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Title: Wastage of foodgrains in the country.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Madam Speaker, over the past four years, six lakh metric tonnes of grain have been lost in storage. Another six lakhs and fifty thousand metric tonnes of grains have been lost in transit. It is said that food grains rot for want of storage facilities. If the cause is known, then what is being done to save the stocks?

Some may say that by improving storage and transit, a solution can be found, but do you not have "open plinths" meaning grain stocks are covered? The problem is that food grains rot because FCI procures more than it can store or transfer. The Government has to maintain buffer stocks and for that you need enhanced storage capacity.

The greater question is the alleged corrupt practices rampant in hiring a go-down and de-hiring it. Is the Government paying the full rent on a general hiring basis or just on the basis of number of bags that are stored in it? Is it just an O&M (Operation and Maintenance) problem? There is no penalty for poor quality of services.

It may be expensive to build storage facilities and manage operations as this will be added to the cost of subsidy. What is needed? Does the Government have a clear Grain Handling Policy that lays down standards for acceptable losses in storage and handling? If they are there, do they fail when the stocks overflow the storage capacity or is it sheer negligence? What actions has the Government taken to punish those because of whom tonnes and tonnes of grains have been allowed to rot in the open? Has some one been made accountable?

The Apex Court has said to the Government that if it cannot store the food grains, it must give it to the people to eat.

I quote the Government figures, Madam. Maximum damage has been done in Punjab, next in West Bengal and then in Gujarat. This is a figure of last two weeks which covers more than ten thousand metric tonnes of which is rice, of which is wheat and also paddy. Is it not a serious problem? The Government has identified it. But is there any effective step taken to solve this problem? On short-term basis, is the Government hiring warehouses or putting up water-proof tents to save the grain? On long-term basis, why can the Government not construct adequate warehouses or storage facility?

Lastly, have the Government considered the Wadhwa Committee Report which had recommended construction of warehouses in large numbers? I would like to get a response from the Government on these issues.