

[English]

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

15.33 1/2 hrs.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS (AMENDMENT) BILL*

[English]

(Amendment of section 20)

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji): Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to amend the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969"

The motion was adopted

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK: Sir, I introduce the Bill.

15.34 hrs.

FAIR PRICE SHOPS (REGULATION) BILL—CONTD.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will now take up further consideration of Fair Price Shops (Regulation) Bill moved by Shri G.S. Basavaraju.

Now, Shri Ram Bhagat Paswan may continue his speech.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM BHAGAT PASWAN (Rosaera): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I said that

other day that adequate number of Fair Price Shops were there in our country. But as far as the question of supply of essential commodities is concerned, sometimes they are in the short supply. Slackened attitude is adopted in supply of essential commodities, due to which consumers have to face lot of difficulties. This is because of the fact that most of the essential commodities are first transported to urban areas from the rural areas and from there, these commodities are again distributed to the rural areas through Public Distribution System. Big businessmen are the whole-sale dealers of essential commodities. In the cities sometimes these dealers sell these commodities in the black-market as a result of which these essential commodities such as sugar, maida, suji and edible oil etc. are not supplied to the rural people. As per the policy of the Government, licences are to be given to the unemployed, Harijans and widows under 20-point programme but big businessmen are the whole-sale dealer of the essential commodities under public distribution system. Therefore, I would like to request the Minister to review this situation. My submission is that licences of whole-sale dealership of essential commodities given to big businessmen under the public distribution system should be cancelled and these should be given to the disabled, Harijans and widows. Sir, transportation cost for carrying essential commodities to villages is very high. At present, dealers have to bear the transportation cost. Villages are located at a distance of 50 to 60 kms. from the cities in my constituency and they are not linked by railway network or roads with the cities. As a result these items are transported to rural areas by bullock-carts or some other means of transport. I would like to request the Government that transportation cost for carrying essential commodities to remote villages should be borne by the Government. I would also like to state that at many places adulteration is done in essential commodities, due to which many diseases spread and the lives of the people are endangered. Another problem is the artificial scarcity created by the dealers inspite of availability of commodities. They sell these items meant to be sold through the

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[Sh. Ram Bhagat Paswan]

Public Distribution System in the black market. I would like to submit that the Government should pay attention towards this problem also without any delay and take concrete steps to ensure that consumers are not forced to buy these commodities in black-market. The dealers under the Public Distribution System in urban as well as rural areas distribute items upto 4.00 p.m. and after that the same commodities are sold in the black-market. I would like that Government should pay attention towards this and make arrangements to provide essential commodities to the people all the items.

There is no storage facilities available in villages. Due to this, essential commodities are damaged which are sold through the Public Distribution System. In cities also, we have seen that goods lying in the open at the stations get spoilt due to rains and the same are later on sold to the people through fair price shops. I would like to request the Government to construct godowns in every village for the safe storage of essential commodities, to protect it from decay so that the people who consume them are not taken ill.

Our State, Bihar has always been affected by natural calamities. Though it is an agricultural state where people are solely dependent on agricultural for their living, but every year there has been one or the other natural calamity such as floods or drought in that state which has resulted in the meagre production of foodgrains. I would like to urge upon the Central Government to provide 10 lakh tonnes of foodgrains to Bihar every 6 months for distribution among the people of that state through the public distribution system, so that the people have not to face shortage of foodgrains. At present Bihar is in the grip of devastating floods, but no relief has been provided so far to the affected people. Instead they have to purchase essential commodities from the open market at exorbitant rates. I would like to bring it to the notice of the Hon. Minister that the kerosene oil is being sold in Bihar at different rates

ranging from Rs. 10.00 to Rs. 15.00 per litre at different places, because the means of transport are not available in these areas and the supply of essential commodities does not reach the villages. Even if it reaches there, it is not distributed through the public distribution system. Instead these commodities are sold in black-market. So, I would like to urge upon the Central Government to direct the district collectors of flood affected areas to ensure supply of essential commodities by boats or by any other means of transport so that people do not have to face difficulties. I would also like to urge upon the Government to supply foodgrains on subsidised rates to the people without employment and those living below the poverty line. Essential commodities should be made available on subsidised rates to the handicapped, widows, aged and those who have no means of livelihood. Such people should be given free ration, if possible, otherwise they should be provided essential commodities at least on subsidised rates. So far as the question of providing ration cards to the poor people having a daily income of only Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 in Delhi in concerned, a survey should be conducted in Delhi and other metropolitan cities to identify such people for the purpose of issue of ration cards because without a ration card they have to purchase foodgrains and other essential commodities from the market in black and they have to face lot of difficulties in obtaining ration cards. Sometimes they are asked to furnish their house number or on other occasions some other information is demanded and on one or the other ground, they are not issued ration cards as they have to live in slums. I would, therefore, urge upon the Government to issue ration cards to such people lying in Delhi and other big cities after proper enquiries so that they don't have to purchase foodgrains from the black market.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to thank Shri Basavaraju for highlighting the problems of common interest and for presenting a Bill on them in the House. I would urge upon the hon. Minister to pay attention to the suggestions for improvement in the public distribution system and

effect improvements accordingly.

Sir, all the essential commodities should be available on these fair price shops. There should not be any scarcity of these items. Everyone should get all the commodities in time. At times we find that commodities are not available for a period of 3-4 months. This situation should be reviewed and factors responsible for this scarcity should be removed. Sometimes, at the time of festivals, Maida and Suji are sold at a very high rate. All these inconsistencies should be removed. These things should be made easily available to the poor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, with these words, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on this important Bill.

[*English*]

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore):
Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very much indebted to you for having allowed me to participate in the discussion on this important Bill brought forward by my hon. friend, Mr. Basavaraju. I congratulate him because it is about the genuine problems being faced by the people who are mainly below the poverty line. These poor people are mostly dependent on fair price shops and similar other shops selling the essential commodities.

Why did he think of bringing forward this Bill? It is very clear from the Bill that the difficulties being experienced by the consumers in the rural and the urban areas too can be solved by enacting this Bill into a law. Of course, there are some lacunae on which I will speak later on. But the aims and objects of the Bill are quite clear and no doubt very useful. He has proposed for having Central Board and State Boards for fair price shops. What for? We are experiencing that the essential commodities sold at the fair price shops to the consumers at many places are not according to the prescribed weight. The quality is also not up to the mark. When we contact the owners of such fair price shops, they tell us that the commodities supplied by

the FCI godowns are supplied less in weight to the extent of 5-10 kilograms per quintal. Of course, we should not blame the Central Government on this issue. That is the responsibility of the State Governments to see that commodities supplied from the FCI godowns are correct in weight.

We have experienced that in our State, Orissa, the State Government have appointed supervisors and inspectors to remain present in the FCI godowns when the rations are drawn from there. They would see that the quantities supplied are correct in weight. But with the connivance of the dealers, officers in charge of the FCI godowns as well as the supervisors or the inspectors, the actual weight is not supplied according to the prescribed weight.

My constituency was severely affected by a cyclone on 26th of May this year. At the time when the State Government provided the emergency relief, myself and some officers checked the foodgrains supplied. The weight was less by ten or eight kilograms per quintal. When we asked the dealers as to why they accepted the foodgrains of less weight, they said that the FCI authorities at the godowns told them that if they wanted to lift the foodgrains, they can do so, otherwise they can go away because it was only supplied on a war-footing to the cyclone affected people. So, they lifted the quota allotted for them even if it was less in weight. Ultimately, the consumers had to suffer. What is happening in the fair price shops? In the fair price shops, foodgrains are distributed to the consumers by less weight and the price equal to that less weight of foodgrains is being adjusted by enhancing the rate for which the foodgrains are being supplied. Suppose, the rice supply is made at the rate of Rs. 2.50 per kg and the loss of weight will be adjusted by raising the prescribed rate of Rs. 2.50 per kg. Ultimately, the consumers are the sufferers. Similarly, the quality is also not up to the mark. Of course, the Government at the Centre is giving price in the approved quality. But ultimately, when it comes to the people for consumption, it is noticed that the quality is not good. I do not

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know who is fixing the prices and how the prices are being fixed. This has to be gone into. This is another difficulty. Despite our Government insisting that the co-operatives and gram panchayats are to be given top priority for giving dealerships, none of the co-operatives or gram panchayats are coming forward to get the dealership because of the difficulties and bottlenecks, i.e., they are getting less marginal profit. Their profit is so less that they are not willing to get the dealership. Whenever they come forward, they run under loss. I am told earlier that the marginal profit is so less that they had to increase the rate, not on paper but within the knowledge of everybody including the sarpanches. This is another problem which should be looked into. The marginal profit should be increased so that gram panchayats and co-operatives will come forward to get the dealership.

The next aspect is irregular supply of foodgrains. The Government is blaming the Railways for slow movement of foodgrains. But the Railways are saying that they are giving top priority for the movement of foodgrains. I know that top priority is given to the movement of foodgrains but due to some incidents like 'Rail Roko' agitation and other natural calamities, the foodgrains are not reaching the distribution centres on time. That is another reason for which the co-operatives and gram panchayats who are interested to do this job are not coming forward. This aspect should also be looked into. Our State Government on instructions from the Centre have appointed an Advisory Committee for all the fair price shops. Though according to the criterion, persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women have also to be taken in that Advisory Committee, but unfortunately, that is not being done. These Advisory Committees are not functioning properly. In fact, they are not functioning at all. Of course, on paper there Advisory Committees. We must ensure that these Advisory Committees function properly so that these types of things are avoided.

Then, the retail centres do not open on time. That is another difficulty. The poor man with a sum of Rs. 4, Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 wants to get his ration and go to his work. But if the ration shop does not open in time, he suffers a lot. Therefore, the time fixed for these fair price shops must be strictly followed and the ration shops opened in time.

Further, we should not fix the time according to our choice. That should be left to the local Panchayat or the local bodies. They would see what time suits the consumers so that they can come and draw their rations from those shops.

It must also be ensured that all the essential commodities are kept in one place in the rural areas or the town areas, so that the people may not run to various places for different items of essential commodities. It should not be that for kerosene oil, they have to go for a distance of two kms and for rice or wheat another 3-4 kms. This needs to be looked into.

I must congratulate our Prime Minister and our Government for providing subsidies on foodgrains to the tune of Rs. 2000 crores per year. But it is very necessary that we should ensure proper distribution of foodgrains and other items. Only if we ensure this, the pious intentions of our Prime Minister, who has done so much for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, poor people, poorest of the poor in the society, would be fulfilled. We would only succeed if we take care of all these things.

I would also request that the non-supply of foodgrains should be looked into very strictly and properly. What is actually happening? The Minister can ascertain it. It appears that the Government of India decided and it has come in the newspapers also, that the States which are producing oilseeds should not be given imported oil like palmolein oil. Because of this Orissa is being denied the supply of imported edible oil. I don't know how far it is true. But if it is a fact, I would request the hon. Minister to look into it. Even though these are the statistics given

by the State Government or the Agriculture Department, what is actually happening in the rural areas? Our experience is that the mustard oil and other edible oils are not available for less than Rs. 25 per Kg. This is the situation. So, I would request the Hon. Minister to kindly look into it.

Orissa, Kerala, Andhra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Assam are rice eating states. Whenever the quota for rice is fixed for a particular State, due consideration should be given to this fact. It is not possible for the Centre to meet our full requirement because the Centre is not producing rice. It is the States which are producing the foodgrains and, therefore, they should see that the target for procurement is properly fulfilled. My humble submission is that all the States should have the Procurement Board which can collect the foodgrains from the fields only according to the targets fixed for a particular State. This will also help the States to procure the foodgrains in due time. But what is happening actually? I am telling you about the State of Orissa. There is a Civil Supply Committee. The farmers are selling their products at a cheaper rate. When they go for procuring the foodgrains, the small and marginal farmers would have already sold their products at a cheaper price. So, this should be looked into.

Lastly, I would say that the FCI godown are so inadequate that even if procurement is done according to our expectations there is a very little scope for the storage. My humble submission is that more FCI godowns or warehouses should be there in the rural areas and the procurement process should start before the harvesting period so that the cultivators should get the due support price for their products.

With these words, Sir, I whole heartedly support the Bill brought by Shri Basavaraju.

Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, are left with just 8 or 9 minutes but still there are a lot of Members who want to speak on this Bill.

So, if the House agrees to extend the time for this Bill, then these Members will get the chance to speak.

SHRI JAGANNATH PATTNAIK (Kalahandi): Sir, it may be extended by one hour.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I think we should extent it by two hours so that all the hon. Members who want to speak can be covered. So, the time for this discussion is extended by two hours.

Yes, Shri Jagannath Pattnaik.

[*Translation*]

*SHRI JAGANNATH PATTNAIK: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I may be permitted to speak in my state language, Oriya.

Sir, I rise to speak a few words on the Fair Price Shops (Regulation) Bill moved by my friend Shri G.S. Basavaraju. The Bill of Shri Basavaraju seeks to regulate the functioning of the Fair Price Shops in the country. In the statement and Objects of Reasons of the Bill, he has stressed upon the need to streamline and strengthen the Public Distribution System all over the country. Besides, he has laid stress on the timely distribution of good quality food-grains and other essential commodities at reasonable rates by the Fair Price Shops. He feels that there is a lack of coordination between the State and Centre in the matter of Public Distribution System and therefore he feels that a way should be found out so that proper coordination is established between the implementing agencies i.e., the State Government and the Central Government and this system achieves a great success.

Sir, our country has now become self-dependent in the matter of foodgrains. It has become possible because of the farmers welfare policy adopted by the Government. Our Government is laying emphasis on the distribution of certified seeds, good quality fertilisers and timely payment of loan assistance to the farmers. Besides, the applica-

*Translation of the speech originally delivered in Oriya.

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tion of modern scientific methods of cultivation and proper utilisation of water resources have increased the production of foodgrains. The Government is encouraging the agricultural scientists and so they are working on the transfer of modern method of cultivation from the laboratory to the land. The combine effects of all these factors led to be increase in the production of foodgrains. Despite all these success, it is regrettable that the interest of the weaker sections are not being safeguarded in every part of the country. Our Government is very much concerned for them. So, Government have opened a large number of Fair Price Shops in the country. Government is determined to strengthen the Public Distribution System. Because our's is a people's welfare state and the main endeavour of our Government is to protect the interests of the weaker sections, more particularly, who are living below the poverty line. The Government is opting strategies through Five Year Plans to increase the production of foodgrains. The Government is giving huge amount of subsidies and loans given to the farmers for buying seeds and fertilisers. Not only that, the Centres has also provided 2000 crores of rupees in the form of subsidy to the Public Distribution System. India is a socialist and democratic country. The schemes are being drawn up for welfare of different sections of the people living in our society. The Government is procuring foodgrains at higher rates and they are being sold to the consumers at lower and reasonable rates. The Government is doing this, because our only aim is to provide benefit to the poor people, the poorer of the poor and we have to raise them above the poverty line. We have to keep them safe and sound and we have to give them justice. There are many schemes being implemented for the people, who are suppressed and neglected for a long time. They have not been benefited by the five year plans programmes. Sir, when the Public Distribution System was started in 1962, there were only 4,700 Fair Price Shops. Now the number of the Fair Price Shops have been increased. The Government have taken policy decision to

set up at least one Fair Price Shop in every Gram Panchayat. But Sir, there are some hilly areas which are inaccessible. More than one Fair Price Shop should be set up in such remote area. Sir, I would like to say a word about the drought prone areas. I represent Kalahandi district of Orissa which is a drought prone district. More attention should be paid to streamline public distribution system in such districts. I am grateful to our Prime Minister who has time and again toured that district. He is personally monitoring the Public Distribution System in that district. A new system has been adopted in that district on his advice. Hat van or mobile van are going to the weekly market place. People are able to buy, the essential commodities for several days from the mobile vans or Hat vans. This is a very good system. This system should be followed in other drought prone and inaccessible areas in the country. As the Panchayats in the inaccessible areas are very big, it is very difficult for the people of every village to go to the Panchayat Head Quarters to get the rations from the fair price shops. They can get the essential commodities from the mobile vans easily. So this system should be adopted in every Panchayat as far as possible.

Then, we have to be very practical about one thing i.e. transportation cost. As you know the kerosene dealership or Fair Price Shops licences are given to some people. But we are not paying them good amount of transport cost. Even they do not get what they spend towards transport. When they carry kerosene from one place to another some quantum of kerosene oil fall down on the road due to the leakage or some other reason. when carrying rice or wheat from one place to another, such foodgrains get damage due to rain or some other reason. If the dealers are not given some margin, then nobody will come forward to open fair price shops. We are talking of black-marketing and irregularities in the distribution of essential items under Public Distribution System. But we are not realising the practical difficulties of the dealers and retailers. If we do not give them margin of profit they will continue to indulge in black-marketing. Therefore, we

have to think over this issue.

16.07 hrs.

[PROF. NARAIN CHAND PARASHAR *in the Chair*]

Now, I would like to say a word about storage system. We do not have good number of rural godown. Even very inadequate number of godowns are set up in the urban areas. Food Corporation of India releases rice for a particular area. It transports the foodgrains by rail or by trucks. Sometimes the foodgrains bags are kept at the pit-heads for days together. When rain starts the foodgrains get damage and later on become sub-standard. In order to save the foodgrains from damage we have to set up more number of godowns. The Cooperative societies are also not in a sound position. As there is no margin of profit the selling of food-grains in the Fair Price Shops, the Cooperative societies do not want to take up the sale of essential commodities. Therefore, there is a need to raise the transport cost. I hope the Honourable Minister would into it.

Sir, our Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi wants to decentralise power. Panchayat Raj and Zila Parishad system are being introduced in the country. Decentralisation of administration through Panchayats and Zila Parishad is an aproach making incident. Now Public Distribution system will be taken up by the Panchayats. I hope this system will further strengthen once the people in the village and Panchayats manage it.

As I had stated earlier the Prime Minister has paid special attention to strengthen Public Distribution System. Now he has taken decision to pay rice at the rate of Rs. 1.85 to Rs. 2/- per kilogram to the Scheduled Tribes under Integrated Tribal Development Agencies. 13 K.G. of rice is being made available for each family through the Development Cooperative Societies under 17 D.A. This is very inadequate. Therefore, this allocation should be enhanced to 24 K.G. per family. At the sametime I would like to suggest to the Government to make available rice at the

rate of Rs. 1.85 to Rs. 2.00 to the people living in the drought affected areas, hilly areas and inaccessible areas.

Sir, there are certain States in the country where the people are rice eater. As my predecessor Hon'ble Member, Shri Chintamani Jena was saying that more quantum of wheat is being allocated to the States where the people are rice eater. While making allocation from the Central pool the Government should see to it that more quantum of rice should be allocated to the States where people are mostly rice eater. Similarly the wheat allocation should be enhanced to the people who mainly eat floor. I would like to say something about sugar allocation. More quantum of sugar is being allocated to the urban areas then the rural areas. Why this disparity? A feeling is being created among the people of rural area. They feel that they are inferior to urban people. I wonder how their need is less than the urban people? I urge upon the Government to remove this disparity. Equal quantum of sugar should be allocated to every card-holder irrespective of the fact that they live in urban or rural areas. Then one thing about Palmolein. The demand of Palmolein is increasing in the rural areas. But the allocation made to the rural areas is very inadequate. I think Palmolein allocation should be increased for the rural areas. I found one lacunae in the Public Distribution system. All the essential commodities are being sold through Fair price Shops to every card holders whether they are rich or poor. I do not understand why rich people are allowed to take ration from the Fair Price Shops. It is a must for the poor and weaker section. The well-do-do people can afford to buy all kinds of foodgrains at higher rates from the open market. So, the benefit of public Distribution system should be available exclusively to the poor and weaker section of the society. The well-do-do-people should not be given this facility.

Sir, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not say a word about Orissa. It is regrettable that rice and Palmolein allocated to the State of Orissa through Central Pool is very inadequate. there is wide gap between the de-

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mand made by the State Government and the allocation made by the Centre. I demand that the allocation of rice and Palmolein to Orissa should be enhanced. Lastly, I would like to say that the basic philosophy of our perspective planning is to see that "the poorest of the poor of the country are in a better position and to provide them food, shelter and clothing is constitutional obligation of ours." So, when we have made a lot of progress in agriculture and when we are self dependent in food production, we must see that the public distribution system functions quite effectively and nobody in this country face starvation in want of food. With these humble submissions, I thank you once again and conclude my speech.

*SHRI HARIHAR SOREN(Keonjhar):
Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to support the Fair Price Shops (Regulation) Bill brought before the House by Shri Basava Raju. This is a very important piece of legislation. Hon'ble Shri Basava Raju has brought the Bill at a time when we find that there are a lot of irregularities in the Public Distribution system. It is really very necessary to remove those irregularities. Therefore, it is a timely Bill.

Sir, many Hon'ble Members have discussed the functioning of the Public Distribution System in the country. I do not wish to repeat those points. I would only like to give a few suggestions to the Govt. as to how the irregularities in the existing system could be removed and as to how we can strengthen the Public Distribution System.

Sir, there was a time when we had scarcity of foodgrain. India was importing huge quantum of rice and wheat. After making sincere efforts the production increased manifold and now the country has become self-dependent in foodgrain and now we are exporting foodgrains to them. When there is no dearth of foodgrain in the Central pool, every citizen of this country must get the essential commodities like rice, wheat and

pulses etc. according to their need and at the same time at reasonable prices. The Public Distribution System has been introduced in the country to check the hoarding, black-marketing and to ensue the availability of foodgrains to every people, particularly the common men in this country. But it is regrettable that the poor and weaker section of the society are not getting their entire need of foodgrains from the Fair Price Shops. At many places, most of the rations are being sold by the dealers and Fair Price Shop owners at black market in higher rate. The Common men buy them from open market at higher prices. These irregularities are to be checked completely. Otherwise the poor people will not derive any benefit out of the Public distribution system for whom it has been introduced. Therefore, I would like to give some suggestions to remove such irregularities.

Firstly, the Government is appointing strage agent from among the people. The storage agents are profit-minded. They get foodgrains from the dealers and sell them in the open market at higher prices and thus get good amount of profit. These private people should not be appointed as storage agents. I would like to suggest that the Food Corporation of India should open one store in every block and its employees. Should work as storage agents. Since there is a possibility of luring away the Employees dealing with storage by blackmarketers, the activities of these employees may be watched and storages should be regularly checked.

The second point I would like to make about the existing retail net work under Public Distribution System. You have opened retailers in every village or Panchayat where Fair Price Shops have been opened. In Orissa, we have got some village or Panchayat level Committees who monitor the effective functioning of the Fair Price Shops. But the tragedy is that the retailers are selected from among the business-men who somehow manage to keep hold on the Committee members. So, the retail Committees are not at all effective. Therefore I would

*Translation of the speech originally delivered in Oriya.

like to suggest that no business men or Private individuals should be appointed as retailers. Necessary guidelines should be issued to the State Governments in that direction. The retail net work should be entirely entrusted to the Cooperatives. In this way we can make the Public Distribution System a great success.

Thirdly, I would like to say about Transportation charges. My friend Shri Jena was referring to it. Everybody is aware that the transportation charge which is being paid to the dealers is very low. Even it is much less than what they actually spend. Therefore, it is very necessary to raise the transportation cost. Otherwise, the dealers will continue to sell some bags of foodgrains in the black market in order to bear the transportation costs. At the same time the margin of profit should also be increased. If we do so, then the gram panchayats and the Cooperative societies will agree to take up this work. When we are giving a huge amount of subsidies to the beneficiaries under different programmes why cannot we spend some more money towards transportation charges? Instead of giving huge amount of profit to the businessmen, unscrupulous traders and black-marketeers, why cannot we give some profit to the cooperative societies and the Gram Panchayats? When we are going to vest more powers with the Panchayats, why the Panchayats will not be given this profit? After all, our aim is to provide benefit to the poor men. So, we must do something in this regard.

Sir, fourthly I would like to say a word about consumers card. The ration cards are being issued to the consumers. As you know Sir, the consumers living in the rural areas are simple and innocent. The retailers exploit these consumers. He keeps all the ration cards with him. He issues ration to the consumers according to his wish. He does not issue the full quota of each item to the consumers. But he records everything in the card as well as in the register. He sells a large portion of the quota in black market. In the process, he earns huge amount of profit. On the otherhand, the consumers face prob-

lem in want of essential commodities. We have to stop this practice at any cost.

Sir, one thing I would like to say, regarding the allocation of foodgrains to different States. As you know Sir, the food habits of our people vary from place to place. Suppose, the people of southern state like to eat rice, the people of Northern states do not want to eat rice everyday. The *chapatis* made out of flour is their daily food. But we don't consider the food habits of the people while allocating foodgrains under Public Distribution System. We are allocating both rice and wheat to every part of this country. Suppose, we are locating more wheat to the States where people don't it, then how will the consumers take the wheat? Similarly, the people of the wheat catting states do not like to take so much of rice which we are allocating to them. In Orissa there are some tribal areas. The tribals don't want to ear wheat. So they do not take wheat from the Fair Price Shops. But it is often seen that the wheat is being issued in their name in the ration card. That means it is clear that the surplus wheat or rice are being sold in black market. Whereas there is a shortage of the same foodgrain in some other area. In order to overcome this problem and check such irregularities I would like to suggest that Government should make a proper assessment of the food habits of the people and the actual requirement of the rice or wheat whatever they like in different areas. The allocation should be made accordingly. I hope the Hon'ble Minister will pay proper attention to it. Sir in Orissa rice is being issued to the Consumers. But almost the entire wheat quota is being sold in the black-market. Similar is the case with regard to sugar. When allocation is made to different states, it is seen that equal quantum of sugar is being allocated to the urban and rural areas. The same quantum of sugar is being allocated to the tribal areas. The people living in the urban areas need more quantum of sugar than the rural areas. But the sugar allocated for the rural areas does not reach them. The retailers say that sugar has not come from the Headquarters. In this plea, he sells most of the sugar quota. The less said

[Sh. Harihar Soren]

about tribal areas, the better. As I had stated earlier the tribals are simple and innocent. They do not bother as to how much of which kind of foodgrain come to the fair price shops. They even do not know what is their quota, how much of sugar they are entitled to get. The retailers take the opportunity of their simplicity and divert the entire sugar quota to the blackmarket which is meant for the tribal areas. In this way the unscrupulous traders who are appointed as the retailers or dealers are amassing huge amount of profit. The State Govt. Officials belonging to Civil Supply Deptt., are not able to protect the consumers. It is very unfortunate that in many areas the Civil Supply officials are indulging in the black marketing in connivance with the retailers and dealers. Sir, our main objective is to provide foodgrain to every people of this country at reasonable prices. Keeping that thing in mind, the Public Distribution System has been introduced by the Govt. of India. But it is regrettable that the benefit is not reaching the poorest of the poor, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, for whom this system has been introduced and huge amount of subsidies is being given under those schemes. Now we have to safeguard the interest of the poor people. Therefore, stringent measures should be taken against the dealers, retailers and other profit makers, who are responsible for the failure of the Public Distribution System. We cannot remain as the silent spectators any longer. The Govt. of India should utilise its machinery to identify the various irregularities that are taking place in the existing system. Those irregularities should be removed forthwith. A new system should be introduced which will protect the interest of the consumers. Govt. of India should issue fresh guidelines to the State Governments so that they implement them systematically. We have to see that the consumers get essential commodities at fair price shops according to their need and at reasonable prices. With this suggestion I thank you every much for giving me this opportunity to take part in the discussion and conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRISHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji): Mr. Chairman, Sir, although the object behind the Bill of Shri Basavaraju is laudable, yet in reality such a Bill will become a flop. It will be impracticable because the entire network of fair price shops the Central Government will not be able to manage. It has to be and it is the primary concern of State Governments to manage the fair price shops. However, it is not because of many reasons that Mr. Basavaraju has come out with this Bill. Maybe in certain States fair price shops are very badly managed and therefore, the Member feels that it is through a State Board constituted by the Central Government to manage the affairs of fair price shops that the things can be set right. However, as I have said, it will be rather impracticable to have a network of fair price shops managed by any Board to be supervised by the State Governments.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, as far as our Constitution is concerned, the general provisions regarding the good rest in the State List, namely, Entry 27 which says:-

"Production, supply and distribution of goods subject to the provisions of entry 33 of List III."

Under item 33 in the List III, of the Concurrent List, this item states:

"Trade and Commerce in, and the production, supply and distribution of,—

- (a) the products of any industry where the control of such industry by the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest, and imported goods of the same kind as such products;
- (b) foodstuffs, including edible oilseeds and oils;"

Our constitutional experts have rightly in-

serted this subject under Concurrent List. It is because they wanted that the Central Government should have such control on essential commodities—through this provision that the Central Government, from time to time, enacts various orders and guidelines with respect to management of essential commodities.

Sir, I would like to state that recently, i.e. in 1986, we have passed a very ideal legislation known as the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. I would say and as I have said earlier also, this was in fact, a very revolutionary step as far as consumers are concerned and as far as management of essential commodities is concerned. The Act, after it was enacted in 1986, did not create that much impact. It is because it lacked in implementation. In fact, such an ideal legislation would have created a revolution in the matter of distribution of essential commodities and enabled people to get quality products through the network of fair price shops. It has provisions for Central Consumer Protection Council and State Consumer Protection Councils. It also has the provision for redressal of consumer's grievances through District Redressal Forums and State Commissions. There are the four essential bodies created under this Act and in certain cases, the main members of these Committees are no less than judicial officers of very high rank. So, such an important machinery was sought to be built under this Consumer Protection Act and if we had properly implemented this Act, I think, the consumers would have got a lot of relief. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister that in many States these bodies have not been established. Therefore, the Act despite having been passed in 1986, had just remained on paper. It is very much essential that this Act should be implemented in all the States. It was an ideal revolution of the entire system. So, I would urge upon you to request the State Governments to implement this legislation very strictly. In my State also, the State Consumer Protection Council and other redressal forums have not been established. So, we should implement this legislation very strictly. Then, we have got the problem

of price control and in that we have got two factors involved. One is the shortage of certain commodities and the other is artificial shortage created by those who are involved. Therefore, this aspect of controlling the prices of essential commodities should be taken care of. So, it has to be assessed as to whether all this has to be done with respect to curtailing of artificial scarcity has been done or not. If the commodities are in short supply, it is very difficult for us to create commodities all of sudden, except by import, which is not feasible always. But if there is any artificial scarcity, I urge upon you to take strong action not only under the Essential Commodities Act but also under other provisions which provide for preventive measures so that relief could be given to consumers under those rules and regulations. People should feel that artificial scarcity will not be tolerated. They can understand sometime if any commodity is in short supply, the Government cannot create that commodity. But they get very much angry if artificial scarcity is created. Therefore, I request you to urge upon the State Governments again not to create any artificial scarcity. As you are aware, certain State Governments—you have duly replied to them—are prone or inclined to make profit at the cost of consumers, at the cost of poor people. For instance, Andhra Pradesh Government case is before us. They have been denying it but they are calling it something else. But the offence that they have committed with respect of rice is nothing less than plain and simple cheating. One who cheats the poor people of rice and when it is being sold at higher prices, what is it, if not cheating, pure and simple cheating? But if they are caught, they get angry. Yesterday I have one example and said that even during floods in 1986, when the money was given under the Centrally sponsored scheme, it was diverted. Out of Rs. 92 lakhs which was given for flood relief, air-conditioners were purchased on large scale. This is the attitude of certain regional parties who are heading Government in certain areas. Your control with respect to these State Governments is very much essential.

I would like to submit another thing.

[Sh. Shantaram Naik]

Since we are strengthening our Panchayat system, we should do this. Although your contact is directly with the State Government and whatever they give as feed back material, whatever information supplied to you, you have to rely upon, kindly try this method. As a sample survey or example, you can ask information directly from certain Panchayats regarding the distribution of essential commodities. If information is sought for directly from Panchayats, you will get a real feed back because State Governments sometimes are prone to give artificial information.

Lastly, I would like to speak about my State. Goa is a very small State. As far as essential commodities supply is concerned, there are problems from time to time and sometimes we do not get proper rice or wheat or other commodities. Goa is a very small State and if you pay a little attention at a particular relevant time, we will be satisfied. There are three major festival times, Ganesh Chaturti, Deepavali and Christmas and at that time, some special attention should be paid to our State. Considering the vastness of the country, to meet the requirements of Goa is nothing. If you meet the requirements of Goa with small addition, you will be fulfilling the requirements of one State and one State will be to your credit, having no problem

With this, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

[Translation]

SHRI JUJHAR SINGH (Jhalawar): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to express my gratitude to you for giving me an opportunity to speak on the Fair Price Shops Regulation Bill and I support this Bill.

It is our aim to provide food, cloth and shelter to each and every individual under our democratic set up. However 30 per cent of our population is still living below the poverty line and these people have to face lot of difficulties in getting these amenities. It

is unfortunate that this section of our population is mostly un-organised. As regards other organised sectors, whether of labourers, Government officers or that of the M.Ps, they are successful in getting all sort of concessions through their pressure tactics and they can also have the subsidised food for them. The labourers working in Government factories or elsewhere, can assert their strength to negotiate their wages and other privileges but such a provision should be made even for those, who live in villages below the poverty line and whose number is quite large but who are unorganised. For the purpose of that provision it is necessary that the State-machinery is very efficient, honest and dedicated. They should be provided with all the necessities of life like food, cloth and shelter. In spite of the Government machinery provided for the purpose the intention of the Government is yet to be fulfilled. The Bill introduced by the Government in this regard is welcome and it will be appreciated if the Central Government takes some steps in this regard.

Every year, we see that after putting in hard labour throughout the year the farmer gets a minimal price for his produce. At times he has even to starve. Just now, you have given the figures in the House, but his margin is hardly Rs. 10 to Rs. 12 and he has to sell his crop at that price only. But after 15 to 20 days, when this produce reaches the hands of the traders after rainfall, the prices doubled within a month. Then it is sold to the consumers by the traders. In this way it benefits neither the grower nor the consumer but the intermediaries who pocket the entire profit. This has thrown the entire system into samples. How a balance can be struck in this regard? An arrangement should be worked out through which the society or the farmer is benefited instead of a particular individual or a class.

Another thing, which should be ensured, is that the other commodities such as cement etc. should be made available in time. The hon. Member, who preceded me, said that some commodities are needed at the time of festivals only. Hence arrangement

should be made to make these things available at the proper time.

It is a very simple thing. The Bill is all right, their demands are also justified and they conform to our principles. But the fault lies with the machinery. This is the situation not only in respect of fair price shops but in every sector—be it the administrative sector or development sector or any other sector. The entire administrative set up has degenerated to such an extent that it cannot benefit the people to the desired extent, unless and until it is tightened up and streamlined.

I welcome the suggestions offered by the hon. member who spoke before me. The Government propose to give more powers to Panchayats beside providing funds to them directly. Earlier, the middlemen used to pocket the entire money thereby depriving poor people from the benefit. I would like to offer a suggestion which you must take into consideration. Essential commodities which are meant to be supplied through fair price shops, should be supplied to Panchayats. The Panchayats are already being given more power and, moreover, they would not be facing the problem of staff. It would enable the Government to fulfill its objective.

Sir, I do not want to take much time of the House. I welcome this Bill and I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

SHRI DAL CHANDER JAIN (Damoh): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Fair Price Shops Bill presented in the House, is very useful. The intention of the Government behind bringing this bill is also very good. Fair price shops have not been able to fulfil the objective for which they were opened. The Government has not been able to exercise control over these shops to the extent desired.

The essential commodities like sugar, kerosene, rice etc. are not made available to the people in time by these shops in rural and remote areas. These commodities are not available there for months together. People of those areas are not supplied their due

quota of ration saying that the quota for that period has not been received. Resultantly, the people are compelled to purchase commodities at higher prices from the open market.

46 per cent of the total population in Madhya Pradesh belongs to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Adequate quota of sugar and rice required for each person is not supplied to the State and this causes great inconvenience. Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I would like to make a submission that adequate quantities of edible oil, sugar, kerosene etc should be made available to the people. The State administration and the Government officials have tried their level best to exercise control over the fair price shops, so that the essential commodities are made available to the people. However, it has been observed quite often that whenever there is scarcity of foodgrains or some other commodity, shortage is felt in the shops in the open market also. In our area, the foodgrains meant to be supplied through fair price shops are supplied through Gram Panchayats in the absence of such shops. But it has been generally observed that even the Gram Panchayats have not succeeded in making these commodities available to the people. They have also not been functioning properly. Therefore, my assertion is that these commodities should be supplied to the State of Madhya Pradesh by the Central Government in adequate quantity. Apart from that, full control should be exercised over the fair price shops and public distribution system so that the poor farmers and labourers could get the essential commodities at fair prices.

SHRI NANDLAL CHOUDHARY (Sagar): Mr. Chairman, Sir, while I participate in the discussion on the Bill presented in the House by Shri Basavaraju, I am reminded of pre-independence days when famine struck Bengal and lakhs of people died. At that time, our country was not self-reliant in foodgrains nor proper means for the transportation of foodgrains were available. Today our country have moved far ahead in this field and we have become self-reliant. Not

[Sh. Nandlal Choudhary]

only that, we have even enriched our resources in the meantime. Even since the famine struck in Bengal or ever since our country got independence, not even a single person has died of starvation and this is an achievement for which we feel proud. The whole credit for the achievement goes to the successful implementation of Government policies. Our worthy leader, Shri Rajiv Gandhi introduced Panchayati Raj Bill in the House a few days back through which the Government propose to decentralise the power. I appreciate this step. The objective of the present Bill is to make all the essential commodities easily available to the people even in the small villages so that they are relieved of their difficulties. I believe that the proposals made in regard to the measures to be taken to control price-rise through fair price shops as part of poverty alleviation programmes are also commendable. Though fair price shops have been opened, yet it has been generally felt that we have not succeeded in providing the essential commodities to the poor people through this system. Middlemen are engaged in hoarding of foodgrains and selling them in the black-market to make profit. It results in the exploitation of poor people. In my constituency some people have managed to get allotment of shops in fictitious names with a view to selling the foodgrains in the black market, instead of distributing the same to the people through fair-prices shops. This has been causing a lot of inconvenience to the people belonging to the weaker section and poor farmers. I would like the Government to evolve means through which essential commodities could be made available to the people at cheaper rates. Today, black-marketing has frustrated our entire scheme, as a result of which the benefits which the Government intends to provide to the poor people through fair price shops are not reaching them. Actually, fair price shop holders have not been getting the due margin they deserve. That is also one of the reasons for their selling food-grains in the black-market. I feel that if they get proper margin, perhaps, the practice of selling foodgrains in the black-

market could be checked to some extent and food-grains made available to the people at cheap rates. The existing laws do not deter the fair price shop owners, especially those who have their private shops, from selling the items in the black market. Therefore, the law should be made more stringent to punish the offenders so that it could prove to be deterrent. Generally, we see that whenever any such shop holder is caught, he is let off after a nominal fine and the allotment of the shop is again restored to him. My submission in this respect is that instead of re-alloting the shops to such persons, Panchayats and societies should be allotted the shops and the foodgrains should be supplied to the people through these outlets. Rural areas too face great problem in regard to the foodgrains. Hence I would demand that maximum shops should be opened in rural areas. Moreover, provision should be made to provide the commodities to the people in their own village. Two or three days of the week should be fixed on which shops should remain open for the people to get commodities. Similarly in the areas where weekly bazaars are arranged locally, the days of the fair price shops should be so fixed as to coincide with the weekly bazaar. Apart from foodgrains, edible oil etc. should also be made available at these shops.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, with regard to the provision about the constitution of Committees or Board under this Bill, I would like to say that committees at village level should be formed on the lines of those formed at district and block-level and representation in these committees should be given to social workers, women and the people belonging to poor section of the society. They should be vested with powers to supervise the working of the shops. Strict monitoring should be done and the shop should be checked from time to time. If such measures are taken, the licence-holders of fair price shops would not get any opportunity to sell the food-grains in the black-market.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the ration quota of the districts is inadequate if per head requirements are taken into consideration.

Therefore, this quota should be enhanced. Further, the quota for the areas and Panchayats where the population of the poor is comparatively more should be fixed at a higher scale because the poor people consume more cereals as compared to their rich counterparts. Therefore, the ration quota should be more in those areas where concentration of poor people is more.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have observed at many places that cereals are stored in the open which results in much damage. I would like to request that more godowns should be constructed for storing maximum quantity of grains. In addition, a large number of fair price shops should be opened so that these items could be made available to the people in time.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Member for bringing this Bill and urge the Government to take into the suggestions made by the hon. Members and bring forward a relevant Bill in this regard so that the ordinary people are benefited and black-marketing is checked.

CH. LACHCHIRAM (Jalaun): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Fair Price Shops (Regulation) Bill presented by our hon. friend has already been implemented in the past. It was implemented at a time when essential commodities were in short supply and this measure had benefited the people substantially. This bill is under discussion for quite a few days. Our hon. friends have thrown light on its positive and negative aspects. There can be no two opinions about the fact that the bill has some shortcomings and there are certain reasons behind it as well. Just now the hon. Member was referring to the corruption prevailing in the Fair Price Shop system. There can be no two opinions about the fact that corruption does prevail in this system and it cannot be otherwise when so many loopholes exist for indulging in such mal-practices. For example, the essential commodities which are supplied by the F.C.I. to the shopholders are not duly weighed before being supplied. Often sugar bags are soaked in water to increase the weight. The rate of

commission per bag of sugar is Rs. 6. There was a time when a gunny bag could be hired by paying 40 to 50 paise, but today the cost has risen to Rs. 4 and the rate of commission is Rs. 6 only. Similarly, the rate of commission on cereals is Rs. 4 or Rs. 5 per bag and out of this, the loaders deduct their loading unloading charges. This is one of the main reasons of their indulging in mal-practices. In spite of our requests to the Government in this respect, the rate of commission has not been enhanced.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Fair Price Shop holders earn 25 paise as profit on palm oil. But they have to part with a portion of their profit of bribing the inspectors. They have to do so in order to run their shops. This is another reason for their indulging in corrupt practices.

The distance between the two Fair Price shops in the rural areas is too long with the result that the people have to cover 2 kms. or more for drawing a little quantity of ration. The result is that they do not draw their ration. Therefore, I would like to emphasise that some fresh legislation will have to be made to control mal-practices. Till such mal-practices continue, the common people will not get the desired benefits. With these words, I express my gratitude for giving me time to speak.

SHRI R.S. KHIRHAR (Sitamarhi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the House is discussing the Fair Prices Shops Bill. Many provisions have been made in this Bill, including the opening of additional fair price shops and exercising control over them. The Central Government has made its contribution in this regard. Provisions have been made to deal with the shortcomings of the existing system. However, I would like to draw your attention towards one point. The hon. Minister in-charge of the Public Distribution System is present here. If we compare the standard of the fair price shops as existing in the urban and the rural areas, we shall find that the shops in the rural areas are being given a step-motherly treatment. If some commodity is supplied through the Fair Price Shops, its

[Sh. R.S. Khirhar]

supply is generally restricted to urban areas and rural areas do not get the benefit. I hail from the remote area in the Indo-Nepal border and I have seen in my village that although such essential items as cereals, sugar etc. are available during the festival season, items like cloth are seldom available. As an hon. Member has submitted just now, the main reason for the corruption and shortcomings in the Public Distribution System lies in the fact that the shopkeepers are in league with the rationing officers and the former have to pay a percentage of their profits to the latter. The hon. Member has said that the shopkeepers do not earn adequate profits as a result of which they are compelled to indulge in such mal-practices. He is right in saying so and I support him. The Government should make a specific amount available to them by which they may be able to make a living and run the shops properly as well. If arrangements are not made for providing them a proper livelihood, they will be forced to resort to mal-practices out of sheer disappointment. I want to submit that this is not a new bill and this kind of a subject has been dealt with earlier as well. But I would suggest that it will do well if these fair price shops are allotted to the educated unemployed persons and a minimum academic qualifications such as matriculation or B.A. is specified in this regard. When such shops are allotted, the shop holders should be treated as in Government service and they should be Governed by the relevant service conditions applicable to the Government employees. This will act as a deterrent because they will be afraid of losing their jobs in case they are caught indulging in mal-practices. They will have a fixed salary and this will help in checking all kinds of malpractices and under-hand dealings. It will also help in solving the unemployment problem. Therefore, in view of the problem of unemployment, the fair price shops should be allotted to graduate unemployed persons and they should be governed by all service conditions applicable to Government employees. I think this will help in exercising control to some extent. It will also check the

collusion between the shop holders and rationing officers and the consequent black-marketing of the rationed items.

With these words, I thank the hon. Chairman for giving me time to speak.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI SUKH RAM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to congratulate Shri Basavaraju, an honourable member of the House for raising an important issue for discussion through this Bill. I am glad that a number of hon. Members have participated in the discussion. But it is quite unfortunate that some of the opposition parties which were supposed to have participated in the discussion on these vital issues facing the country and who could have brought to light the shortcoming in the system have now only one-point programme before them, i.e. to indulge in character assassination of the great leader of this country who also happens to be the leader of the House. But the Congress Party and the Congress Government are committed to solving the major problems of the people of this country. That is why an hon. Member of the House belonging to the Congress Party felt serious concern for the shortcomings in the public distribution system of essential commodities and with a view to finding a solution of it, he has presented this Bill in the House. We are glad that the hon. Members participated in it and offered some very good suggestions. Public distribution system of essential commodities is a vital point in the 20 Point Programme launched by the Congress Government. Besides, it is one of the components of the Minimum Needs Programme and the Government is committed to providing essential commodities at reasonable prices to the people of this country, especially, those belonging to the poor class. The Government has already taken several measures in this regard. At the same time we must keep one thing in mind that all the commodities are provided to them in time and in adequate quantity.

We get 70% of our total procurement of

wheat and rice from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Thereafter, these commodities are distributed in the entire country. On an average, the foodgrains cover a distance of 1500 Kms. Through a network of 1800 were—houses in various parts of the country, foodgrains are transported to all the States and the Union Territories. I agree that there are some shortcomings which need to be removed.

We must not forget the fact that the drought which our country faced in 1987 was the severest of the century. Had there been inadequate stocks of foodgrains in our ware—houses, had our distribution system not been so strong, the situation would have deteriorated beyond imagination. 2.5 crore tonnes of foodgrains were supplied from the Central pool. We did not have to go to a rich country with a begging bowl; we met the challenge with our own resources

Last year, when I attended the World Food Ministers' Conference, all the representatives from various countries appreciated our achievements and said that the most creditable achievement of India was that it had attained self-sufficiency in foodgrains and met this great challenge with their own resources. This is by no means a small thing. It, indeed, is a big achievement. However, we have to overcome the shortcomings in our Public Distribution System. It is the joint responsibility of the States and the Central Government.

One thing more which should be kept in view is that in the event of any shortage of essential commodities in a particular State even after the full quota is supplied by the Centre, it is not the Central Government's responsibility to meet the shortfall. The concerned State has to take care of it from their own resources, as centre's role is only to supplement their efforts. At present the Central Government supplies only seven items for distribution to the States. Besides these items, the State Governments are free to add more items if they so desire. We have constituted an Advisory Council too, which meets twice a year. The Ministers of Food of

all the States and Union Territories are the Members of this Council. We always pressurise them to strengthen the public distribution system in the country. Some of the hon. Members have expressed their concern, and rightly so, that the holders of fair price shops are not getting reasonable returns. However, some of the States have taken initiative by adding more items to the list of essential commodities to enable them to increase the margin of the fair price shop holders and, hence, other States can follow suit. So far as the number of fair price shops is concerned there were about 2.34 lakh shops in the whole country in 1979, and the number has now increased to 3.50 lakh. 72 per cent of these shops are in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas. We have always been emphasising that the fair price shops should be run under the control of the co-operatives, because we want to associate the Panchayats in this task. We do not want to leave the entire distribution system at the responsibility of Government officials. When crores of people are linked with it, we want that this system should be kept under watch by these crores of people. With this end in view, we have issued instructions to all the State Governments to constitute Vigilance Committees in their respective States.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN (Barmer): In our State, the Cooperatives have proved to be a total failure. As the commission is not reasonable, the entire system has gone haywire.

SHRI SUKH RAM: I am talking about your State. That is why we have instructed the State Governments to form Vigilance Committees. The monitoring is done by our Ministry. Apart from that monitoring is also done at State level and district level. Some of the State Governments have already made arrangement for keeping proper vigilance at fair price shops and the consumers have also been given representation in the vigilance committees so formed, so that they may keep watch over them and ensure that the commodities supplied to the fair price shops are made available to the poor people and others. A scheme for door-step delivery

[Sh. Sukh Ram]

has also been introduced, under which 75 per cent loan and 25 per cent subsidy is given to the States to enable them to purchase mobile vans for this purpose. From the year 1985-86 to 1980-90, assistance worth Rs. 642.88 lakh has been given for the purchase of 276 mobile vans, so that the commodities which the Government wants to supply through fair price shops to the people in remote areas, could be supplied through mobile vans. The complaints made by the hon. Members regarding corruption, hoarding, black marketing, etc. are also genuine. We always issue the directions to the State Governments under Essential Commodities Act to provide essential commodities at cheaper rates. So far as the implementation of this Act is concerned, it is the responsibility of States and Union Territories to implement it. They do take action from time to time. During the year 1986, 9124 persons were arrested for violation of this Act and commodities worth Rs. 1146 lakh were seized from them. Similarly, during the year 1987, 8750 persons were arrested and goods worth Rs. 1580 lakh were seized from them. Recently in 1988-89, 8552 persons were held and goods worth Rs. 1562 lakhs seized from them. This shows that the State Governments do take action in this direction. But in spite of all these measures, people manage to evolve many more methods of indulging in malpractices. As the commodities sold through fair price shops are cheaper as compared to those selling in the open market, the fair price shops remain under more pressure.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, our Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi launched a major programme in November, 1985 for the welfare of scheduled tribes under, which the whole country had been divided into 191 blocks spread over 17-18 states. Under this programme, provision was made to supply rice and wheat at cheaper rates to the areas predominantly inhabited by scheduled tribes. While only 5-6 lakh tonnes of foodgrains were provided in the year 1985 for this purpose, the quantity has now been raised to

20-22 lakh tonnes per year. Recently, some people created uproar on this score. The States Governments were selling rice in retail @ Rs. 1.85 per kg.—the price at which the Central Government supplies rice to the State Governments. This system was prevalent not in one State but in many States. But Andhra Pradesh sold it at the rate of Rs. 2 per kg. Not only that, the people of the State did not know the simple fact that the scheme was sponsored by the Central Government. They continued to sell it at Rs. 2 per kg. The Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi had launched this scheme, but the Andhra Pradesh Government kept the people under impression that the scheme was being run by them. Therefore, the word 'cheating' used by the Prime Minister is appropriate. Centre was providing assistance every year, but that State was running the scheme in its own name. This is nothing but cheating. The States have started realising that they depend on the Centre but even today some regional parties want to prove that they have nothing to do with the Centre. Many hon. Members have expressed their gratitude to the Centre, in this House as well as in the other House, for extending help to the States as a result of which there is progress in these States.

Sir, we are monitoring all our big programmes at Ministry level. Some hon. Members have suggested that sample and price list should be displayed on the shops. Orders have been issued to all the States that price list and samples should be displayed at all the fair price shops. I admit that complaints are there. In a transaction of 15 to 18 lakh metric tonnes complaints regarding sub-standard material and other shortcomings are bound to be there. But before we provide foodgrains to States, joint inspection is carried out by the quality control officers of F.C.I. and the officials of the State Government. Thereafter, it is supplied to Fair Price Shops for distribution. If there is a complaint they should not take it. F.C.I. cannot impose it upon them. If something is found sub-standard in the Fair Price Shops, it is the responsibility of the State Governments and they should ensure the quality. Some com-

plaints were received about rice, as some hon. Members also stated.

So far as procurement is concerned, Punjab contributes the maximum. Some-time back there were floods in Punjab and Haryana which caused extensive damage to the standing paddy crops. The farmers who feed the entire country, were to be helped. Our Prime Minister himself went there, saw the problems of the farmers and decided that relaxation should be given in procurement specification. where we had a target a of procuring 40 lakh tonnes, we could procure only 28 lakh tonnes. Rice was distributed to all the States, irrespective of whether it was opposition ruled State of Congress rules State. 300 lakh tonnes of rice was supplied to West Bengal and 350 lakh tonnes was supplied to Maharashtra. Rice was supplied to all the States and no State declined to accept it. But in West Bengal people were told that this rice was totally sub-standard and it was not fit for human consumption. If States behave in this way and there is confrontation with the centre, nothing can be done. We do not believe in discrimination particularly, in the distribution of essential commodities, no matter which party rules the State. We have never tried to get political mileage out of it. If we go by figures we can prove, we have supplied 41 per cent of total rice to the opposition ruled States where only 31 per cent of our population lives. Out of the subsidy of Rs. 2,200 crores that is being borne by the Central Government, 36 per cent goes to these 4-5 states. If there had been any such intention on our part the figures would have proved otherwise. We are supplying much less to the bigger States than what is due to them but still there is no complaint from them. I have taken note of the questions that have been raised here and I will try to discuss them at the advisory council's meeting, which is held twice a year, and find the solutions. But I had gone a step further and I had said that these problems should be discussed at regional level meetings and we should go into the details to find out how far we can help. I held a meeting in Shillong 3-4 months back. It is a hilly area and the roads are washed away during rainy

season there by disrupting supplies. Perhaps there is lot of problem in Mizoram also. Therefore, we decided that two months buffer stock should be kept there but unfortunately due to Bodo agitation and other agitations, there was some problem. But in spite of these, we sent as much foodgrains as possible. There might have been some shortcomings but we will try to remove them.

We have discussed separately with Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. I also intend to visit all the States and try to solve the problems there. We may come across some difficulty because we cannot meet the demand fully, for example there is demand for rice but it cannot be met 100 per cent. We do not have shortage of any other foodgrain. 170 million tonne of foodgrains have been produced this year in our country i.e. 33 million tonnes more than last year. It is freely available in the market, and there is no shortage of it. We are supplying foodgrains to the State Governments and they are distributing it to the consumers specially to the poor. Although our distribution system is of universal nature but even then we insist upon all the States and the hon. Prime Minister is particularly concerned—that programmes should be formulated for tribal areas. He wants that the poor who are getting foodgrains at subsidised rates, should get it at still chapter rates. But there are some people who know nothing except levelling in charges and allegations and indulging in character assassination. They are not interested in solving the problems of the country. They want to grab power somehow and create 1977 conditions once again. I hope and I am convinced that people of this country will not repeat that mistake. They have understood their trick. Instead of raising important questions in this august House, they have raised only one question during these 4 years. I have been elected to this House for the first time but during these four or four and a half years I found that instead of pointing out our weaknesses or raising national issues in this House the opposition has been harping on one issue only and the national newspapers are full of it. Besides, they have tried to obstruct the

[Sh. Sukh Ram]

proceedings of the august House on more than one occasion. They had only one point programme i.e. to disturb the proceedings of this august House. The people of this country have recognised them fully now.

[English]

PROF. N.G. RANGA (Guntur): I will make one suggestion. For instance, for tribal people, rice is being supplied at a concessional rate. Now, such schemes should be properly advertised so that people would know—all over India, again and again, it may be repeated also on the Radio as well as on the T.V.—at what concessional price, it is being supplied by the Central Government. Then, they will be able to see the difference between the price that is actually being collected from them and the price at which it is really being placed at the disposal of the State Government. That is one thing.

The other thing is that the Central schemes—whatever they are, in order to help different sections of the people—must be properly stated and advertised so that people would know what they are. It is not like in the olden days when they used to come from the Government. Which Government? There are two sets of Governments—Central Government as well as the State Government. When they are vying with each other, how are the public to know. Therefore, the Centre should take care to see whatever they are specially doing in order to help such and such sections of people, they should give proper publicity for that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, this suggestion is very good. But in addition to this, I would add that the monitoring could also be in such a manner that the Members of Parliament who will represent the Centre in the States could be involved in it so that they are able to rectify the lacuna.

SHRI SUKH RAM: I fully subscribe the views of Prof. Ranga. The central schemes should be properly publicised and the people

of this country should know what have been and what are the contributions of the Government of India. It is necessary for the unity of the country. The Central Government has to be strong enough and the people should realise that they depend on their progress and on certain schemes implemented by the Government of India. I fully agree with you. We thought that it is the duty of the State Government also to see that these schemes are being properly publicised. But some State Governments, instead of telling that the schemes belong to the Government of India, that these schemes are their own; this gives an impression that the schemes belong to them as has happened in the case of Andhra Pradesh. They say that the schemes are their own and they are spending the money for them.

[Translation]

I was talking about consumer protection. In the last few years many laws have been passed in this august House and the Consumers Protection Act was passed at the instance of the hon. Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi. To my mind no other law is as revolutionary as this one. So we want all the State Governments to act upon it. Some States have already formed the Consumers Protection Councils, while in the other these are yet to be formed. In some States these are functioning effectively while in the others they are not so effective. We are constantly in touch with the States and 3-4 meetings are held in a year. Besides this, we also correspond with the States from time to time. We will continue to exert pressure on the States till they fully implement it.

I appreciate the spirit with which the Bill has been moved in the House by the hon. Member. I have learned a lot from it. We will be benefited by the suggestions that have come forth during the discussion on the Bill in the House. However, I would like to inform the hon. Member that the proposed expenditure of Rs. 100 crores in the Bill is insufficient as Rs. 5000 crores are spent on foodgrain procurement alone, besides maintaining the infrastructure like FCI's 85,000 employees

and officers. Not only this, support price—due to which the farmers are now receiving remunerative prices and the production had also increased—is also to be paid to them. Therefore, I feel this amount would be inadequate. I think the hon. Member has succeeded in drawing the attention of the Government and the House towards the issue. I know there are some shortcomings but they will be removed and in this connection we are in touch with the State Governments.

We will keep in mind the suggestions given by the hon. Member in the House. However, these suggestions cannot be accepted as their implementation is very difficult and they will not bring about any change.

Therefore, I request the hon. Member to withdraw the Bill moved by him. The Government has taken note of the suggestions and will benefit through it.

*SHRI G.S. BASAVARAJU (Tumkur): Mr. Chairman Sir, As I was mentioning yesterday, there was corruption in most of the offices in the State during the Janata Rule. Administration was in shambles. The development work had come to a halt. The Ministers and legislators were busy in making money. They never took any interest in the welfare of the State. The former Chief Minister touring the foreign countries in the name of finding NRI investors in the State. He attended the assembly rarely.

Lands were distributed generously to the rich people. The Government said that the land is being distributed to the Societies, but they were all bogus Societies. Infact the land was distributed to the relatives of the former Chief Minister, who does not know about 'REVAJEETHU' affair in the country. Similarly the High Court gave its verdict in the arrack bottling case. The allotment of a seat to the M.D. Course and the involvement of the former Chief Minister's son is well known to one and all. In this way the Government had no time to look into the welfare of the people of Karnataka. They ignored the farmers. Not a single rupee was spent for

irrigation. I request the Hon'ble Minister to complete the upper Krishna Project at the earliest. Finally due to the mess and infight the Government fell on its own weight. People in the entire state are happy about the Governor's rule and there is some improvement in the administration in State.

New Government Electric Factory (NGEF) affairs is known to the whole country. Electrical goods are manufactured in this factory and it was working very well. What did the former Chief Minister of Karnataka (the first Chief Minister of Janata Government) do with this factory. All the benefits were sold to W.A.G. some I.A.S. Officers are also involved in the affair of NGEF.

I have also received layer of notices alongwith some of my friends. There are some IAS Officers also who mismanaged the administration of NGEF. Such officers should be punished severely. They should be suspended immediately and CBI enquiry should be ordered immediately. Otherwise, we would lose this prestigious factory.

Old age pension is being given in the State. Sir, you would be surprised to know the real recipients of this old age pension. In each village the number of recipients had been increased. According to statistics 12.5 lakh persons are getting this old age pension. Widow pension is also being given for name sake. The husband will take his own wife to the concerned office and get the widow pension to his own wife. Money distribution went on unabated during the Janata rule. In the last 6 years they have sawlloved more than 400 crores of rupees.

The Congress (I) Party has served the poor people. We know about it. But the Janata Party has cheated them. Farmers were the worst hit during Janata Government's rule. They had given various promises to get their votes. Farmers thought that the interest on their loans would be waived, that was not done. Then later farmers were not given any loan. Their position become precarious during Janata Government rule.

*Translation of the originally delivered in Kannada.

[Sh. G.S. Basavaraju]

The Public Distribution System is not functioning satisfactorily. Corruption is rampant in the Fair Price Shops. Adulteration of sugar, kerosene oil Palmolene Oil has become very common. The middlemen are having a roaring business and they are cheating the common man. Central Government is pending thousands of crores of rupees to these Fair Price Shops such that the down trodden, Harijans and Girijans backward people can be benefited. Unfortunately this benefit is going to the middlemen. Such middlemen should be brought to book and they must be punished severely.

Fees structure in the educational institutions in Karnataka has to be changed. The capitation fees in Engineering College ranges from two to three lakhs of rupees. The capitation fees in Medical Colleges ranges from 2 to 5 lakhs of rupees depending upon the capacity of the applicants' parents. Not only the intake of these Colleges has been increased but also many new colleges have come up. Most of these Colleges are privately managed and there is no specific pattern for collection of fees. I, therefore, urge upon the Government to look into this matter and bring and uniform fees structure in all educational institutions. The atrocities on Harijans and Girijans are unabated. There is no protection for them. Of course now the Governor's rule is trying its best to restore normalcy in the state. Law and order situation is returning to normalcy. The number of atrocities on Harijans is a record during the Janata Government rule. The number of deaths in these atrocities is also a record. Hence I request the Hon'ble Minister to protect the Harijans, Girijans and other down trodden people.

The deficit which has been shown in the budget will definitely go up. The total deficit will be atleast Rs. 300/- crores. Hence I urge upon the Hon'ble Minister to sanction atleast Rs. 300 crores as special assistance.

I support the Budget wholeheartedly. I thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity

to speak and with these words I conclude my speech.

[English]

I beg to move for leave to withdraw the Bill to regulate the functioning of fair price shops and for matters connected therewith.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

"That leave be granted to withdraw the Bill to regulate the functioning of fair price shops and for matters connected therewith."

The motion was adopted

SHRI G.S. BASAVARAJU: I withdraw the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now let us go to the next item.

Sri H.N. Nanje Gowda ..
Absent

Shrimati Usha Choudhary.

17.47 hrs.

CROP INSURANCE SCHEME BILL

[Translation]

SHRIMATI USHA CHOUDHARY (Amravati): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:-

'that the Bill to provide for comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme and matters connected therewith be taken into consideration.'

Mr. Chairman, Sir, if something is to be done for the farmers and the agriculture, then the later must be declared as an industry. For the upliftment of the farmers the only alternative is to declare agriculture as an industry. Therefore, this Bill is significant and