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Title: Need to provide diesel at subsidized rates to State Road Transport Corporations at par with the common consumer.

SHRI K. SUDHAKARAN (KANNUR): I appreciate the concern of the Government to tackle the burgeoning fiscal deficit by phasing out subsidies on petroleum products. To lessen the impact of the recent hike in diesel prices the Govt. has chosen to effect a nominal increase every month rather than hiking the prices steeply in one go. More than petrol, diesel serves the common man more widely in transportation of goods, including vegetables and perishables and is the prime mover for public transportation system on which the common man depends for his day to day travel. However, the Government has chosen to deny supplies of subsidised diesel from retail outlets to fleet of buses owned by State Road Transport Undertakings, which primarily serve the common man with affordable travel facilities like railways, and has clubbed them with bulk consumer category. It would be chaotic if the State Transport Undertakings line up at retail outlets every morning for long hours to the detriment of common consumers. The recent diesel hike has crippled the operations of State Road Transport Undertakings as already most of the State Road Transport Undertakings including that of Kerala are facing huge financial crunch. SRTCs are likely to face stiff resistance from the public if they revise bus fares to cover up the steep hike in diesel prices.

To enable the State Road Transport Corporations (SRTCs) to continue to serve the public at large, I would urge the Centre to delink the SRTCs from the bulk consumer category by providing them diesel at subsidised rates at par with the common consumer served by retail outlets.