

12.44 hrs.

MESSAGE FROM RAJYA SABHA

SECRETARY: Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha:—

"In accordance with the provisions of sub-rule (6) of rule 186 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to return herewith the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill, 1977, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 14th July, 1977, and transmitted to the Rajya Sabha for its recommendations and to state that this House has no recommendations to make to the Lok Sabha in regard to the said Bill."

ASSENT TO BILLS

SECRETARY: Sir, I lay on the Table copies, duly authenticated by the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha, of the following three Bills passed by the Houses of Parliament during the current session and assented to since a report was last made to the House on the 27th June, 1977:—

(1) The Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(2) The Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(3) The Yoga Undertakings (Taking over of Management) Bill, 1977.

12.44 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED DISAPPEARANCE OF GROUNDNUT OIL FROM MARKET AND ABNORMAL RISE IN ITS PRICE

SHRI YADVENDRA DUTT (Jaunpur): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Commerce and Civil Sup-

plies and Cooperation to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

"The reported disappearance of groundnut oil from the markets, abnormal rise in the prices thereof, double refined palm oil being sold as groundnut oil and action being taken by Government to meet the scarcity and check black-marketing in groundnut oil."

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI MOHAN DHARIA): Sir,

I rise to make a statement regarding reported disappearance of groundnut oil from the markets, abnormal rise in the prices thereof, reported sale of double refined palm oil as groundnut oil and action being taken by the Government to meet the scarcity and check blackmarketing in groundnut oil.

As the honourable Members are aware, the major groundnut producing States are Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and the groundnut oil requirements of the other States are to be met by inflow from the major producing States. As is well known, this is a lean season for groundnut oil and the stocks available in the major producing States would have been well-nigh exhausted. Honourable Members will also kindly appreciate that this seasonal phenomenon has been accentuated this year owing to shortfall in production. As against the production of 16.2 lakh tonnes of groundnut oil in 1975-76, in the succeeding year the production is estimated at only 12.50 lakh tonnes. Hence, there is a decline in the quantities arriving in the market centres in the consuming States and the consequent rise in the prices.

Some complaints have been received that refined palm oil or palmolien is being sold as groundnut oil in Bom-

bay. These complaints are being looked into.

Aware of the relatively shorter availability of groundnut oil during this year, Government have taken some measures to meet the situation. The most important of these was the decision to ban use of groundnut oil for vanaspati manufacture and import of rapeseed oil for direct consumption. As I have informed the House on a previous occasion arrangements have been made through the State Civil Supplies Commissioners to distribute refined imported rapeseed oil through the fair price shops at an ender tail price not exceeding Rs. 8.50 a kg. in important centres.

Arrangements have been made through the STC import 20,000 tonnes of groundnut oil for distribution during the festival season.

Owing to various measures taken, some of the private traders are utilising their licences to bring in imported oils. Till 11th of July a little over 106 lakh tonnes valued at about Rs. 70 crores have now arrived in Bombay Port, through private firms. STC has been asked to import edible oil as per requirement of the country and the Corporation has initiated necessary action. A tentative plan for the next oil year (1st November, 77 to 30th October, 78) has also been prepared and necessary measures including imports to meet the need of the country are being taken.

State Governments are advised to take stern measures against hoarders under The Essential Commodities and other Acts. A conference of Chief Ministers has been convened on 30th July, 1977 to consider the present price and economic situation.

SHRI YADVENDRA DUTT: Sir, will you kindly permit me to put one or two questions?

MR. SPEAKER: This is a Call Attention and so one will do.

SHRI YADVENDRA DUTT: Kindly allow me to put one question as a mover. Sir, it is surprising to see the hon. Minister's statement that as against the production of 16.2 lakhs tonnes of groundnut oil in 1975-76, in the succeeding year, the production is estimated at only 12.50 lakhs tonnes. I want to know from the hon. Minister as to whether it is not a fact that in 1975-76, that is, last year, exactly the same situation prevailed in Maharashtra—Bombay? If it is the fault of the shortfall in production, then what about his figure of 16.2 lakhs tonnes now? The situation is exactly the same in these months.

Last year, when there was a shortfall, they took some immediate measures so that situation is not repeated again. My question is: the hon. Minister said that he had banned the use of groundnut oil for the manufacture of vanaspati so that there is no possibility of similar scarcity in the coming season in the groundnut stock, especially, in those States that consume vanaspati.

If vanaspati scarcity takes place, would that not result in blackmarketing. Is this not a policy of ad hocism?

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA: As already stated, on so many occasions, we have stepped into the shoes of the earlier Government and, after entering into the office, immediately whatever steps could be taken have been initiated. Regarding vanaspati shortage even though the apprehension of the hon. Member is right, I would like to inform the House that today, we are giving 90 per cent of the raw materials required by the vanaspati industry out of the imported edible oil by the S.T.C. and we have taken care to see that the usual production of vanaspati, that is, of the order of 6 lakhs tonnes every year is maintained. Perhaps the stock will be a little bit more and not less than this.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contai): Sir, I am sorry to say that my call attention motion was not only relating to groundnut oil but that included other edible oils as well. I hope the hon. Minister will help me by giving answer about other oils as well. It is not the case that only groundnut oil disappears from the market and so there is an abnormal rise in price. In the case of mustard oil, vanaspati, coconut oil and other oils also on an average it is found that in just one month, there is nearly a 25 per cent price rise when it comes in the market everywhere.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR (Quilon): The prices have gone down now.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It may be so in the case of Kerala. That is not so in the case of West Bengal. I want to know from the hon. Minister what is the basic reason why this has vanished in the rural area and the price there is abnormal. We are drawing your attention to this only. I do not know whether they have developed some kind of self-complacency. They are not coming out with an adequate statement to convince the people that they are carrying not only the backlog but they have also inherited the bunglings of the last Ministry.

MR. SPEAKER: Please, now put your question.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: The prices of oils in different parts of the country appeared to fall but in the middle of April there was sharp rise in the prices of mustard oil and edible oils. I would like to know the reason. Is there any hoarding? From a sudden fall in prices, why there is a sudden rise? If there is hoarding, what steps are being taken by the Government. Government has said that there was a scandal in regard to licences for importing edible oils from outside. I want to know whether Government have applied cer-

tain substantive laws to haul them up and also taken stringent measures against them? I would also like to know what positive steps have been taken to see that edible oils are available to the people not only in the urban areas but particularly in the rural areas?

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA: On a number of occasions I have narrated the reasons for shortages. I have also said where there are shortages there is a tendency of hoarding. So far as bungling in respect of import licences for edible oil is concerned, I have already informed the House that certain cases have already been referred to the CBI. It is for them to investigate. After the investigation is complete whatever action is required to be taken the same would be taken.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, to meet the situation we asked the STC to immediately go into action and we prepared the plan not only for this year but also for the next year. So, from that point of view, all possible care has been taken. Imports have already been allowed and STC is going ahead. It may not be fair on my part to disclose the figures of import. Further, Sir, a Committee has been constituted to take immediate measures in respect of crops of groundnut, oil-seeds, cotton, pulses and also jute. Some measures could be undertaken even during this monsoon. The Committee went into it, immediately the money was sanctioned and we are taking certain steps so that we could bring in additional acre under cultivation and we could have better production. We have also taken one more care. We have introduced distribution of refined rapeseed oil and it is available at the point of consumers at Rs. 8.50 per Kg. Now, it is argued that it is available only in cities. But, as I have said, if we could give this oil in cities, it will stop the flow of domestic oils to cities to some extent and that will be available for the rural areas. So, what-

ever steps are possible have been taken and regarding further measures, I can assure the House that this point will be discussed in the Conference of the Chief Ministers to be convened by the Prime Minister on 30th July 1977.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): Sir, I can only sympathise with the hon. Minister, Mr. Mohan Dharia.

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, the groundnut oil has played certain role in politics in different States. Everyone knows it. Nobody can blame anybody. Gujarat is also one of the major groundnut producing States. But there also, there is a problem. The farmers are not getting proper price for their produce. The hoarding takes place at the mill owners level, not at the farmers' level. The farmers are always complaining that they are not getting remunerative price.

MR. SPEAKER: It is a Calling Attention Motion. It is not a debate.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I am not out of the purview. It is a mini debate. I am only explaining that groundnut produced by the farmers does not fetch a remunerative price. The farmers are not getting proper price, but the mill-owners are the real culprit. They are hoarding this item and controlling the whole market. They are encouraging more speculation. So, to set it right, you have to invoke certain acts. In your own statement, it is stated that the price of the groundnut oil in the market was Rs. 211.9 in March 1976, in February 1977 it was Rs. 423. The groundnut oil, the price of which was Rs. 213, had gone up to Rs. 400. You can see the steep rise in price of this oil. It has gone up more than the average. Recently there was a press report stating that among the total oils, groundnut oil seems to be the worst affected oil and a steep rise

has been accompanied by shortages in Southern States and the mustard oil which is the main cooking medium in the Eastern belt, is selling at a price of the 75 per cent to 100 per cent higher than the price prevailing during the last year. Pulses are also very much affected. The worst affected pulses are *Arahar and Rajma*.

MR. SPEAKER: You are only to deal with oil. You confine yourself to oil.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I am confining myself to the price rise of groundnut oil.

AN HON. MEMBER: He is making a comparative study.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): My hon'ble friend was right in raising a point of order at that time. But he does not apply it to himself. How can he raise all these points? He cannot do that. It is not a debate. I would request you, Sir, in future, kindly to see that the discussion on the Call Attention Motion does not become a debate.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I do not make it a debate. It can be discussed in the Rules Committee. It is not a matter of my being impatient. I think the Prime Minister is equally concerned with the price rise. We are also affected because of this. If you go to market, you will find the price increase at the interval of one or two hours. It is a serious situation and we are all concerned about it. The hon. Prime Minister himself would agree that a discussion on the price rise, in this House is necessary. I would be very happy if the House discusses this matter separately. (*Interruptions*). Do not think that it is against you. (*Interruptions*). I know how to do it. Don't try to teach me. I am an old Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Please address the Chair. And What is the information that you are calling for?... (*Interruptions*). Please put your question.

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA: What I have said already answers the hon. Member's question.

SOME MEMBERS: rose.

MR. SPEAKER: In calling attention, nobody else is allowed.

13.06 hrs.

The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till Fourteen of the Clock.

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

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, item No. 8—Statement to be made by Shri Ravindra Varma, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN- TARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA): With your permission, Sir, I rise to announce that Government Business in this House during the week commencing 25th July, 1977, will consist of:

(a) Consideration of any item of Government Business carried over from today's Order Paper.

(b) Consideration and passing of the following Bills, as passed by Rajya Sabha:-

(i) The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(ii) The Oil and Natural Gas Commission (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(iii) The Insecticides (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(c) Consideration and passing of:

(i) The Petroleum (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(ii) The Tea (Amendment) Bill, 1977.

(d) Discussion on:

(i) 20th, 21st and 22nd Reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

(ii) Report of the Union Public Service Commission for 1975-76.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this connection I would like to include one more item, and that is this. It is widely reported in the press that the Prime Minister sent a letter to Mr. M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu regarding the statement on the floor of the Tamil Nadu Assembly on the language question. The Prime Minister told Mr. Ramachandran not to ventilate his feeling on the language issue in public and asked him to discuss with him privately. I believe that it is not a private matter to be discussed between the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister and the people of the country are very much concerned with it. Moreover, I feel it is an inroad into the freedom and it is a virtual chaos and intimidation to a State and the State parties, especially the political Party ruling a State. So, I would like to include this item also for a debate next week as it is a matter of public importance and concern by all the people of the country.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): The gist of the Business Advisory Committee's Third Report has been circulated on the 21st of July. There the time for discussion for....

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We are now discussing only the Government business.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: But I want to clinch it today, if possible. Since it has been circulated, I feel so because a firm decision was taken in the Business Advisory Committee