

12.34 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

[English]

**Reported Supply of Adulterated Rapeseed
Oil through Fair Price Shops in Calcutta
Causing Paralysis to a Large Number
of People.**

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA
(Balasore) : I call the attention of the
Minister of State of the Ministry of Food
and Civil Supplies to the following matter
of urgent public importance and request
that he may make a statement thereon :

“The reported supply of adulterated rapeseed oil through fair price shops in Calcutta, causing paralysis to a large number of people and steps taken by the Government in the matter.”

**THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE
MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL
SUPPLIES (SHRI SUKH RAM) :** Govern-
ment shares the concern of the House
about the tragedy caused by consumption
of adulterated rapeseed oil in Calcutta.

Government imports edible oils through
the State Trading Corporation of India
Ltd. for supply under Public Distribution
System and services it through the STC
and the Hindustan Vegetable Oils
Corporation.

The West Bengal Government is allotted
only rapeseed oil which is refined by the
private refiners engaged by the West Bengal
Essential Commodities Supply Corporation
and STC; by WBECSO itself and by the
Hindustan Vegetable Oils Corporation.

There are reports from Calcutta that
some people have fallen ill and have been
hospitalised. . .

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY
(Katwa) : I am on a point of order. We
have got two different copies of the state-
ment here. In the original statement it is
said : “The oils, after refining, is cleared
by Public Health authorities.” But in the
revised statement this line has been omitted.
Why ? (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Only the
revised statement is the final thing.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura) :
Why has it been revised ? Who pressurised
you to change it ? (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : There is
no point of order.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Government
shares the concern of the House about the
tragedy caused by consumption of adultera-
ted rapeseed oil in Calcutta.

Government imports edible oils through
the State Trading Corporation of India
Limited (STC) for supply under Public
Distribution System (PDS) and services it
through the STC and the Hindustan
Vegetable Oils Corporation (HVOC).

The West Bengal Government is
allotted only rapeseed oil which
is refined by (a) the private refiners
engaged by the West Bengal Essen-
tial Commodities Supply Corporation
(WBECSO) and STC; (b) by WBECSO
itself; and (c) by the Hindustan
Vegetable Oils Corporation.

There are reports from Calcutta that
some people have fallen ill and have been
hospitalised after consuming food prepared
with edible oils purchased from one or
more outlets in Behala and Tollygunge. The
Enforcement Branch of West Bengal
Government sealed the ration shop from
which the adulterated edible oil was
apparently sold and an order suspending
the licence was issued. The ration cards
under this shops have been tagged to three
other neighbouring shops. Three persons
found to be operating the shop have been
arrested. Later on six persons in the same
locality were also arrested. The number
of people admitted in different hospitals is
reported to be over 300.

The consumption of the said adulterated
edible oil had a debilitating effect on the
extremities (hand and feet) on the victims.
The effect of the adulteration appears to
be delayed one.

On chemical analysis of the samples of
adulterated rapeseed oil, a substance
identified as Triorthocresyl Phosphate (TCP)

[Shri Sukh Ram]

was found as an adulterant. TCP is widely used as plasticiser in the plastic industry. It is an oily liquid freely soluble in all vegetable oils.

TCP can cause irreparable damage to the Central nervous system, leading to complete disarray of the neuro-muscular controls of the body and eventually death.

Investigations carried out by the State Government have revealed that the ration shop from which adulterated rapeseed oil was sold at Behala, received a consignment of 9.75 quintals of refined rapeseed oil from RASOI REFINERY, an authorised refinery of the West Bengal Essential Commodities Supply Corporation (WBECSC). The transport contractor who took delivery of the refined rapeseed oil on behalf of the ration shop in question also supplied rapeseed oils from the same stock to 7 other shops of Behala and Thakurpukur in the same sub-area. Till now there has been no complaint from any ration card holders of these 7 other shops. This establishes that the rapeseed oil received by the offending ration shops was adulterated after it was received by the ration shop owner. Enquiries have also revealed that the offending ration shop sold adulterated oil to ration card holders. This oil was also sold from a Grocer's shop owned by the employees of this shop at some distance from the ration shop under the description of mustard oil at a higher price.

The State's Food and Supplies Minister has clarified that he would like to place on record that until now there have been no incidents where the supplies received from the Government of India have been suspect or in any way found unsuitable for human consumption.

The Sub-inspector of Food and Supplies in-charge of the shop in question has been suspended for dereliction of duty and Area Inspector and Rationing Officer in-charge of the said area have been transferred. Directions have been issued to all concerned officers in the State to eliminate 'Benami' transactions, verify stocks and investigate the likely diversion of rapeseed oil from the ration shops. During the surprise raids made, edible oil worth over

Rs. 1 lakh was seized by the State Government for contravention of the stock limits and other offences. The State Government is investigating the matter further. The Health Deptt. of the State Government has also swung into action.

In the connection Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare alongwith Additional Director General (Medical) visited Calcutta on 30th July, 1988 and visited a number of hospitals in the city to see the condition of persons affected. Medicines worth about 1 lakh rupees were made available to the State Government by the Union Government. In the matter of providing treatment to the affected persons, the Union Health Minister discussed the matter with the State authorities and requested that the Centre be intimated if any essential physiotherapy equipments was required to rehabilitate the affected persons. The request in this regard from the West Bengal Government is still awaited. Samples of Rapeseed oil from the affected locality has been collected and tested by the Central Food Laboratory, Calcutta.

Even though the internal distribution of imported edible oils under Public Distribution System (PDS) and administration of the prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 is the primary responsibility of the State Government, the Department of Civil Supplies is exhorting the State Governments from time to time to ensure that the imported edible oils given to them for PDS is distributed to the consumers in the right quantity and quality. To minimise the diversion of imported edible oils to unauthorised channels and also to prevent its adulteration, Government has decided to progressively increase the supply of it in small packs.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Speaker and also to you for admitting this very serious matter as a Calling Attention Motion. In this connection, I must congratulate our local M.P., Kumari Mamata Banerjee who has very courageously taken up this issue and has been voicing her concern in the public. May I know from the hon. Minister whether these fact was brought to light on 24th of June this year? If so, why did the State Government

not take steps to remove such rapeseed oil from that area? So that those may not be sent to the open market because, Sir, what the hon. Minister has already told is that the first rate oil is added for making it adulterated which will look just like mustard oil. as the price of mustard oil is also much higher than the rapeseed oil, this rapeseed oil is supplied through P.D.S. being diverted to black market. But this adulterated oil is sold in the open market. Why did not the State Government take any step for the last one and half months? Only a few days back, after Kumari Mamata Banerjee and other Union Ministers have brought this matter to light . . .(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : This is totally incorrect. What are you talking? (Interruptions)

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : The State Government is giving Rs. 500 for each patient for treatment. The patients who are paralysed have become invalid for the entire life. This amount of Rs. 500 is nothing. Sir, I myself visited the Vidyasagar hospitals on 25th July. The horrible scene which I have noticed is so pathetic that nobody can check tears falling from his eyes after seeing those patients. It is very serious. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of the Union Government, as well as the Union Minister and the Health Ministry that many small children and grown up ladies are victims to this type of paralysis and other diseases. Some have complained before me that they are also having some defects in eye sight. So, Sir, this amount of Rs. 500 to each patient for the treatment is nothing but it is just a joke, so to say.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Under which provision of the Constitution, this House can discuss the question of hospital, the question of dispensary, public health and sanitation in the State. It is entirely, exclusively within the State administration. It does not mean that by discussing rapeseed oil, this House can discuss hospitals and other things concerning the State subjects. I am on a point of order. He is making incorrect statement. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I would request the hon. Member to confine his

speech only about rapeseed oil. Please avoid bringing in State subjects in his speech.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I would request the hon. Member to restrict speech to rapeseed oil.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : Sir, for your kind information, I would like to submit that I am not saying anything out of the statement made by the hon. Minister. I am just putting some questions for clarification which are arising out of the statement given by the hon. Minister. I must congratulate our Health Minister who has visited on the advice of the Prime Minister to the hospital in Calcutta. Sir, it was mentioned in the press that though the hon. Chief Minister of West Bengal had assured that the State Health Minister would be present when the Union Health Minister would visit the hospital, he was not seen. The reason is best known to them. I am just bringing this to the notice of the House. The Health Minister, after visiting the area and due to such horrible condition of the patients, made known that for future purposes the Union Government contributed Rs. 1.0 lakh worth of medicines. And also the Health Minister from his side has offered to supply some equipments and instruments for physiotherapy. But no formal request from the State Government has been received yet. This is very serious matter.

Similarly, I have gone through the news items published in the national newspapers that about 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the patients who were admitted in the free hospitals have been forced to leave the hospitals without any treatment to show the figures less. This is a very serious matter too. Besides, I had also gone through a news item that in Behala area some workers of a political party have started a camp to dissuade the peasants from going to the hospital for admission to minimise the seriousness of the issue. If this is done, this is a very serious thing.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : Who is that political person? Be clear, have courage to say something of what you want to say. (Interruptions)

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : Sir, the news item which was published stated that the edible oil businessmen are of the opinion that 5 per cent of the total imported oil going to open market by way of slippage which has been shown in the accounts to be as transit loss. So, this 5 per cent might be adulterated. I want to bring this to the notice of the hon. Minister who may kindly go through this aspect also. All such matters need be probed through the CBI.

The hon. Minister has stated that the analysis established the presence of TC phosphate which has been adulterated and he has also confessed that this adulteration of TC phosphate can cause irreparable damage to the central nervous system and may lead to death. (*Interruptions*). So, it is very serious. The West Bengal hon. Minister for Food and Civil Supplies is shifting the responsibility to the Health Ministry, the States Health Ministry is also blaming the Food and Civil Supplies Minister. These are the things. Besides, the Calcutta police are also blaming the Health Department because you may be knowing that in 1972 more than 400 people fell sick in Dum Dum area by consuming adulterated mustard oil. At that time the then Government had amended some of the sections of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act in 1974 by amending certain clauses of awarding the most stringent punishment of life imprisonment to the offenders. But I am very sorry to say that in 1974 this Act was passed, but till today, for the last 14 years, not a single person could be convicted or arrested under this Act. This is a very serious matter. What the hon. Minister has told in the Statement is that 9 persons were arrested. May I know whether these 9 persons were arrested under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1974. In the normal way they have been arrested. The Food and Civil Supplies Department of the State Government is blaming the police that whenever they go to collect the samples, police help is not given. In that case, how can they function? I must say that this is a very serious issue. In his statement, the Minister has mentioned the ways to check the diversion of imported edible oils through unauthorised channels and also to prevent the adulteration and

also to increase the supply of small packs of imported oil. May I know from the Hon. Minister what is the progress in this regard? When small packs of imported oil can be made available to the people?

Besides, this, the Hon. Minister has stated that the sample of rapeseed oil which was collected from the affected area is being given for test and analysis to the Central Food Laboratory in Calcutta. What is the result of that? I must urge upon the Government that this is nothing but cold blooded murder through slow poison. With the result, ladies are affected by paralysis. In that event, what will happen to the future generation? What would be the fate of those children who will be born from those ladies who are affected by this serious disease. I would request our Health Minister to give due thought to this issue. These are the facts on which I would request the Union Government not to take it so lightly by shifting the responsibility on the State Government by saying that the distribution was entrusted to the State Government. On the 25th, some people of Calcutta told me that your Government has supplied this rapeseed oil. They do not know that this rapeseed oil is imported and supplied to the State Government for the use by the public after being processed in the state owned refineries. But the general impression is that since the Union Government has supplied rapeseed oil, the entire blame is coming on the Centre. In this connection, I would request that not a single drop of imported oil be made available in the open market for sale. May I know what is the reaction of the Government on this issue so that in future neither in West Bengal nor in any part of the country these types of imported oil be adulterated. With these words, I conclude.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We adjourn for lunch to re-assemble at 2.00 P.M.

12.59 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till
Fourteen of the clock*

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after
Lunch at five minutes past Fourteen
of the Clock*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

[*English*]

Reported Supply of Adulterated Rapeseed Oil through Fair Price Shops in Calcutta causing Paralysis to a Large Number of People —Contd.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : We are now continuing with the Calling Attention.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Jadavpur) : Sir, at the very outset, I would like to appeal to all the Members from this side or that side, to listen to me carefully because it is a very sensitive and serious matter. The Lok Sabha is the highest forum of our democracy. I think, it is our *mandir, masjid, church and guru-dwara* in our democracy. That's why, as a Member of the Parliament, I would like to raise this issue for the sake of human beings.

I am grateful to you, Sir, for having this discussion. In my State, more than 1,000 people have been affected by adulteration of rapeseed oil. Previously, it was in Calcutta, particularly in Behala area. Three hundred people are paralytic now. They have been admitted into the hospital. Now, more and more people are getting affected. It has covered many other areas, like Tolleygunge, Yadavpore, Vishnupur, Mograhat, Bhawanipur. That's why it is our duty to raise this issue in this August House.

Sir, I have personally met the affected people in these areas and in the hospital. I have myself seen tears in their eyes. People ranging from a five-month child to 85-year old men are affected by the adulterated rapeseed oil. When I met them, they just asked me with tears rolling down from their eyes : Whether we will survive or not ? A 65-year old mother asked me : Whether I will be able to cook food for my children ? A boy, aged 22 years, said : Mamataji, can you tell me whether I can survive or not ?

Who is to be blamed for all this ? The State Government is there. The Central Government is there. Who will take the

responsibility of these ? Four hundred people have been admitted into the hospital. Their upper limbs, their lower limbs, are totally paralytic.

I am grateful to our Prime Minister. He is very much concerned about this. Our hon. Health Minister has already visited the hospital for necessary action. He has directed that necessary assistance should be given to the State Government, if that Government is willing.

I want to raise this issue because now it has affected Calcutta. Tomorrow, it may affect other parts of the country. After the Bhopal gas tragedy, you cannot imagine this type of incident which took place in our country. That's why, I think, all the Members of this House—either from this side or from that side—will condemn the culprits who are indulging in adulteration. Poor people are going to be victimised. This House should condemn this.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY (Midnapore) : We do condemn.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I want to tell the Health Minister who is here that after he visited the hospital, another 200 people have been admitted. What was given in the State Government's report ? One report has come in the paper. One medical team from the Indian Medical Association, experts of the medical team have stated that wrong treatment was given and going on for the victims. They are giving steroids and decaden to the victims. Experts said that it is wrong treatment. That is why I just raise the matter for your kind information. 400 people are paralysed. They are not getting proper treatment. Wrong treatment is going on. I want to ask you as to what is your moral responsibility to save these people, to protect these people. What steps are you taking to protect these people and to protect the interests of these people ? The State's Food and Supplies Minister has clarified that he would like to place on record that until now there have been no incidents where the supplies received from the Government of India have been suspect or in any way found unsuitable for human consumption. If Government is not guilty for that, then who is guilty ? This is a very serious question. I do not want

[Kumari Mamata Banerjee]

to criticise my State Government here because I cannot criticise. But I can praise my State Government which is my right. I think that everybody will admit this. Because of the excellent work done by my State Government, 400 people have been admitted in the hospital. That is why I suggest that the Chief Minister should get the award of Padma Bhushan from the Central Government. I want to tell you that this is because the entire Government is paralysed now. Who will protect the people? If the State Government is not willing to protect the people, then it is your responsibility to protect the people. We want to know what you are doing in this regard.

AN HON. MEMBER : Mr. Acharia, you tell Jyoti Basu.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : We ignore her.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : I am happy that my colleague, Mr. Saifuddin Chowdhary has ignored me. It is good. They ignore the people Who am I? I am people's representative. They can suppress me but they cannot suppress people's words. That is my question. 25 days are over. How many persons have been arrested who were indulged in this adulteration? Only six or seven persons have been arrested but I know that this is only an eye-wash. That is why I am requesting you to bring the amendments of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. You bring new amendments for stringent action against the culprits and against the adulterators who are indulging in all these kinds of things. They should be hanged. After the Second World War, we have seen from the newspaper that the Japan Government shot two adulterators and after that no such incident took place. But in our country, our first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said that we should take strong action against the adulterators. Sir, even in China, they are taking stringent action against the adulterators. Sir, I think the Members will say, nobody died in this incident but I would like to say that it is worst than death, rather I would say it is just like murder. It is a very big crime that the people are indulging in these sort

of things. Therefore, I would request you to take strong action against these adulterators and also bring an amendment to the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954. In your statement you have said that the State Government has the power to take action against the culprit. But you have to give more powers to the State Governments so that they could take stern action against these adulterators.

The West Bengal State Government is giving Rs. 500 each to the affected families. I have seen with my own eyes that the whole of the family, parents as well as children are admitted in the hospital. Sir, it a matter of schame. Despite the fact that they have their legs and hands, still they cannot move, they cannot take their food and they cannot walk. I would request the Government to take some steps to rehabilitate these victims. Both the State Government as well as the Central Government should find some way out of it. It is not a partisan matter. I do not want to make it a political issue. It involves the lives of the human beings and, therefore, some step must be taken in this direction.

Who is the main culprit? Sir, I would like to inform you that the main culprit is the Ration Shop called the 'Garib Bhandar' where the adulterated rapeseed oil was distributed. Sir, this shopkeeper was arrested only day before yesterday. I would like to know why you have taken so much time to arrest him. Our State Minister is not here that is why I am asking you as to why so much time was taken to arrest him. I would request you to give some special benefits to the victims there.

Our Health Minister is sitting here. I would like to request him to send one expert medical team to our State because the patients there are very much in need of good medical facility. They require some physiotherapy treatment which is not being given to them because of lack of doctors and other things. Therefore, I would once again request our Health Minister to send an expert medical team there. Our Health Minister has assured the West Bengal Government that they are willing to give every possible assistance to them but I am sorry to say that the reply is that they

are not interested. Since this incident took place in my constituency, I would request you to please send an expert medical team so that they can find out as to what is the actual disease. Nobody knows about the actual disease. If you will not send a medical team there, then you will not be able to save these people. Therefore, I earnestly request the Central Government to set up a medical board which should go there and find out the cause of the disease.

Lastly, Sir, I would like to say that the Central Government should assure the House that such type of incident will not occur again. The Central Government will show no mercy to the people who are indulging in such crimes. The Health Minister has visited my State. Shri Ajit Panja also visited that place. So, I would request, if there is time, our Prime Minister should also go there and meet the people. Our Head of the State did not visit the suffering people because he was also not well. It appears he was ill because of the use of adulterated rapeseed oil. That is why, I am requesting that you must take this matter very seriously and do something for the victims.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
Just one clarification.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Not now. I will allow one hon. Member for seeking a clarification after the Minister has answered.

Now, the Minister.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY :
He is not there. In the meantime, I will...
(Interruptions).

SHRI ASUTOSH LAW : If he is allowed to speak in the calling attention, it will be taken as a precedent in future...
(Interruptions).

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI MOTI LAL VORA) : Sir, I want to give certain information because I have been there...
(Interruptions).

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN (Cooch Behar) : On a point of order...

SHRI MOTI LAL VORA : I am not at all replying; I am just giving some information.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Mr. Sukh Ram will reply now. I am not allowing anybody else.

SHRI SUKH RAM : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, One point was raised by some friends from the opposition side that one or two lines were deleted from the text of my statement. I may make it clear that I received this notice only yesterday, and keeping in view the seriousness and importance of this issue, I agreed to reply to it today and the officers in my Ministry sat up to 2 O'clock in the night and they received various informations from the West Bengal Government.

I received this draft reply only at 9.30 in the morning and then I finally approved it at about 10.30 in the morning. It was then finally typed and circulated. The original draft reply was, I think, sent to the dealing Assistant in the Lok Sabha and the hon. friends must have procured it from there. According to the rules also, when I give my reply here, that only is considered to be the final reply.

Secondly, there was some objection by some friends that it should not be taken up as a calling attention, it should be considered as a discussion under Rule 193 or something like that. I wonder, how this issue should have been raised at all. In fact, the Members should congratulate the movers of this calling attention. This is a very serious matter. This is not a partisan issue because it concerns human suffering. More than 300 people are suffering. Who is the real culprit? My entire reply is based on the facts supplied by the Government of West Bengal. These people are suffering and now the question before us is as to how it happened. Of course, an investigation is going on. The Government of West Bengal is conducting an investigation. But one fact is established by the preliminary investigations. Adulteration of the oil has taken place at one fair price shop and the owner of that fair price shop is absconding. Three persons who were working under him have been arrested. A

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case of violating the law was registered in the year 1984 against this absconding person. That case is still going on. I fail to understand as to why for the last four years action could not be taken against him.

I am repeat that I am saying all this on the basis of the facts supplied by the Government of West Bengal. Now, the initiative taken by the Congress(I) members on this side should have been appreciated by the Members on the Opposition Benches. As a matter of fact, they themselves could have raised this issue and asked for a calling attention motion. Perhaps, they did not think it fit to bring it before the House because they happen to be from the ruling party in that State and Congress is the opposition party over there.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : You yourself have stated that this is not a partisan issue and now you are taking a partisan line.

SHRI SUKH RAM : In the morning you did object to raise this issue.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : We wanted to participate in this debate.

SHRI SUKH RAM : There was an objection by my friends from the Opposition Benches. They stated that this could not be discussed here because it was a state subject.

I may clarify the position. This issue relates to the public distribution system. We are supplying certain essential commodities to the States and rapeseed oil is one of them. The adulteration of an essential commodity supplied by the Central Government to the State Government does concern the Central Government. In that capacity also, this issue can be considered by this House. I do not know why you have taken an objection.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : Who objected ?

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Let us put the record straight Sir. We objected only to discuss a State issue here.

We never objected to discuss the supply of rapeseed oil and its adulteration. Please do not put words into our mouth. We did not object to it.

SHRI SUKH RAM : This is not a State issue. This is one of the items supplied by the Public Distribution System. This issue relates to the Centre and that is why this has rightly been raised here.

As far as the facts of the case are concerned, I have stated in my reply that the first consignment was issued to this Fair price Shop on 22nd June. It was worth 9.75 metric tonnes. The second consignment was issued on 5th July, 1988. This matter came to the notice of the State Government probably on the story which was carried by a local press over there on the 18th July, *i.e.* this fact came to the notice of the State Government after a lapse of about 27 days. Thereafter the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies of the State Government visited the site. Then the State Government started investigating this matter. I do not know how this raid had taken place. As far as the duty of the Central Government is concerned, I want to simply state that whosoever is responsible or whosoever is at fault—whether it is the agency of the State Government or the agency of the Central Government, it must be identified and severely punished so that such things do not take place in future and the guilty is punished. There is no question of suppressing the facts by us nor I think by the State Government also. The only thing is that, when this investigation is going on we are prepared to assist the State Government wherever it is possible. But two things have been established. First is that, when the State Government conducted certain raids on account of this case, rapeseed oil worth one lakh was seized and this was on account of violation of laws by the depot holders. The State Government has always been requesting the Central Government to allocate more edible oils to the State, I made it clear that 100 per cent demand of the State Government may not be possible for the Central Government to meet but we are trying to meet the minimum demand of each and every State Government. But at the sametime I have been requesting in writing to the State Governments that they

have to ensure that this essential commodity reaches the poor because the price of it is about Rs. 14 Rs. 15 per kg. against the price of other indigenous edible oil which ranges between Rs. 25 to Rs. 30. The State Governments have to come with heavy hands against the person who violates the law. In this case it is established that a lot of edible oil which is being supplied to the West Bengal is being misused.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Only in one shop, it has been found . . .

SHRI SUKH RAM : Only when this case came to their notice, edible oil worth one lakh was seized in that very locality. They have not conducted the State-wide raids; otherwise I am very sure this oil must have been misused by some people. I don't say that it is not misused elsewhere. In other States also it may be misused. But what we have been requesting is that the State Government should ensure that this goes to the people. This fact is established. Sometimes you also say and rightly so that as you are the representative of the people, you must raise the voice of the people here in this forum. This is the right forum for you. You say that West Bengal is not treated well by the Central Government, that the Central Government has reduced the allocations of foodgrains to the West Bengal. As I stated the other day, whatever allocation we have given this year, even that is not being lifted by the West Bengal Government. My request to you is that you take up this matter with your Government and find out the truth as to why this is not being lifted, instead of blaming the Central Government.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : This is the object of this Calling Attention.

SHRI SUKH RAM : This is what I say. This has been adulterated at a certain level, and the shop-owner has been absconding. It is very strange, as I stated, that there is one case against him the Essential Commodities Act, and for the last four years this case could not be decided by the State Government. (*Interruptions*) This might encourage him to indulge further in this nefarious activity. (*Interruptions*)

The West Bengal Government has admitted in its reply that there may be a

large number of *benami* shops, and this is also a *benami* shop.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA : Why don't you institute a CBI inquiry on this issue ?

SHRI SUKH RAM : I may make another submission : A very progressive law has been passed by Parliament, known as Consumers Protection Act in 1986, and we have been requesting all the State Governments to constitute consumer councils at the State level. Bihar is the only State which has constituted this council. Had this Council been constituted in West Bengal, in addition to the remedy available under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, the consumers who suffer on account of negligence, omission or commission by the State or Central agencies, could have some remedy and seek some compensation—which goes up to Rs. 10 lakhs at the State level. Had they constituted it, the sufferers could get this benefit. Now I do not want to prejudice the inquiry by making any statement. Whatever I have said is on the basis of the facts supplied by the State Government. I wish that the State Government conducts this inquiry very quickly and identifies the culprits, and that the culprit is punished, because as far as the Central Government is concerned, we are supplying the essential commodities to the State Government; and thereafter, it is the duty of the State Government to supply them further to the people through fair price shops.

As far as this import of edible oil is concerned, I am given to understand that the quality control is ensured by the State Trading Corporation at the time of unloading of this oil; and the facts on record have proved it beyond doubt that this adulteration has not taken place at the level of STC's issuing certificate to the State Government and at the level of the refineries, because this oil was not issued only to this shop; but it was issued to a number of other shops also. The complaint has not come from cardholders of any other shop. It is only specifically the cardholders who have purchased this oil from this shop who have suffered.

[Shri Sukh Ram]

The Health Minister rushed to the spot and made enquiries about it. He assured all assistance to the State Government. Medicine worth Rs. 1 lakh has already been given to them. If they want physiotherapy equipment for rehabilitating those patients, the Health Minister has assured them that it would be made available. Their reply is awaited. Now the West Bengal Government has to come forward in case they want any help.

With these words, I simply want to submit that this should not be made a political issue; this is a human problem and whosoever is found guilty must be punished so that such occurrences do not take place anywhere and in future in West Bengal also.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I have already informed the House that I would allow only Mr. Chowdhary to seek clarifications.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : I want to read from the *Statesman*.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : No. Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions)**

AN HON. MEMBER : You cannot allow him. This is not correct. (Interruptions)**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Only one clarification you seek.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora) : If I also seek a clarification, will you allow me? (Interruptions)**

AN HON. MEMBER : He is creating a new precedent. (Interruptions)**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I had already informed the House. Now I cannot go back. I have already told you that as a

very very special case, I will allow only one member to seek clarifications. I have already allowed Mr. Chowdhary. Now I cannot go back.

(Interruptions)**

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : You write to him. Please take your seat. Don't obstruct the proceedings.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : You are showing a special favour to them. (Interruptions)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : It is a heinous crime and severe punishment has to be given to those who are responsible for this. We should rise above party level to give them punishment that they deserve. But I am pained to say that there is an attempt to politicise this.

I was very happy when I read in the newspaper that an MP from that area Kumari Mamata Banerjee raised an agitation there, I liked it. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : What do you want to say?

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : I praised her for what she did. But when it crossed the limit, when a Chief Minister from other State goes there without intimating the State Government, people become suspicious. (Interruptions) I am asking the Minister. (Interruptions)

I am asking the Minister whether the State Government . . . (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please take your seats

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : During our talks in the Central Hall I told Kumari Mamata Banerjee : "What you are doing is very good, but do not cross the limits."

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Whatever you have discussed outside, why are you bringing here? You see the Minister's state-

ment and ask a question. What you have discussed outside, why are you bringing here ?

(Interruptions)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : I also want to congratulate the Minister for the statement that he has made that the State Government has taken action, that the investigations are going on and some of the culprits have been arrested and no stone will be left unturned to book the culprits. I want to ask him, if he can tell us whether during last year a bulk amount of rapeseed oil was sold by the Central Government in the open market and (Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : That is all. Only one question. Now the Minister will reply to it.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Minister will reply now. I have asked him to put one question.

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOWDHARY : Last question. There is a news item in *Jugantar*.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Only one question I have allowed. Nothing more. That will not go no record. No.

(Interruptions)*

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : I am on a point of order. You are discriminating. (Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Only one question, I have allowed. Only the Minister will reply. I allowed only one question as a clarification. That is all.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT : You have allowed him. Let us also put a question.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I have allowed only one question.

(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please take your seats. I will take care of this. (Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I told you, I will take care of this.

(Interruptions)*

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER : I gave permission only to raise only one supplementary. He has already raised it. That will go on record. Nothing else will go on record.

(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Order, order.

SHRI SUKH RAM : The whole House must congratulate Miss Mamata Banerjee for raising this issue. We are not bringing politics in it. This is a question of human life. She has raised this issue, and all the sections of this House must appreciate this. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : Please be calm. No further discussion.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SUKH RAM : Sir, there seems to be criminal neglect, omission commission on the part of certain State agency. It has to be identified. Investigation will reveal it. But there is definitely criminal neglect, omission or commission on the part of certain state agency. It should be identified by the State Government and severally punished. . . (Interruptions) We have supplied essential commodities to the State Government and it is the responsibility of the State Government to further make supply to the people through fair price shops. Adulteration has taken place at lower level, i.e. fair price shop . . . (Interruptions) My only request is that instead of bringing politics in this issue, we have to consider it dispassionately.