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Title: Smt. Harismrat Kaur Badal called the attention of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare to the situation arising out of rejection of 40 Lakh tones of rice variety PAU-201 by the Food Safety Standards Authority of India citing provisions of Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954 and Food Safety Standards Act, 2006 and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto.

SHRIMATI HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL (BHATINDA): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of rejection of 40 lakh tonnes of rice variety PAU-201 by the Food Safety Standards Authority of India citing provisions of Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 and Food Safety Standards Act, 2006 and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

MADAM SPEAKER: Shrimati Badal, if you have received a copy of the Statement and have also read it, then we would have it laid on the Table. Have you received it?

SHRIMATI HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL : Yes.

MADAM SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, she has read your Statement. Therefore, you may lay it on the Table.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): Madam, I lay my statement.

*The hon. Member has called the attention of the House to the rejection of 40 lakh tonnes of rice of variety PAU-201 by the Food Safety Standards Authority of India citing provisions of the Prevention of Food Adulteration or PFA Act and the Food Safety and Standards Act 2006. In this connection, I would like to inform this House that the reason attributed to the Food Authority for rejection of the rice variety does not depict the actual picture of the incident.

During December 2009, Food Corporation of India (FCI) and Department of Food and Public Distribution informed that the PAU-201 variety of Paddy rice milled in Punjab is showing higher incidence of damaged grains in rice. The issue was examined by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and according to it, the blackened grains /slightly blackened grains and pin –point blackened grains in the rice of this variety were ranging from 3.39 to 8.79 per cent. The ICAR viewed that blackened grains/slightly blackened grains and pin-point blackened grains in the rice were due to excessive iron content in this variety. In January 2010, on the request of the Food Corporation of India and the Department of Food & Public Distribution, 75 samples of rice were collected from various places of Punjab by a team constituted by the Department of Food & Public Distribution. The samples were sent to three Central Food Laboratories situated at Ghaziabad, Pune and Mysore for analysis as per the parameters prescribed in the PFA Act 1954. Out of the above three labs, only the Central Food Laboratory at Ghaziabad is under the administrative control of the Food Authority.

The standards for rice are prescribed under item A. 18.06.04 of Appendix 'B' of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955. This states that rice shall be the mature kernels or pieces of kernels of *Oryza Sativa Linn*, obtained from paddy as raw or parboiled. It shall be dry, sweet, clean, wholesome and free from unwholesome poisonous substance. The Rule also prescribes that:

â€¢ It should not contain moisture more than 16 per cent by weight (obtained by heating the pulverized grains at 130 C-133C for two hours).

â€¢ It should not contain foreign matter more than 1 per cent by weight, of which not more than 0.25 per cent by weight shall be mineral matter and not more than 0.10 per cent by weight shall be impurities of animal origin.

â€¢ It should not contain damaged grains more than 5 per cent by weight.

â€¢ It should not contain weevilled grains more than

10 per cent by count.

â€¢ It should not contain Uric Acid more than 100 mg. per kg.

â€¢ It should not contain Aflatoxin more than 30 mg. per kg.

The partially pin-point blackened grain of rice are considered as damaged grains as per definition and standards for rice prescribed under PFA Rules 1955. The analysis reports of the 75 samples revealed that only 9 samples were not found to be conforming to the standards of rice as prescribed under PFA Rules as stated above as these contained damaged grains, moisture and Aflatoxin more than the prescribed limits. The results of the analysis were conveyed to the Food Corporation of India as well as the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

SHRIMATI HARSIMRAT KAUR BADAL : Madam, I am deeply grateful to you for allowing me to raise this very urgent and important matter.

Today, we live in a country which ranks 94th out of 119 countries in the Global Hunger Index, a country where every day 7000 people die due to hunger and 20 crore people in our country sleep hungry every day. What is not only shocking but absolutely shameful is that every year in this same country we allow thousands of tonnes of grain worth crores of rupees to rot and decay due to the sheer negligence and callousness of those very people whose job it is to ensure that this food reaches from the farmers field to the plate of the poor and the hungry.

Madam, we have heard of Food Safety Standards, we have heard of Prevention of Food Adulteration and a host of other rules and regulations which are supposed to ensure what we are eating is not detrimental to our health or poisonous to our health. But in spite of these, be it synthetic milk, spurious medicine, oxytocin injected fruits and vegetables and host of other things are openly available in the market, flouting all norms of safety for the public. But what is sad is that instead of implementing stringent PFA laws and FSSAI standards to control and stop this rampant sale of adulterated foods, in the name of maintaining food standards today this Government is working overtime to reject 40 lakh metric tonnes of rice worth Rs.4000 crore which would feed 50 lakh hungry people for one full year in the name of safety standards.

Madam, I would like to point out to you that in Punjab as of the last one year, 40 lakh metric tonnes rice of a variety called PAU-201 has been lying out in the open camp storage space and rotting because the FCI has said that they will not lift this rice because the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has declared this grain as damaged.

I would like to point out to you that PAU-201 is an a grade quality of rice which has 11 per cent higher yield than all other varieties, consumes 20 per cent less water, and is environment friendly. This rice was duly developed by the Punjab Agricultural University looking at the increasing demands of the increasing population and shrinking agricultural land. This was duly tested by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research which is the apex scientific research body under the Ministry of Agriculture.

After due clearance and seeing the benefits of this variety, this variety was promoted in Punjab and 10 lakh MTs was even lifted in the previous year. But last year when there was a drought in our country and one can imagine in an agrarian State where three-fourths of the farmers are in a debt trap, when there is no rain, what it means to them? Even then the debt-wrecked farmer, enterprisingly pulled all his resources and put everything he could afford to save his crop and in the process of saving the his crop he ensured the food security of this nation in the face of a countrywide drought.

Madam, but look at the irony. The paddy which was saved due to the labour, toil, hard work, money and sweat, invested by the farmer, has been allowed to rot and decay in the last one year in the name of food safety standards because the Health Ministry said that this is one per cent more damaged than the acceptable norm and the grain is one per cent more broken than the acceptable norm and that there is a pinpoint black spot on it.

Madam, I would like to tell you about this so called damage on the basis of which the Health Ministry has rejected this and the FCI has refused to lift it. I will quote from the ICAR Report. It says:

"The PAU-201 rice variety was released by Punjab Agricultural University in the Kharif season of 2007. It is a high yielding variety having yield potential 11 per cent higher and requiring less water than other varieties leading to considerable saving in irrigation water and this has a brown pigmentation which is genetic character of the seed and its health. The data on pathological studies has proved that the blackening is not due to fungal

infestation as is suspected. The grain is not susceptible to Aspergillus attack and hence looking at the health benefits of its high iron content of this variety, the slightly blackened and black spot grain do not lose their aesthetic appeal compared to the white grain and can be considered as good grain due to the extra health benefits. The iron fortification is priority health concern of this country and this variety can easily provide the solution to this problem. The iron content in this variety is higher than other varieties which causes more slightly blackened and black spot grain and this fact need to be taken into consideration for exempting the classification of grain from rejection."

The black spot is due to the iron content. Today 50 per cent of the children in this country are mal-nourished; 60 per cent of our women are anemic. The black spot in this grain which is due to higher iron content can solve a host of other problems. This variety of rice is being rejected because of its aesthetic appeal. Is this what the law in this country promotes? Is this what the Health Ministry is promoting?

Madam, I would like to point out what the Agriculture Ministry says on the black spot. When this variety of rice was not lifted we requested the Health Ministry and also the Agriculture Ministry to take the sample of this variety of rice and have it tested. For your information I would like to submit that 75 samples were taken from various parts of Punjab for this PAU-201 variety. They were sent to three laboratories – one in Pune, one in Mysore and one in Ghaziabad, which are under the administration of the Ministry of Health. You would be surprised to learn that out of 75 samples tested, 66 samples were found to be absolutely okay. There was a problem in 9 samples. I would like to point out what the problem was in these 9 samples. The reply of the hon. Minister says that 9 samples were not found to be conforming to the standards of rice as prescribed by the PFA rules as these contain damaged grain, moisture and aflatoxin more than the prescribed limits. I have the reports. Out of the 25 samples that went to one laboratory, only two samples were found to have higher moisture levels. The acceptable moisture level is 16 per cent. One sample had 16.2 and the other had 16.3 per cent. All of the samples rejected because two samples had more. In what the Minister is saying is damaged, out of the 25 samples, 4 of them were found to have more damage, against the five per cent acceptable norm, the first had 5.7 per cent; the second had 5.7 per cent; the third had 5.7 per cent and the fourth had 6.2 per cent extra breakage than the acceptable 5 per cent norm.

Madam, when we come to aflatoxin, within the prescribed limit, namely, 30 ppb limit of aflatoxin, there were only two samples, i.e. the one which had 50.4 and one which had 49.9. It was two samples out of 75 and all the rest of the 23 samples had not only 30 but less than one ppb as against 30 ppb which is the acceptable norm.

So, these were the results of the three labs. I would like to point out that the Ghaziabad lab which comes under the Ministry reported all of them to be absolutely fine. In spite of this, today, 40 lakh tonnes of grain are lying there rotting in Punjab in open cap storages because of bureaucratic hurdles of this Ministry. ...(*Interruptions*) Madam, the bureaucrats are not answerable when people die out of hunger....(*Interruptions*)

I would just like to point out over here that in our country, grains are being allowed to rot. This is not just an issue where the grains are rotting and are still allowed to rot but it could actually feed 50 lakh hungry people for the last one year who have died of hunger. Every year, 25 lakh people die of hunger in our country.

Madam, it is besides the fact that they are not feeding hungry people, the bigger issue here is that even today, action is not being taken to lift this rice and what is the result of this today? The godowns of Punjab should be 75 per cent to 95 per cent free for the next crop which is coming in the next three weeks but today, our godowns are 95 per cent full with grains and 140 lakh more tonnes of rice will rot being kept in the open because our godowns are not empty as yet.

So, I would appeal to you, Madam, and to the Ministry to look at the urgency of the matter. This rice is being eaten by the people of Punjab, by the farmers of Punjab and others. I have also given the hon. Minister a sample of rice. I appreciate the pro-active steps which he has taken to solve this problem but the bureaucrats are not the ones who are answerable to the people, they are not the ones who have to feed the nation. You can have reports filled in as many times as you want. (*Interruptions*) Why should Punjab Government, the farmers and the storage officials bear the brunt of this rice rotting for the last one year? I request the Ministry to urgently have the rice lifted at the earliest possible because this 40 lakh tonnes are not poisonous, it is not harmful and it can save the lives of lakhs of hungry people who are dying due to hunger even this very minute.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD : Madam Speaker, I share the concern of the hon. Member but I would also like to make it clear that it is not the Food Ministry which has got into it but it was between the Punjab Government and the Food Corporation of India. ...(*Interruptions*)

श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव (मैनपुरी): यह सारे देश का मामला है। पंजाब और यूपी में भी सड़ रहा है।...(*व्यवधान*)

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: So, it was referred to us and once anything is referred to us, we have to report faithfully and ultimately, it is the Food Corporation and the Ministry of Agriculture which have to take a decision. It is not that we have done something pro-actively. ...(*Interruptions*)

श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव : पहले भी बोल चुके हैं लेकिन कोई कार्यवाही नहीं हुई।...(*व्यवधान*)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : आप बैठ जाइए। हरसिमरत जी, आप भी बैठ जाइए।

वे।।(*व्यवधान*)

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: As I said in the beginning, all of us are concerned about this matter including the hon. Member and the Government. I am also concerned not only about the farmers but at the same time, we would not like to rot such a huge amount of rice.

In this connection, I would like to put the record straight and inform the House that the reason attributed to the Food Authority for rejection of rice variety does not depict the actual picture of the incident. During December 2009, the Food Corporation of India and the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India informed that the PAU-201 variety of paddy rice milled in Punjab is showing higher incidence of damaged grains in rice.

The issue was examined by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and according to it, the blackened grains/slightly blackened grains and pin-point blackened grains in the rice of this variety were ranging from 3.39 to 8.79 per cent.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research viewed that – I am talking of the Ministry of Agriculture and it has not come to my Ministry then – blackened grains, slightly blackened grains and pin-point blackened grains in the rice were due to excessive iron content in this variety.

In January, 2010 on the request of the Food Corporation of India and the Department of Food and Public Distribution, 75 samples of rice were collected from various places of Punjab by a team constituted by the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

The samples were sent to three Central Food Laboratories situated at Ghaziabad, Pune and Mysore for analysis as per the parameters prescribed in the PFA Act, 1954.

Out of the above three labs, only the Central Food Laboratory at Ghaziabad is under the administrative control of the Food Authority.

The analysis reports of the 75 samples revealed – I agree here with the hon. Member – that only nine samples out of the 75, were not found to be conforming to the standards of rice as prescribed under the PFA rules as stated above as these contained damaged grains, moisture and aflatoxin more than the prescribed limits. The results of the analysis were conveyed to the Food Corporation of India as well as to the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

So, they should have decided then whether to lift it or not. We did our job. But again I do not know the reason why they did not lift it. The hon. Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab and the hon. Member met me and told me that they are still not lifting. The meeting was held with the delegation of the Government of Punjab headed by the Deputy Chief Minister and the hon. Member, and it was decided that let the ICMR independently conduct analysis of the black portion of the PAU-201 rice for which samples be collected by the FCI and the Government of Punjab.

I think the hon. Deputy Chief Minister and the hon. Member must have approached the hon. Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Agriculture wanted to hold a meeting. So, another meeting was held on 15th August, 2010 in the Minister of Agriculture office where I was also present. Officers of the Ministries concerned, Indian Council of Agriculture Research, Indian Council of Medical Research, Food Safety and Standard Authority also attended the meeting. What was decided in the meeting presided over by the Minister of Agriculture? It was decided that the ICMR and the ICAR, the Health Ministry's Research Wing and the Agriculture Ministry's Research Wing will coordinate fresh collections of samples from Punjab and expeditiously test the composition of the blackened portion of rice and its toxicity. So, we have been assigned

to find out the composition of the blackened portion of the rice and its toxicity.

In the meeting it was decided that ICMR will look into the two following issues, that is (i) the toxin level, which is called the aflatoxin level, in the damaged rice of this variety; and (ii) the content of the blackened portion of the damaged rice.

The Secretary, the Department of Health Research and the DG, ICMR constituted a Committee on the same day, that is on 19.8.2010, for collection of samples of PAU-201 variety from different parts of Punjab.

The members of the Committee consist of two senior scientists of the ICMR and the Assistant Director General (Seeds) of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

The team had a meeting on 20.08.2010 at Ludhiana in which, the Director of Central Institute of Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology (VIPHET) of ICAR, Director Research, Punjab Agricultural University (PAU, Ludhiana), Deputy Director, Food and Civil Supplies, Government of Punjab and other officers attended. They discussed the strategy of collection of samples.

Director Research, Punjab Agriculture University, nominated two rice breeders for identification of rice variety 201.

Director Central Institute of Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology (CIPHET) nominated another scientist to assist the team.

The joint team visited six districts of Punjab namely: Barnala, Muktsar, Firozpur, Bhatinda, Mansa and Moga from 21st to 23rd August, 2010.

Representatives of Punjab State Government and Food Corporation of India with their teams were also present during collection of samples.

35 paddy samples and 11 sorted damaged samples of rice were collected from 35 mills from the six districts of Punjab. Sorted damaged rice samples have been sent to ICMR's Institute, National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad for analysis of aflatoxin.

The paddy samples weighing more than 300 kg were collected and have been sent to Hyderabad for milling to get white and sorted damaged rice at Directorate of Rice Research, Hyderabad.

Secretary, Department of Health Research and DG, ICMR called a meeting on 25th August, 2010 of representatives of the Food Corporation of India (FCI), Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to discuss the follow up action after collection of paddy and sorted damaged rice samples.

The following were suggested in the meeting:

1. Three laboratories one at National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad and two others – one of Ministry of Commerce will analyse these samples for aflatoxin.
2. National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad will also analyze the content of the black/brown coloured portion of damaged rice.

National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad has initiated the analysis of 11 sorted damaged rice samples and the results are likely to be available by the second week of September, 2010. ...(*Interruptions*)

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MADAM SPEAKER: Now, the House will take up `Zero Hour' matters. Dr. Ratna Dey.

...(*Interruptions*)

DR. RATNA DE (HOOGHLY): Madam, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity. â€¦ (*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : यह क्या हो रहा है? आप लोग बैठ जाइये।

â€¦(अवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : आप बैठिये। ज़ीरो ऑवर में आपको बोलने का मौका देंगे।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : आपकी बात हो गई। इस तरह से नहीं चलता है।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : जगदम्बिका पाल जी, आप क्यों खड़े हो गये हैं, बैठिये। अजनाला जी, कॉलिंग अटेंशन समाप्त हो गया है, अब आप बैठिए।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

MADAM SPEAKER: Let Dr. Ratna De speak. Shri Jagdambika Pal, please take your seat. Dr. Rattan Singh Ajnala and Shrimati Harsimrat Kaur, please take your seats.

...(Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: We have now moved on to `Zero Hour'. The Calling Attention is over. Dr. Ratna De.

...(Interruptions)

MADAM SPEAKER: Nothing will go in record except what Dr. Ratna De says.

(Interruptions) â€¦*