party which is not an ally of United Front. Therefore, you did not give permission to sell sugar there. There was no timely procurement of paddy and wheat. You summon the record and see that Basmati paddy was purchased from Haryana at a price of Rs. 1200/- per quintal only. And when we go to buy it after its process in a factory we have to pay Rs. 50/- for one kilo gram. Still there is time, you can have control over this situation. If you revamp distribution system much can be done. In this regard you have permitted the State Government now. Had this permission come early, the State Government would have extended its cooperation. This Govt. has conspired to weaken the farmers' economically. I would say this an anti-farmer Govt. They are relying upon external forces which are sagging the small scale industry of our country in the name of multinationals. My friend Ram Kripal Singh ji is laughing. I feel anguished when he says that multinationals will do good to this country.

I would like to submit one more point and conclude. Don't make it a party issue, make it a national issue. The Minister should not hide the facts and should not discriminate between the State Governments. An argument is advanced, that there is no ration in Delhi and no railway wagons are available. If there are no railway wagons will you not transport foodgrains by truck. Don't take such steps as it will harm the public. Be it the Govt. of Delhi, Govts of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar or Gujarat, the supply is not being made.

Lastly, I express my gratitude for granting the time for speaking. I also convey my thanks to the Minister for ordering a CBI enquiry. But we demand that from MD to SRM all officers should be put under investigation and the report of CBI should be laid on the table of the House. So that we come to know what enquiry has been conducted by CBI.

[English]

SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE (Raiganj) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is needless to mention that all the essential commodities, including foodgrains, have shown an unparalleled increase in prices during the

last few months. When this Government came to power, it announced a Common Minimum Programme and according to that programme it was assured that the Public Distribution System will be strengthened to meet the twin objective: that is the price stability and to make available the essential items to the poor and downtrodden people. All these controls are the essential factors.

The Association of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is represented by big business magnets of our country, has expressed a view that this year is likely to end with a lower rate of export and industrial growth in comparison to the last year. In 1995-96 the trade deficit was 4.5 million US Dollars and it is expected to be 6.7 million US Dollars this year. The price stability cannot be ensured without taking into account this gloomy economic picture of our country. As accepted by our hon. Minister of Food and Civil Supplies, the wholesale price index of wheat...

MR CHAIRMAN : Mr. Mukherjee, you should not read.

SHRI SUBRATA MUKHERJEE : I am not reading, Sir. I am just taking the help of data which was supplied by our Minister today.

According to him, the wholesale price index of wheat was 268.5, which went up to 332.2 in October, 1996. He has also accepted the increase in the price index of rice which was about 10.3 per cent.

19.00 hrs.

It is no doubt, a gloomy picture so far as production of wheat is concerned. The rise in the price of wheat depends on the level of production. Production this year is somewhat less. Wheat production last year was 653 lakh tonnes but in 1995-96, it had come down to 622 lakh tonnes. This low production is an important factor but this alone cannot be the cause for rise in the price of wheat. The Government has failed to procure the requisite quantities of wheat for the Public Distribution System. Last year the procurement was 31 lakh tonnes but this year the Government has failed to procure that quantity. But that alone cannot be the cause for rise in the price of wheat. The price of wheat has gone up from Rs. 750 per quintal to Rs. 1000 per quintal. The low procurement did directly hit the toiling masses and the downtrodden people of our country as the public distribution system had failed as a result of this.

Our good friend hon. Shri Shivraj V. Patil give very important suggestions to restrict the prices of essential commodities. I associate myself with most of his suggestions such as cooperation between the different wings of Government. But I cannot associate myself with his concept of the New Economic Policy. It is completely different from just making use of the modern technology. We are not at all against modern technology but we are definitely against importing of all essential

commodities from outside the country in the name of modern technology. We should be ashamed of the fact that after 50 years of our Independence we depend upon imports of water. Are soft drinks of the standard of Coca Cola and Pepsi not produced within our country? Are we not capable of producing soft drinks in our country? We are capable of it but the policy which the Government had adopted forced us to close this type of small scale industries.

In conclusion I would like to say that price stability cannot be determined in isolation of macroeconomic conditions which include debt burden, rate of interest on the debt, exchange rate of rupee, fiscal deficit etc.

It is high time that the Government reviewed the New Economic Policy again, which was adopted by the previous Government. Otherwise, there shall be no stability in the price index and the Government shall not be able to fulfil the assurances given to the people when they came to power.

MR. CHAIRMAN (SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA) : Shri Mohammad Ali Ashraf Fatmi. Please take two minutes only.

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI (Darbhanga) : Maybe, I am the last speaker, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN : No. There are a number of speakers like Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee, Shri Laxman Singh and others.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Mr. Chairman, I would try to have my say within few minutes so that you don't have to ring the bell. We are discussing a very important issue in this House and the whole country is watching us. The need of the hour is that we should rise above the party lines. Its a matter of deep sorrow that our friends from Lok Dal have levelled a direct allegation on United Front Govt. of being anti-farmer, anti-poor and anti-rural. He said all this in single sentence. I would like to say that progress of Indian villages, farmers is the firm determination of this govt. We will give to poors their due share because social justice is the basic element of this Government. It is on this basis, we think about our country and society ...*(Interruptions)*

In this budget the Government has done whatever was possible within their limits for construction of houses under Indira Awas Yoz' a, access to water, reducing prices of fertilizers and offering subsidy on tractors. He was just now saying that the Minister and the Government did not pay attention otherwise we could have a bumper wheat crop. Devender ji is the present Minister...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JAI PRAKASH : Fifty four rupees for paddy not for wheat...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : We have had a good paddy crop. You can discuss this issue with

the agriculture Minister. The Government of India is not to be blamed for the present complex scenario. Last year we had a poor crop. Many Members have limited here less procurement when the availability is less procurement is bound to be less. Some of the Members accused that edible items were exported, even wheat was exported. I would like to know why the honourable members clap here loudly when the hon. Minister while standing here says that we have stock of foodgrains sufficient enough to export. Today, Basmati rice is on the top position among the commodities being exported from India...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI JAI PRAKASH : But it has become very costly...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : The commodities being exported by India at a large scale are produced by the farmers be it pulses, onion, rice, sugar, cotton, cloths or other agricultural products. Today, these commodities are being demanded by the entire world. The farmers of our country work hard throughout the year and earn wealth for the country. When there is a shortage of any commodity then it is said that export has been reduced. Before taking up export one plan in regard to the quantity of export to be done. Thus international agreements are signed and the things are exported in accordance with the agreement ...*(Interruptions)* You are a farmer but we including the hon'ble Minister are small farmers. We are not big farmers like you. When a farmer is able to produce a crop more than his requirement during a certain year, he thinks it better not to produce that particular crop in the next year which leads to shortage of that produce in that year for which farmers should not be held responsible. A farmer toils hard. The farmers may produce more crop this year. We may have surplus yield of wheat next year and hon'ble Minister will announce it in the House. You may make such announcements in Haryana.

After all, where the point lies? Now discussion is going on essential commodities. The most important issue is about the prices of wheat. Where are the wheat and flour being sold in the market at a high rates? Shri Ram Kripal ji has rightly said that why flour is being sold at a high rate only in some cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Jaipur. Ram Kripal ji had not made any mention about Haryana. You were getting angry for nothing.

SHRI JAI PRAKASH : Why the flour is not available in Bihar at low rates?

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : After all, why flour is being sold at high rates in these States? As our colleague has said that the only reason for that is mismanagement of P.D.S. I urge upon the hon'ble paper in this regard. It should be made clear in that paper that which of the states had demanded wheat from F.C.I. and why wheat was not released to those states or why those states did not accepted it. Though, I did not want to speak but I would like to say that all this is happening

with the connivance of some states. That is why wheat is being sold at higher rates in Mumbai, Delhi and Jaipur. The hon'ble Minister should give clarification in this regard. Whether the Governments of Delhi, Maharashtra and Rajasthan had asked you to release wheat to them? If they had demanded it why you did not release? If you had released then where it has been consumed? I would like to know as to whether they had demanded wheat or not? The hon'ble Minister should also clarify it. There is no need to go into the details in this regard. Here I would like to utter a couplet of Urdu which you might have heard of :

"Phal Safi Ka Bahas Ke Andar Khuda Milta Nahin
Kor ke Suljha Raha Hai Sira Milta Nahin".

Please do not try to complicate it. Due to less production, wheat was purchased in less quantity. As per the stock available with the FCI wheat was made available to PDS in various states or not. It is necessary to ensure whether wheat can be made available to those states where there is a shortage of it or not.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I will take one or two minutes more. The matter had been referred to the Supreme Court yesterday and the Governemnt has to reply. Without taking more time, I would like to make a submission to my colleagues that our Minister of Food hail from village and he is very much concerned about the poor people of the country and he has not been able to take a sound sleep for the last one month. He was aware of the situation that is why, he has taken precautionary measures. Therefore, stern action should be taken against the hoarders. The Government can prosecute those people who are creating terror. But he should make an effor to make essential commodities available in the market and in PDS shops. Besides this, it should disclose the political reasons if any, in this regard.

SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH (Jahanabad) : Mr. Chairman Sir, discussion is going on in this House on the issue of price rise for the last several days and I was listening it seriously. The main point is to solve this national problem and not to see who is in favour and who is against this. Not only ruling party but oposition is also affected due to this. If the causes of price rise are ascertained then only proper suggestions can be given to the Government. According to me the main reason of this is non-existence of any national food policy. By setting up of Food Corporation of India the Government has taken it granted that a national food policy has been formulated. The hon'ble Minister has said that the Government are conducting an investigation in respect of Food Corporation of India and if the said investigation is carried out properly, I think several people will be imprisoned. We have observed that prices have gone up due to policies of this Government. During the procurement seasons of wheat and rice the same is not procured and it is grabed by the traders in the open market. I have also raised a point in this House that much more amount has been

spent on destroying the permal rice that the amount spent on purchasing it. All this happened due to Food Corporation of India. There are so many reasons for price hike. It is said that there is paucity of funds for procurement and if it is true than how we have declared green revolution in our country. What was the outcome thereof? Once upon a time the slogan 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kissan' was raised but what are the facilities provided to the farmers? Target for more production was fixed for the farmers and they achieved the said target but now we have to think the extent upto which production should be increased? Our agricultural production is not increasing in proportion to our population. We can not increase area of our agricultural land. We can provide sufficient food to rapidly increasing population only by enhancing agricultural production. It is necessary to ponder over the increasing population. This is not a matter of one day only. We have been witnessing for the several years that only discussion is held in this House on price rise. We merely talks but no concrete suggestions are given to check the price rise. The traders taking loans from the banks is in fact public money and they hoard foodgrains with that money and they sell the foodgrain on much higher rates. The loans should not be extended to such traders. They should be tried on charges of sedition.

One thing is that we have not been able to increase agricultural production. One of its reason is that we have not been able to complete land consolidation. Unless land consolidation is completed we will not be able to produce sufficient foodgrains. Mr. Chairman Sir, land consolidation has been completed in Bengal as a result of which production has increased there. We can not claims that we have produced sufficient foodgrain there but it is fact that production has increased. If consolidation is completed all over the country we may produce sufficient foograins and we can keep the prices under control. We can deal with the artificial price rise created by these traders. One day while replying to a question Shri Chaturanan Mishra said that electricity was not available to the farmers on asking about irrigation he gave the same reply. Had the due attention been paid in time towards the problems of farmers the situation would not have been so bad. Agriculture has always been neglected. 70 percent population of the country depend upon agriculture. As per an official report if one acre of land is provided with irrigation facilities atleast hundred people can be engaged for one year. If we develop agriculture sector and use rivers and revolutes which are natural resources, we can increase our agricultural production but we have not been able to do so. If we go to the Ministry of agriculture they refer us to contact irrigation Department. And when irrigation Department is contacted they further evade the responsibility on the electricity Department. All these three Departments should be under one Minister, as all relates to agriculture. If these Departments function separately, how we would be able to develop our

agriculture sector. What is actually happening is that new Departments are being created by splitting Ministries to accommodate new Ministers. Though we can achieve our objectives with less number of Ministers but on the contrary we are increasing their numbers continuously. The Last point is that corruption has crept in our social life which is also one of the reason for growing price rise. It is said that this House is supreme. It should also be seen as to whether politics encourages corruption. We can check price rise only if political corruption is checked. But those who resort to hoarding they are subject of discussion here. I just want to say that it's not a fault of our Hon. Minister Sh. Devendraj. But we also know that if the coming time would be such, who would be held guilty for this, minister would be held guilty, Government would be held guilty instead of those opposing it. See, buttressing is all the more harmful, particularly when we have to govern the country. I'll say that we must be careful against these things because there are people who are there to defame the Government, but these people have no powers and hence ineffective. With there words, I conclude.

SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH (Rajgarh) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, thanks for giving me a chance to speak. I will be very bnief. Sir, the prices of foodgrain have not been risen automatically but have been increased in a planned manner, and there are certain forces in the country which cannot see a son of a farmer as Prime Minister and I will say to Shri Devendra Bhai to be careful of such forces and make strict laws. I will cite a example - Madhya Pradesh Government has recently made a law to detain hoarders and black marketeers under National Security Act. I am of the view that if you make a law to this effect in the country, hoardus and blackmarketeers cannot deceive you in this way. Apart from this, there are so many things. We have to see that behind this shortage of foodgrains, behind low production in agricultural produce, there are certain reasons and the increase in prices has been due to the gap between demand and agricultural production. There are many reasons of decrease in agricultural production and it is very necessary to look into there. Wasteland is one of the reasons. We have not been able to develop wasteland. Lakhs of acres of land in our country is lying as wasteland. Due to our inability to develop this land, our agricultural production is not increasing. Our colleague from Shiv Sena was yesterday speaking about watershed management. We should irrigate wasteland also, and should have more arrangements for irrigation. But I am afraid to see the behaviour to Maharashtra Government against the person who sacrificed his life for watershed management. I am talking about Shri Anna Hazare. The work done by this person on watershed management at Reale village is an example and we want not one, but thousands of Anna Hazares in our country so that we are able to develop wasteland. I ask my brother from Shiv Sena that he himself says to his Government that such a greatman should be

honoured and not victimised. Apart from it thousands of acres of land at sea shores in our country, due to absence of sea-wall, does not remain worthy of agriculture. In Madhya Pradesh lakhs of acres of cultivable land turned into ravines due to flood in Chambal river every year. Tal in Bihar and Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh and all the other areas on the banks of Chambal river are turned into ravines and agricultural land is decreasing day by day. Though this subject is not related to your Ministry but you should co-ordinate with Agriculture Department as this is related to the production. Besides, we have to pay more attention on research work to increase agricultural production. One of our agricultural analyst Mr. M. Ray, has given very good suggestions, I do not want to read them all. In the Ninth Five Year Plan Standing Committee on Agriculture has recommended that we should spend one percent of agricultural gross domestic product on research work. If we do not pay attention on research work then our production will not increase. For example we take pulses. The genetic production of pulses has been around 14 millions per year since the last 30 years. We couldn't increase the production of pulses more than five and a half quintals per hectare. This is very important issue so we should pay attention towards it. In the same way we have started paying attention on tissue culture. I want that taking the advantage of our policy of liberalisation we should invite persons from other countries to promote tissue culture. Thus, we shall be able to compensate our farmers by tissue culture who get substandard seeds.

Without taking much time, I want to raise some problems of Madhya Pradesh. Recently there were food-riots in Madhya Pradesh, which is very sad incident. Since a long time we had been demanding that quota of foodgrains for Madhya Pradesh should be increased because condition is getting worse there. We have been allotted a quota of 44,000 MT, our demand is that it should be increased upto 54,000 MT. You know that remote villages of Madhya Pradesh are tribal dominated areas and in Chhatisgarh region the people mostly consume rice. So I would like to say that the quota of rice fixed at 48,000 MT, should be increased to the tune of 60,000 MT. The quota of sugar should be increased from 28,127 MT to 35,000 MT. At present the quota of Kerosene is 42,378 ML and it should be increased upto 46,000 ML as Madhya Pradesh is a backward and poor state. When allocation of these items is increased then definitely situation will be improved.

I want to say one more thing about the prices of sugar. We have sufficient stock of sugar in our country. Recently when I met the Secretary of the Ministry, he also told me that there is sufficient stock of sugar in the country but its prices are not coming down. When this Government took the charge, you have talked about introduction of de-licencing policy to increase production of sugar. If you de-licence the sugar mills, then whosoever wants to establish sugarmills, can do so and thus you can control the prices of Sugar. In my

constituency in Madhya Pradesh, one sugar factory is to be established in co-operative-sector and I have met you many times in this regard. Besides, in our Nerbada Command Area and in Tava Command Area atleast 30 more sugarmills can be established provided the Government grant permission in this regard. I understand that by increasing the production of sugar its prices can be controlled. There are so many places in the country where sugar-mills could not be established because of non-availability of licences.

I would like to say that the Government should pay attention towards it and we all must make efforts to Control the prices of essential commodities.

Once again I would like to say that the Government should remain alert against that conspiracy as there are so many persons who will encourage hoarding and they will do it in future also. If you could control these soaring prices then it will be your success and if you couldn't then it will be your failure. We wish for your success. Mr. Chairman, Sir, with these words, once again, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, by discussing this subject, we are really respect the feelings of the crores of people but this can only be fulfilled when we shall be able to give them some relief otherwise there is no use to do this mental exercise with no any result.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, we want that the Hon'ble Minister should take up some definite steps so that an ordinary man gets some relief. I would like to draw your attention towards this point it has been repeatedly said that the production of grains has declined hence prices have risen which is not correct. I have a document "Indian Economy Today" which we got in the last session and I would like to present it here what has been mentioned therein .

[English]

"The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy expect the *kharif* foodgrains production to reach 103.6 million tonnes in 1996-97. This is higher by six million tonnes, compared to 97.7 million tonnes produced in 1995-96. Similarly, production of *rabi* foodgrains is also expected to be higher at 92.7 million tonnes during 1996-97, compared to estimated production of 87.3 million tonnes in 1995-96. The total production of foodgrains during 1996-97 is estimated to be higher by 11 million tonnes at 196.3 million tonnes, against 185 million tonnes produced in 1995-96. This implies an increase of 6.2 per cent over 1995-96."

[Translation]

Mr. Chairman, Sir, it had been mentioned therein that the production of foodgrain will be increased by 11

million tonnes there is an increase of only three million tonnes. I do not understand that production of foodgrains does not decline in only a day. We came to know about position of production of foodgrain and weather six months ago. In spite of that we have exported foodgrain. What is reaction of the Government in this regard. When production of foodgrains is declining than, we are exporting foodgrains. I do understand that there is a feeling in the country that we have exported foodgrains and we have get a very little stock of wheat. Due to these reasons the prices of wheat have been shooting up. The Hon'ble Minister has said that we have sufficient stocks. I want that if the Government is working here...

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : I have just said that we had sufficient stock of foodgrains for P.D.S. Programme and R.P.D.S. and welfare schemes but when we have been supplying 11-12 lakh tonnes of foodgrains in the open market during the last several years, but this year only three four, five and now six lakh tonnes of foodgrains per month have been supplied. Thus we are supplying six lakh tonnes less quantity of wheat in comparison to the last year and due to this the wheat price is increasing. So far as the Public Distribution System and other system are concerned, we have enough stock of wheat.

SHRI CHAMAN LAL GUPTA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I also want to draw the attention of Hon'ble Minister that the hoarders and businessmen take benefit of such situation. The Government do not keep things under control timely and create such an impression that there is shortage of foodgrains in the country and as a result thereof the prices of foodgrains are very high. You also know that 'Dal-Roti' or 'Chawal-roti' are staple diet of common man. Today in our country 56 percent people are earning only Rs. 10 per day. How a person who is earning Rs. 10 per day can feed his family when price of pulses is Rs. 40 per kg. and Atta Rs. 12 per kg? This issue is being discussed here and a lot of suggestions have been given that we should increase production. Somebody has said that we should care about our farmer's interests. But the main question is that how the poorest people will get foodgrains. I think the Hon'ble Minister will think over it seriously.

The Public Distribution System should be reorganised. I don't want to take much time. At present I want to draw his attention towards my area. Luckily he has visited my area, he has gone to Doda. Even today there are many places where sheep and goats carry load for 100 kms though they can carry only 4 kgs. You can very well imagine, that is there hilly regions which will include our border areas like ward one, Dakshin, Janskar, Kargil and Leh. In these areas, there is an acute shortage of ration and in the coming time I think that there will be a lot of problems. I would like to draw your attention towards it. that in the last session on 17th

July, I had raised a question. In reply to that question, you had said that in Srinagar and in Kashmir valley 5514 tonnes of foodgrains were destroyed. You had also said that you would conduct an inquiry into it. I do not know whether you conducted an inquiry or not till today. I would request you that you must conduct an inquiry into it.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, we provide eight kilograms of rice and three kilograms of wheat to every person in the Kashmir valley while the situation is reverse in Jammu. There we provide three killos of rice and eight killos of wheat. Your distribution system, the people of F.C.I., have done a commendable job. They have despatched eight kilograms of wheat per head to Srinagar in Kashmir. A truck charges 7600 rupees for transporting foodgrains from Jammu to Srinagar. They have despatched 3 Kilograms of rice head for that place. That ration will not be accepted and, again it will be returned. You just imagine that FCI has become such a den of scandals that with the connivance of high-ups it is indulging in such scandals.

I have a request to you that you should give your attention towards this. Not only this I would also say that our state is self-sufficient, despite this our imports are going upwards. We need have keep more ration. After all, what does happen to this large quantity of ration? Much of the ration is smuggled to Pakistan. I am drawing your attention towards these things. I hope that you would give your attention towards this end. Particularly in today's situation, so that common man gets his ration, you should make arrangement for this. The rest of the points have been raised by others. Fair price shops should be opened everywhere. Our distribution system should be set right. A farmer should be provided with fertilisers, seeds, water and electricity at a subsidized rate and at the proper time. Alongwith that the firmness with which we can suppress the hoarding, we should make sincere effort to do that. If we take these steps then I hope that the impression which we have created in the country that there is a shortage of foodgrains and so their prices are skyrocketing, we shall be able to control that.

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum) : Sir, let me begin with a candid statement. I do believe that the Government, which we are supporting from outside, did not act on time. We all welcome the steps which have been proposed. But the timing should have been somewhat earlier. I now understand the difficulty of the Government.

The problem arose when we exported last year, not this year. Why did we export? There are two reasons. We have a very wrong idea that we have achieved self-sufficiency in food. It is this idea which corrodes our approach to the problem of prices very often. If there is food scarcity either in China or in India, the entire world would be in turmoil because we have to support such

a huge population. Therefore, our approach to the concept of food sufficiency within the country must be changed. I will come to some odd kind of contradictory remarks that have been made in the very rich discussion that has taken place, but this is one wrong idea that we have to give up and that will prevent us from exporting food.

The second point raised for exports was that our approach to the economic policy itself was forcing us towards exporting more and more and tragically while exporting foodgrains what we are trying to import are completely knocked down or semi-knocked down motor cars. Let the House note that the prices of our cars are not rising. Nobody is here but let me go on record. In the car market more discount is available. In fact, the prices of cars are coming down because the supply is more than the demand. I just mentioned it because it is related to rise in prices.

There is another area where the prices are plummeting. That area is called the share market. What is happening there? The tremendous amount of funds are being withdrawn from the share market. That is why the prices are going down. Where are those funds going? Those funds are going to this food market. There is a relation between these two. We have to understand it. I am extremely unhappy that in this discussion only Shri Devendra Prasad Yadav is present and not the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture ought to have been present here. The population and production has already been mentioned. But in the short run, if you make an intervention in the market, you can bring down the prices. You cannot do so in the long run. When they talk about increased production, they forget that we have been increasing our production almost every year from the sixties when we were tied down to American imports via PL 400 but the prices have not come down. This is a kind of relation which we have to understand. The per capita availability of foodgrains has not declined over the years. Yet the prices are rising. This is happening in the long run. Why does it happen? We have to understand it. In the short run, had there been no delays we could have contained that. Then, you would have been forced to raise the prices of wheat or rice in the Public Distribution System. That is what has happened. So, this point has to be understood that something is wrong somewhere also which is leading to long secular rise in prices. Why are we concerned about it? It is not so because our friends cannot buy wheat at Rs. 15 per kilogram. It has to be underlined that every rise in price of foodgrains means more people below the poverty line. We have to understand that. The new Government has to understand that.

It is not to our surprise totally that we have now the statement from the Planning Commission that instead of people below the poverty line coming down over the last 15 years, they have remained at the level of 40 per cent. If a survey is made just now, we will discover that

it has gone up from 40 per cent to 50 per cent because they are not able to buy even the necessary wheat which will add that amount of calories to their body.

This is the implication for the economy as a whole for all the people who consider themselves Indians and consider themselves patriotic. This is important and that is why I started with the candid statement that the Government ought to have been such more alert than it is now.

Sir, why did I relate the share market to this? The bank credit is coming down, yet the prices of necessities are increasing. We have to find out coming down, yet the prices of necessities are increasing. We have to find out an answer. Our investment expenditure is coming down. Our purchasing power is going down because of sick industries, the Kalahandi famine and floods. Yet, the prices are rising. This is not a simplistic thing as the Shiv Sena said or somebody else said that because of population growth this is happening. Despite the population growth, the per capita availability in terms of production has increased except in one or two years. So, the explanation has to be sought elsewhere.

In the short run, we have to intervene with whatever we have got despite the fact that by exporting on the basis of a wrong idea of food sufficiency, the stocks have come down. Despite that fact, we are intervening and the results would be immediate. But that is not enough. In the long run, I think he has and some others also have very correctly mentioned that we have to increase production. Our per capita consumption of 50 gms., or whatever it may be, has to be increased even if we want to change the quality of our food. Much more foodgrains would be necessary for animal husbandry. Therefore, we have to consider as to how to increase or how to add to our production of foodgrains and not merely of cash crops.

Sir, have we done enough for our irrigation? In the last five years our addition to irrigation potential has not increased significantly. In fact, our Plan expenditure has not been fulfilled at all. I was reading the Mid-term Review also. It is an impossible situation. When we debate whether fertiliser prices should be subsidised or not, let us remind ourselves that the key to the stabilisation programme in the economy is nothing else but food sufficiency and therefore, if that requires fertiliser subsidy, that has to be given. If that requires more fertiliser production, then the closed fertiliser units have to start producing fertilisers, even at a cost because nothing is costlier than the death of Indians due to lack of food and nothing is costlier than the collapse of our economy due to shortage of food. We have to do that. It is this kind of approach which was forgotten in the course of the last five years and I believe the present Government will not forget that.

Sir, I do not want to take more time. We are approaching eight O'clock and let me conclude. I just wanted to underline these things because so many

good points have been made. But we have to grasp the fundamental point. In the short term, what the Minister is suggesting is welcome. The problem is, over the last so many years-I have calculated on the basis of 1960-61 prices the cost of living of agricultural workers has gone up by 14 times. What is happening? On the one hand, we get cars with a price tag of Rs. 22 lakh, we get a refrigerator with a price tag of Rs. one lakh and washing machine etc., at heavy prices. On the other hand, the cost of living of agricultural labourers is going up, even when the per capita availability is going up in terms of foodgrains and more and more people are going down the poverty line.

We have to handle this problem. This Government should handle this problem on the basis of a different kind of emphasis within the country in terms of irrigation, in terms of fertiliser subsidy, in terms of food subsidy and in terms of our international economic policy not being subjugated by what has been preferred for the developing countries of the world. They are imposing on us certain approaches, Unless we are able to resist it, there is no salvation excepting for a short period. I hope the present Government will move towards a reversal of the approaches of the last five years. If they can do it, people will bless them and the Government will be stable. Thank you.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY (Chhapra) : Mr. Chairman Sir, discussions have been held on every subjects here. The hon'ble Minister who is present in the House. I think his department looks after marketing. Only and has the responsibility to transport food from one place to another in the country. I want to draw your attention towards another subject. The high rate of inflation that is prevalent today in the country, when people's purchasing capacity increases it is but natural that people would like to purchase those foodgrains more which are not available in abundance. In such a situation it is not enough for the Food Minister just to be present here. Had the Finance Minister been here, he would have naturally thought over it in a better way. When the question of productivity comes up, the presence of Agriculture Minister is a must. Food Minister

would distribute foodgrains only when it is produced it. If water resources minister were present here, we might have known as how to utilise water resources in order to increase the foodgrain's production. I demand that when such an important subject is being discussed in the House, there should be coordination of all the departments. Likewise the presence of Environment Minister was Compulsory as the environment is being misused. Water level is going down, there is a shortage of water in the country, naturally this case is related with the environment. Besides this, what will be the role of Planning Commission? Planning Commission which is the apex body of departments, which coordinates all the plans of the country, guides then, should also be brought be coordinated so that rational issues may be discussed and solved properly.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : The list is exhausted and the Minister will give the reply tomorrow. Now, the Minister wants to make one small statement.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV : Mr. Chairman Sir, as ordered by the Chair a reply will be given tomorrow but I am announcing the decision that has been taken by the Government. I want to make the House aware of this important decision taken by the Government. As has also been said by the honourable Members the production of wheat was less in the last rabi season and subsequently, the price of wheat increased in the open market. The central Government has decided to import two million tonnes or 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during the current financial year to control its price immediately.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House now stands adjourned to meet again on Friday, December 13, 1996.

20.00 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, December 13, 1996/Agrahayana 22, 1918 (Saka).