

SHRI BUTA SINGH : I want to know on what his point of order is.

MR. SPEAKER : That is what I want to know.

श्री राम विलास पासवान : अंडर रूल 376। जब मैंने व्यवस्था का प्रश्न उठाया तो चेयरमैन साहब ने कहा था कि इसको स्पीकर डिसाइड करेंगे।

MR. SPEAKER : I will look into it.

श्री राम विलास पासवान : आप पहले सुन लीजिए। मैंने मास रेप के सम्बन्ध में आपके पास नोटिस भेजी थी लेकिन आपने उसको रोजेक्ट कर दिया। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ मास रेप का सब्जेक्ट स्टेट सब्जेक्ट है या सेंट्रल सब्जेक्ट है ?

MR. SPEAKER : Over-ruled.

श्री राम विलास पासवान : आप बताइये यह कहाँ का सब्जेक्ट है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : सब्जेक्ट तो किसी का नहीं है, यह बुरा सब्जेक्ट है। किसी का हो सकता है लेकिन यह बुरी बात है। जहाँ यह होता है वहाँ की सरकार जिम्मेदार होती है।

(व्यवधान)

श्री राम विलास पासवान : आप तो इस पर हमेशा ध्यान देते रहे हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : दूंगा और देता रहूंगा।

श्री राम विलास पासवान : फिर रोजेक्ट क्यों कर दिया है बिना सोचे समझे ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इसलिए रोजेक्ट कर

दिया है कि हमारे जुरिस्टिक्शन में नहीं आता है, किसी और के जुरिस्टिक्शन में आता है।

Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

12.36 hrs.

STATEMENT ON PRICE SITUATION

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE). Mr. Speaker, Sir, Hon'able Members will recall that I had made a statement in this House on the price situation three months ago on the 18th August. I welcome this opportunity to review the behavior of prices since then. Provide debates on the price situation are of benefit to the Government and to me personally as these provide an opportunity to hear the impressions of distinguished Members as also their suggestions for bringing about improvement in this important area, which affects us all—and more particularly the weaker sections of society.

As I had informed the House in August, there was a noticeable moderation in the rate of increase in prices from the middle of May, 1983 upto the end of July, 1983. The rate of increase in prices during this period in the current year was much more moderate than in any of the previous four years. The developments since then, however, have not been as favourable. The Wholesale price index increased by 1.4 per cent in the month of August 1983; there was no change in the level of the index in September and there was a decline of 0.3 per cent in October. The seasonal decline in prices, which beings around the second half of September, has been relatively weak this year. For the three month period August to October, 1983 the wholesale price index increased by 1.1 per cent. During the corresponding period of 1982, and 1981 wholesale prices had declined by 0.7 per cent and 2.8 per cent respectively. Compar-

able figures for 1980 and 1979 are 0.8 per cent and 3.0 per cent.

Taking the financial year as a whole, the increase in prices upto 29th October, 1983 has been 7.7 per cent as against 5.1 per cent last year, 3.7 per cent in 1981-82, 11.3 per cent in 1980-81 and 15.7 per cent in 1979-80. The annual rate of inflation on a point-to-point basis on 29th October was 8.8 per cent as compared with 6.9 per cent on 30th July 1983, and 6.5 per cent at the beginning of the financial year.

As I had informed the house in August, prices of certain specific items, particularly, rice, pulses, edible oils, khansari, gur, fruits and vegetables, and tea had increased rather sharply during the current financial year upto end of July 1983. Since then upto the end of October in the wake of an excellent kharif crop, prices of rice, wheat and fruits & vegetables have come down by 3.1 per cent, 0.2 per cent and 7.3 per cent respectively. Prices of coarse grains like jowar, bajra and maize have declined between 1.6 per cent and 13.9 per cent. However, prices of gur and tea have continued to increase. Similarly, coffee and edible oil prices have also increased by 4.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively. Taken as a whole, some commodity groups, namely, food articles and food products have shown an increase of 1.8 per cent in the last three months. These items also figure prominently in the Consumer Price Index, which during the period April to September has shown an increase of 10.4 per cent. As Hon'ble Members are aware, the increase in prices of above mentioned item reflects largely the after-effects of the severe drought experienced in the previous kharif, and the effect of certain specific factors such as increase in international prices of tea.

In my statement in August, I had given an account of the measures taken by the Government to contain the price rise. Among these measures are: decision to import rice and wheat, stepping up the releases of foodgrains, sugar and edible oils through the public distribution systems; reduction in fertilizer prices;

increase in the cash reserve ratio from 7 to 8.5 per cent in two phases and an intensive effort to maximise the kharif output. Since then, the kharif prospects have become more certain and the target of foodgrains production of 142 million tonnes during the current year is expected to be reached. The Government has also decided to further step up releases of foodgrains and edible oils through the public distribution system, and to regulate the releases of sugar in a manner which would have a sobering effect on prices of sweetening agents. On the demand side, the Reserve Bank of India has announced further steps to absorb excess liquidity with the banking system. The scheduled commercial banks will be required to maintain an incremental cash reserve ratio of 10 per cent of the increase in net demand and time liabilities. Prices of selected industrial products have also been reduced as a result of reduction in excise duties on some items facing demand recession.

The Government is hopeful that the above measures and the bright prospects for the kharif crop will strengthen the seasonal decline in prices in the coming weeks. However, as I have so often said in his house, the behaviour of prices in our country is a complex matter and requires continuous and close monitoring and surveillance. Even a small decline in the availability of specific items, or an unanticipated change in the domestic or international market can easily disturb the prices situation. I, therefore, once again seek the cooperation of this House in continued efforts to contain inflation.

12.40 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE-DISCUSSION ON STATEMENT ON PRICE SITUATION

MR. SPEAKER : In connection with the discussion under Rule 193 on the statement made by the Finance Minister regarding price situation, to-day, copies of the statement are available at the publication counter.