

the Bill. With this I also want to thank the hon. Minister and the Government for bringing Maulana Azad National Urdu University Bill, 1996 in the House. Our Government has done some wonderful things during the last six months and this Bill is another step in that direction for which I would like to thank my Government and hon. Minister Sh. Bommai.

A University is being setting up in the name of Maulana Azad. Maulana Azad had been a great freedom fighter who gave his personal contribution towards the building of the nation. Besides, he was also a educationist and a journalist. For a long period he has been an editor of an Urdu daily in Calcutta. He had also served the nation for quite a period as first education Minister of the India. Today a University is being set up in the name of that great soul and personality which is a welcome step.

This Bill is being discussed since yesterday. A number of hon. Member have expressed their feeling regarding the Bill. I feel that everybody has welcomed the Bill because Urdu is spoken in many areas of our country. Many a member has expressed that Urdu does not belong to any particular community. It is spoken by the people of every cast, community and religion. Be it Hindu, Muslim or Sikhs, it is used by all of them. The demand for setting up an Urdu University is a long pending one. This is a dream come true for the people who have been making demand for it.

I feel that Hindi and Urdu are twin sisters and both are similar. I understand that the aim, with which this Bill is brought is clear in itself. The aim of the Urdu University will be development and promotion of Urdu language and using it in vocational and technical education. This is the role aim behind this Bill. The another aim of this Bill is to give proper attention towards imparting education to women at a large scale.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to submit that merely setting up an Urdu University cannot ensure the development of Urdu. We will have to go in the depth. This is not going to benefit the Urdu knowing people. Merely providing education at varsity level is not sufficient. Therefore it requires to strengthen the roots in this regard. We will have to ensure that for the persons interested in studying Urdu should be started at the lowest level. Unless it is done they cannot make progress. For the promotion of Urdu, first we will have to take in account the number of primary and secondary schools where Urdu is taught. There are many States where education is imparted through Urdu Medium but there are States where Urdu is not in the school syllabus. Unless we take into account all these aspects till then we will be unable to promote Urdu. Therefore, in my view, in order to fulfil this dream we will have to introduce Urdu at primary level. I would urge upon the hon. Minister that he should ensure arrangements to provide Urdu education to Urdu speaking person at primary level so that we can develop Urdu properly.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please conclude in a minute.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : I would take some more time.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Then you can continue tomorrow

16.00 hrs.

## DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barsat) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to raise a discussion regarding the price rise of all essential commodities with your kind permission. It hardly needs any mention about the stark reality that all essential commodities, including the foodgrains, have shown signs of an unparalleled increase during the last few months. It is the experience of life that can provide us the much needed argument than the argument from me or any display of excellence is mentioning or collecting the statistics about the market. Therefore, I refrain myself from quoting certain statistics from the books supplied by the Government.

In this connection, there has been a change in the governance. We have here a Government of the United Front. This United Front is a coalition Government with the cooperation or coalition of 13 or 14 political parties as on today. When this Government took over the responsibility of governance, they announced a Common Minimum Programme. It is very relevant for me today to mention in this House and quote from the Common Minimum Programme what the objective of this Government was in relation to price stability. With your kind permission, I quote from page nine of the Common Minimum Programme :

"The public distribution system will be strengthened to meet the twin objectives of price stability and make available essential articles to the poor. Special cards will be given to the families below the poverty line and essential articles under the PDS will be sold to them at half of the normal issue price. Access to the PDS will be barred from the affluent sections of the society while the responsibility of supplying foodgrains and essential articles will remain with the Centre and State Governments and the management of these shops will be under the control or jurisdiction of Panchayat Raj System."

I appreciate that this is the only way to meet this kind of price spurt in all essential commodities. I humbly request the Government to inform the hon. Members of this House to what extent they have been able to implement the assurance that was made by the Government before assumption of the office.

In this connection, I also presume that we are well acquainted with the economic situation of our country. It is also assumed that price stability cannot be ensured in an isolated manner. The price stability or the price policy or the price rise or the price decrease-whatever you may call it - is linked up with the economic and political factors of the governance also.

Sir, with your kind permission, very briefly I would only like to quote from a report or the background note of the ASSOCHAM—which is not a Leftist organisation; which is not a Trade Union organisation; it is not an organisation sponsored by the Left elements or the Left movement in this country — the Associated Chambers of Commerce represented by the big business houses of our country. I quote :

"The economic situation does not hold out a bright and encouraging prospect in contrast to the Government's claim. The year 1996-97 is likely to end with a lower rate of industrial and export growth, higher fiscal and trade deficit as compared to 1995-96"

This is the fact revealed by the ASSOCHAM.

It further says :

"Industrial growth in the current year is expected to be around 10 per cent as compared to 12 per cent in 1995-96. The shortfall is attributed to the continuing high cost borrowing, slump in primary capital markets, infrastructural bottlenecks and sluggish imports of several critical raw materials. The data for the last four months of 1996-97 indicated a slow down of exports to 11 per cent, well below the 28 per cent the year before. It is estimated that the fiscal deficit targeted at five per cent of the Gross Domestic Product amounting to Rs. 62,266 crore for 1996-97 may go up to Rs. 70,000 crore. This is primarily due to the failure of the Government to contain the Governmental expenditure and raise public sector savings. The trade deficit at 4.5 million in 1995-96 is likely to increase to 6.7 million US dollars".

Sir, this is the economic situation of the country today as has been revealed by the Associated Chambers of Commerce. Therefore, we should bear in mind that the price stability cannot be ensured without taking into account this gloomy economic picture of our country and also unless the Government changes or reverses the economic policies pursued by the earlier Government. Price stability is impossible within the framework of the so called 'New Economic Policy' launched in this country in the year 1991.

Sir, with your permission I would like to spell out the essential features of this New Economic Policy which the earlier Government launched and pursued for the

last four years. The essential features of this so called 'New Economic Policy' are :

- (a) Open and unrestricted invitation of foreign capital.
- (b) Unhampered import by way of liberalisation of import policy.
- (c) Marketisation of the economy.
- (d) Globalisation of Indian economy.
- (e) Dismantling of the Public Sector.
- (f) Privatisation of public sector organisations and hosts of other facts.

There are the economic features. These are the distinguishing features of the new Economic Policy and the position that has been described by the ASSOCHAM is the direct result of the so called new Economic Policy of the country launched and pursued for a few years by the earlier Government. Therefore, I say that this policy of controlling the prices of essential commodities is an impossibility, is a day-dream unless the economic policy which produces the situation cannot be solved. With all humility I would request the Members on this side also, to know what has been the endorsed statement of the Prime Minister. I wish and hope that the statement is not correct and he comes to correct this statement which he is supposed to have made. The statement of 9.12.96, as reported - again I say, I wish he has not said so and if he has said so he will correct himself - that, "Mr. Deve Gowda, has today praised the previous Narasimha Rao Government saying that it has brought the country out of financial crisis". How the country has been brought out of the financial crisis has been described by me only a few minutes earlier. He said and I quote :

"The United Front Government would take forward these policies. We have already taken various steps in this direction".

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI (Deogarh) : You are in the Steering Committee...(Interruptions)

SHRI CHITTA BASU : Yes, I know what to speak at which forum and at what time. I adhere to this economic Common Minimum Programme...(Interruptions) Please do not make running comments. If you have got the courage, you can stand up and speak when your turn comes...(Interruptions) This does not add to the dignity of the House. I will restrain myself and, therefore, I shall not answer you.

Sir, the Party to which I belong - and I think the Party to which you also belong - has extended support to this Government on the Common Minimum Programme. If the Government fails or if the Government hesitates or if the Government dithers in implementing this Common Minimum Programme politically, I have got the sovereignty to express my views and I am doing that. In my understanding, this statement is - I shall not say in violation - not in conformity, in keeping with the

basic policy of the United Front's CMP. It must be contradicted and I think the responsible Leaders should also respond and take suitable measures to correct this position.

Sir, we want price stability. The Common Minimum Programme has spoken for it. I shall not quote the Economic Policy statement of the United Front Common Minimum Programme because that is known and I have given sufficient indication that this policy statement of the Prime Minister is not in conformity to that. I hope the Government will correct it at an appropriate time.

Price stability depends on many factors. It is not an isolated phenomenon. As I have not much time at my disposal and as it is not a budget speech I am making, I will restrict myself to giving the primary reasons. Price stability depends primarily on the quantum of public investment, subsidies, administrative prices, prices of foodgrains and the extent of public distribution system. There are other factors also but, in my opinion, these factors have a direct impact on the prices. If the Government restricts, restrains or shrinks public investment, it must have some impact on the prices. The result of that impact is rise in prices.

Sir, I am told that the Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan had been prepared, discussed and adopted by the full meeting of the Planning Commission. The Approach Paper is not available with me, nor is it available with any Member of the House. It was reported to me that public investment during the Eighth Five Year Plan, which was 45 per cent of the total investment, is likely to be reduced to 35 per cent of the total investment during the Ninth Five Year Plan beginning from April, 1997. This is a warning, a great warning. I once again say that that paper is not available with me at the present moment. I have been told that public investment is going to be reduced in terms of percentage of the total. Unless that is reversed, price stability cannot be guaranteed and economic situation cannot be altered in the interests of the poorer sections of the society. Therefore, we should take note of this phenomenon.

There has been a hue and cry that the economy of our country is at such stage because there are subsidies. Subsidies are there even in highly industrialised and capitalist countries. Subsidy is an important factor of their economic policies. Farmers in the United States of America are also provided with subsidy. But they have got the check to say that Indian farmer should not be given subsidy! Many developing countries offer subsidies. Their farming is subsidised and their agriculture is subsidised. And here it is being said by the economic experts that our country is facing this economic difficulties because we spend more on subsidies. Subsidies are necessary.

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (Barrackpore) : That is an American medicine.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : Let us not have it. It is not that we should have the medicine prescribed by anybody and everybody.

This subsidy factor also has to be taken into consideration. There should be, I emphatically say, there should be subsidy element in determining the price of essential commodities. Then alone can we control the price line. If the Government is committed to do away with subsidy, it would result in disaster. Now, the question is on what kind of essential commodities subsidy should be provided, to what extent, and it is not whether or not we shall extend subsidy at all?

If exports are being subsidised, if imports are being subsidised, which promote the interests of the big exporters and big importers, how can we expect that the poor farmers of our country are not being provided with subsidy in terms of fertilisers, in terms of other essential necessities for the production in farming? Therefore, the subsidy cannot *ipso facto* be bad for the economy. Subsidy for whom? Subsidy for what class of people? I am strong and vocal for giving subsidy for the ordinary consumers. I am a strong advocate for the subsidy for the common masses insofar as the essential items of the daily life are concerned.

Therefore, Sir, there is a proposal from certain quarters. I am reporting that in the policy framework of the Ninth Five Year Plan document, there is a strong advocacy for the reduction of subsidy without taking into account, for whose interest the subsidy is being given or for whose interest, the subsidy is not to be given.

Sir, regarding the administered prices, if you continue to increase the issue price of the foodgrains, how can we expect that the prices in the open market would diminish? If you do not provide sufficient foodgrains, wheat or *atta* or rice to the consumers belonging to the poorer sections of the society, belonging to the middle income group with limited earnings, how can they survive? Do you know even increasing the administered prices of POL petroleum, oil and other products - would have a cascading effect? It increases the prices of all essential commodities including your wage, including your ordinary items like vegetables, which you daily consume. If the Government continues to increase the administered prices of POL, there is no possibility; there cannot be any possibility to bring down the level of prices. The policy instrument is required to be corrected; the policy instrument is required to be involved in order to see that the administered prices are not increased every time by the whims of the bureaucracy or the whims of those who on their own decide the policy and take decision.

Sir, I am told that the administered prices of oil, petroleum and other products are likely to be increased...(Interruptions)

SHRI SRIBALLAV PANIGRAHI : Now, you realise.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : He is always accusing me. I realise everything. I will not take much time to your disadvantage.

Therefore, I urge upon this Government that if they are really serious in bringing down the price level or at least retaining the present level - I do not expect that it would be brought down immediately - there is no alternative but to desist from increasing the administrative prices of petroleum and other essential commodities, including foodgrains.

Regarding foodgrains, my friend has made a statement. It is a good statement so far as the Policy Statement is concerned.

The price of wheat has increased. That has been done due to black-marketing and also due to certain other factors, viz., malpractices by the trading community and so on. You are running the Government. You have got the instrument of Government. You have promised to provide better Government.

Therefore, it is your duty to see that black-marketeers are chained and put in the proper place. And you also see to it that wheat price is brought down.

Lastly, I will say that price stability cannot be determined in isolation of the macro-economic situation. This macro-economic situation includes debt burden, interest rate, exchange rate of rupee and other factors, including fiscal deficit.

Now, I will conclude by saying that it is high time that the entire gamut of economic policy is reviewed in keeping with the CMP which provides for a durable framework for an alternative economic policy for development with distributive justice.

With these few words, I thank you and other hon. Members very much and I urge upon the Government to review the economic policy of the Government.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ (South Delhi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, Shri Chitta Basu ji has initiated discussion on the price rice and I, on behalf of my party, rise to speak on the subject. The problem of Shri Chitta Basu ji is that with a view to have support of common people, he want to raise their difficulties in the House on the one hand and on the other he would like to continue his support to this Government in the name of secularism. That is why he quoted some figures from Government documents and hesitantly make his submission. But my party has no such hesitations therefore, without going into the complication of Government figures, I would like to express the agony of a common man in his own language. Mr. Chairman, Sir, as you know that a few days ago I also raised this matter of price hike of flour and pulses during zero hour and yesterday, when the hon. Minister of Food made a statement in the House

on the price rise of wheat, viewing the seriousness of the issue, our hon. leader and leader of opposition Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji demanded that a immediate discussion should be held on this matter. I regret to say that the Government neither responded to my questions raised during zero hour nor it accepted the demand to hold immediate discussion on it yesterday. Probably due to your intervention in matter yesterday, the Government has agreed to hold a discussion on it today. Even then I would like to thank the Government because it is an old saying that better late than never. Mr. Chairman, Sir, Dushyant ji is an eminent Hindi poet and it appears that on a similar he had written the following couplet from Visitor's Gallery :

Pet main hai bhukh roti nahin to kya hua.

Ajkal Sansad main hai jore bahas ye mudda.

Today also, the people who are listening to this discussion would have so much of satisfaction that this Government may not be able to provide them roti but it is atleast holding a discussion on it in the Parliament. Perhaps they are hopeful of any relief from the Government after this discussion. Therefore, before I start discussion on this issue I would request the hon. Minister that he should not hold this discussion for formality sake or considering it just a medium of expressing the anger by the members but he should seriously consider the problems raised by the hon. Members and try to find out their effective solution so that the people may get some relief in the real sense. Today people are very angry and they are cursing the Government. They are demonstrating on the roads. The Women Morcha of BJP Delhi unit have organised a demonstration today at Jantar Mantar because they are of the view that the worst affected victim of this price rise is women. The husband handovers his entire earning to his wife and then it is the woman who is ultimately responsible for managing the household affairs. If she is unable to manage the household affairs she would be called as an inefficient woman. She cannot tolerate the hunger of her children and she consider it her religious duty to feed her husband. That is why she is the main sufferer of this price rise. Sometimes she has to go for sleep without food. Today, she has come out on the roads to express her agony.

Sir, I would like to ask some question about the problems being faced by the people and I want that the Government should respond to those questions. Yesterday, the hon. Minister has given a detailed statement in the House in which he repeatedly said that the FCI has enough stock of wheat. One thing he has said very confidently that no wheat has been exported since June, 1996. So I would like to know that when enough stock of wheat is there and they have not exported any wheat then how the wheat has disappeared from the market and who has done it? Yesterday, the hon. Minister said very confidently that his intention is clear. God knows, his intention is clear or not but the wheat is clear (disappeared) from the

market and the entire country know this reality. Can I ask where the wheat has gone? The reply to this query is available in his statement itself. He said that the FCI had sold wheat in the open market and he had also given figures about it. This restriction of 200 metric tonnes or 500 metric tonnes has been imposed yesterday only but before that there was no such restriction and the traders purchased it at their discretion.

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : Sir, for the information of the hon. Member I would like to say that the restriction of 200 metric tonnes has not been imposed yesterday but it was imposed on the day I took over charge of this Ministry.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : You have mentioned about the sale of 5 lakh tonnes of wheat per month and also about the sale of 63 lakh tonnes of wheat. The traders could have purchased the wheat as per their requirement. So what I would like to ask is that you have sold wheat to the Mill owners at control rates and they should have sold the flour in market only by adding grinding cost on it but they sold it just in double rates and the Government did not bother to take any action. Is it not a fact? What the Government was doing when the mill owners purchased wheat at control rates and after grinding it they sold the flour at Rs. 9 per kg.? They purchased wheat at Rs. 4.50 per kg. and they should have sold the flour just after adding grinding cost of 20 paise, 50 paise or at the most Rs. 1 per kg. on it but they sold it at Rs. 9 per kg. and the Government, which call itself as Government of humble farmers whether farmers have got any benefit from this price rise of wheat. No, farmers did not get any benefits because wheat was purchased from the farmers on the support price only. This hike in price did not contribute anything to the Government exchequer because wheat was sold at control rates. The profit was earned by the mill owners and the sufferers were the consumers. This is the miracle of this Government of humble farmers that it gave maximum profit to the mill owners. It is a hard fact that the mill owners have never earned such a big profit ever before. I am saying this thing in the House with authenticity. The hon. Minister says that if the Government sold it in the open market, it has also made adequate supply to the PDS. He said that the allocations were made to the State Governments as per their demands. But it is not the fact. It was said about Delhi that the allocation of wheat has been made as per the demand. I have with me a letter of the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies of Delhi Government. The hon. Minister has given his statement here yesterday only but this letter was written by Shri Lal Bihari Tiwari Thirteen days back. It was not written to me alone but to all the Members of Parliament from Delhi. Shri J.P. Agarwal and Shrimat Meira Kumar might have received the same letter because it was written to all MPs of

Delhi. It has been mentioned in the letter that he has written a letter to the hon. Minister of Food of the Government of India seven days earlier. In view of the non-availability of wheat with the PDS in Delhi he has written this letter with heavy heart and I read out it here :

Dear Shrimati Sushma Swaraj ji, due to the non-availability of Railway rakes there is heavy shortage of wheat in Delhi based godowns of FCI and it has adversely affected the PDS in Delhi. Till now wheat could not be supplied to many PDS shops. Since the FCI works under the control of Ministry of Food, I have written a letter to Shri Devendra Prasad Yadav the Minister of Food and Civil Supplies, Government of India on 21.11.96 and the Chief Minister of Delhi, Shri Sahib Singh Verma has written a letter to the Prime Minister on 27.11.96 that they should intervene in this matter. We have also requested them to make railway rakes available to FCI in adequate numbers so that FCI store a sufficient quantity of wheat from the neighbouring State in their Delhi based Godowns for Public Distribution.

MR. CHAIRMAN : What is the date of this letter.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : This is dated 28.11.96. It was written 13 days ago. It has not been written after the statement of the hon. Minister. What I mean to say is that it is immaterial whether this shortage is because of non-availability of railway rakes or due to less allocation of wheat, but the main thing is that it has affected the PDS in Delhi as a result of which wheat is not available in ration shops. Our problem is that it is the responsibility of the State Government to run the PDS but the supply of rice and wheat for PDS is the responsibility of the Central Government. But the common man cannot understand this difference. When we go to the public, they say that they have voted for BJP. They consider us responsible for all these deficiencies, whereas we are not responsible for that. If the Government of India is unable to provide railway rakes to FCI and the FCI is not able to fill up its Godowns in Delhi, which is affecting the PDS in Delhi, why we should be held responsible for that. Why our party Government should be held responsible for this mismanagement by the common people? The hon. Minister is saying that the Government is allocating adequate quota of wheat but what is the meaning of that quota allocated on papers only. So long as the allocated quota of wheat is not reached in Godowns and handed over to Delhi Government, how can wheat be made available at Ration shops. The Central Government get rid of the matter just by issuing one statement but the elected representative of Delhi and the BJP Government of Delhi have to face the people. This Government gives such statements which mislead the people. Yesterday the hon. Minister has said that 60 thousand tonnes of wheat was allocated but their off take is just 41,000 tonnes. It is right but this off take was upto October.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is a matter of common sense that every year new crop of wheat comes in the market in April and there is no shortage of wheat from May to October. The sale of wheat from ration shops is more when the market rate is higher than the ration shops. It is a matter of common sense. When the rates of open market and ration shop are same or there is minor difference, then no body goes to the ration shop because every one knows that he would get good quality of ration and more choice in the open market. That is why sometimes there is no off take of wheat from the ration shops.

I am telling it from my own experience. I was also in charges of the Food and Civil Supplies Department in Haryana. Sometimes we used to refuse to off take the wheat and ask the Central Government to keep our share with it. We have shortage of wheat during December to March and every body know about it. During that period every State Government gives its enhanced demand and it is said that the market rate has gone up and the off take of Ration Shop has gone up, so with a view to strengthen the PDS, they demand more quota of wheat. Even a small ant can understand this thing so why the Minister cannot understand it. Even the ant collects her food for rainy season because she knows that if she does not collect food for rainy season she would die of hunger. Are the FCI officers, who have been looking after this corporation for years together, not aware of this fact? In his statement he made a mention of buffer stock of wheat for which they had no storage capacity. If you want, I can read out the lines. He made this statement in Hindi. I do not have the Hindi version. I am reading out its English version.

[English]

There was problem of storage due to huge quantity of wheat in the godown. But FCI had to bear the burden of carrying cost as the quantity of wheat was more than requirement."

[Translation]

If the Government have surplus wheat in its godowns, the people's hardship can be removed if it is distributed among people at the time of shortfall. The PDS could be strengthened and the PDS could have received people's applause. The poor people could have got 'chapati'. But the Government is not bothered for that. The Government feels it a burden to store surplus wheat in its warehouses. So they sell it in the open market. Open market sale of wheat was done under a conspiracy. It smacks of a conspiracy and corruption. We are holding a discussion under Rule 193 on essential commodities. So it is not the question of wheat alone. In India rice and 'dal' is the staple food of 75 per cent of people. People prefer to take rice and 'dal' at lunch.

Hon. Paswan ji is sitting here. The hon. Member sitting right behind him also belongs to his State. He accompanied us on our tour to Russia. When he did

not get rice and 'dal' for 4 days, he was upset. He requested me to trace a hotel where rice and 'dal' was available. He said that without rice and dal, he does not get satisfaction. What are the prices of dal today. I have got today's prices of rice and 'dal' today? Flour sells at Rs. 10.50 per Kg. 'mong' pulses at Rs. 32/-. Arhar Rs. 32/-. gram pulses Rs. 20/- per Kg. Mustard oil sells Rs. 52/-. Safola at Rs. 67.50. salt Rs. 6/- and rice Rs. 24 per Kg... (Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : These were the priced in the morning.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Yes, the prices will rise further till it is evening. None of these items is other than an essential commodity.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Which rice?

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : 'parmal' and 'sella'. Basmati sells not less than Rs. 45/- per Kg. Basmati of common variety sells at Rs. 45/- to Rs. 68/- per Kg. This is the very rice from which we prepare boiled rice everyday.

SHRI JAI PRAKASH (Hissar) : The F.C.I. was not able to make necessary arrangements to procure rice. No bidding was done in the Mandis of Haryana for as long a period of 15 days. While on the one hand paddy is purchased at Rs. 700 per quintal, on the other hand rice sells at Rs. 50/- per Kg. here.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Chander Babu Naidu is giving for Rs. 2.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, these are the prices of staple food like rice, pulses, salt and flour. If this will the price of commodities of daily consumption, how a common man can survive. The vegetable prices are also very high. People advise for consuming nutritious food and green vegetables. Green vegetable prices are beyond our reach. Potato and onion sell Rs. 8 to Rs. 10/- per Kg. People have to consume chapati with salt and onion only. Even that much is not available to common man. This is the Government of a humble farmer. This Government has snatched away dry chapati from a common man's mouth.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, not to speak of rice and 'dal', a daily labourer does not get 'chapati' salt and onion for his daily meal. The middle class people get their protein needs from pulses. They cannot imagine consuming butter and cheese. Today 'dal' sells at Rs. 32/- per Kg. So they cannot purchase dal and eat rice and dal in their everyday meal. When I take into account the prices of potato and onion, I recollect a time of my friends of the Congress Party. The Janta Government fell due to high prices of onion. My friends from the Congress party created an uproar all over the country that price of onion had reached an all time high of Rs. 5/- per Kg. Today onion is selling at Rs. 10/- per Kg. Because of our binding on secularism, we have to bear with this Government for the price of onion at Rs. 10/- per Kg.

Because it is necessary for them to keep this Government in power in the name of secularism so it is also necessary to have one kilogram onion at Rs. 10/-.

Sir, you know about the conspiracies of multinational companies. In this connection, there is one aspect which I would like to submit before the House. Perhaps no one has paid his attention towards that aspect. The prices of pulses, rice, potatoes, onion, flour and salt are going up and I think a deep rooted conspiracy of multinational companies is there in it. The Government is also not paying attention towards this aspect. The multinational companies want to make the living standards of common people costly and that cannot be done without increasing the prices of essential commodities. When living standards will become costly, people would demand more wages and when the Government and domestic industries would not be in position to meet their demand, they would attract towards multinational companies. These multinational companies have planned to eliminate domestic industries. This is a conspiracy being hatched by the multinational companies that living standard of common man be made costly so that they may come out on roads with their demand of enhanced wages. Only multinational companies have the capacity to meet their demand of enhanced wages. The Government is not thinking about this aspect. Had the Government thought over this aspect, it would have not delayed the implementation of the recommendations of the 5th Pay Commission. This Commission has not yet even submitted its report. Some of the hon. Members may think that I am deviating from the subject but it is not so. It has direct bearing with this subject. This concept of pay commission was adopted in our country because the fixed salaried class is the worst affected class of the society by the price rise. Their home budgets go on increasing and they require to spend Rs. 100 extra per month. If I accept the version of Shri Vajpayee ji that prices differ from morning to evening then the dearness increases everyday by Rs. 20. But there is no hike in their salaries so they are unable to make any adjustment between their fixed salary and ever increasing dearness. For that purpose this concept of Pay Commission was adopted but what is the condition of today is that firstly there is delay in constituting the Pay Commission, then report is delayed and after the report is received its implementation is delayed. By the time recommendations are implemented they become redundant. Before the recommendations of the Pay Commission, dearness increases by five to six times. Even the Pay Commission does not neutralise the dearness. Therefore, I would like to say that the Government does not bother about its employees. Today there is great discontentment among the employees and they are likely to launch agitations against the Government. Daily wage workers are facing hardships and the women are crying but the Government is not paying any attention towards them. We have learnt that

the Government is going to further increase the prices of petroleum products and diesel. Sir, you know that the prices of petroleum directly affect the price rise. When there is hike in the prices of petrol and diesel freight charges are get directly affected and the prices of all other items automatically go up. If the prices of petrol and diesel are increased by the Government what would be the condition of salaried class people. Have the Government ever pondered over it? Why the Government would bother about them because all the Ministers are getting Government banquets every day which include mutton and chickens and the officers have American Express cards or Dinner cards to have their meal in five star hotels. The price hike neither affect the policy maker's nor the persons responsible for implementation but its ill-effects are to be faced by the common people, Government employee or daily wage workers. They toil for their everyday meal.

SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : I would like to inform the hon. Member that the hon. Minister is vegetarian and does not take mutton or chicken.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : If the hon. Minister is vegetarian, he might be taking cheese etc. Everyday Government banquets are being arranged.

What I mean to say is that women they do not have to pay from their own pocket how they will realise the problems of a common man. Shrimati Kanti Singh ji is nodding her head. Being a lady perhaps she use to purchase ration and knows how much the prices she use to purchase ration and knows how much the prices of flour has gone up. She might be purchasing vegetables and fruits from the market, so she knows how much the prices have gone up.

But these people do not know to what extent prices are rising. Therefore, I would like to tell you that you may join hands in the name of secularism, but the poor people have started cursing you. Their curses will bring the downfall of this Government. Therefore, I would like the hon. Minister to look upwards a bit as I am saying this in his interest only... (Interruptions) I would request the hon. Minister to ponder over it seriously and take effective steps on the points which I have raised during the course of the debate. Before the curses of the poor people bring down this Government, effective arrangement should be made in this regard so that the people are able to have a meal and sound sleep at night.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Two-three more members from your party are going to speak. Please conclude now.

SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ : Mr. Chairman, Sir, you are telling me to conclude. I shall leave time for my colleagues to speak, but before I resume my seat, I would caution this Government to wake from its slumber before the curses of the poor bring the downfall of this Government. The Government which claims to be ruling in the name of the common man is not able to give anything to the common man, yet it must strive towards providing them two square meals a day, at least.

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA (Jhabua) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, today's subject of discussion is very important. The people, especially the poor, are severely hit by the price rise. Just now Shrimati Sushma was speaking and I thought for a moment that she did not bring politics into her speech. But at times she did talk politics and dragged Congress into it.

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSHI (Howrah) : They are destined to do it, what can they do?

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA : I would like to tell the House as to why such a situation was created. Senior opposition leaders are present here. We are discussing national issues, but we have never discussed unemployment, growing population or social justice to the poor and weaker sections. That is why no party could secure majority in 1996 elections. Shrimati Sushma took it ill as we did not support them when they formed the Government. How can we support them? But we did give them an opportunity to get others' support...*(Interruptions)* it was for them to muster majority; we cannot be blamed for that...*(Interruptions)* All that we want is that the country should be run on the right lines. I would ask my colleague Shrimati Sushmaji whether they want to create a UP like situation here also. So far, neither they nor any other party has been able to form Government there. You can ask them...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You keep to the context. This is discussion under Rule 193 on price rise. You speak on that.

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA : I was speaking on the price rise only. We are answerable to the nation and that is why we should support them. As Shri Chitta Basu has said, it would have been better had the Prime Minister been present here to give more depth to this discussion. Shri Basu has quoted that the Prime Minister has himself contradicted in Indore that the outlay of the Ninth Plan would be Rs. 60,000 crore...*(Interruptions)*

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the people are in distress. Somebody said that Shri Yadav's wife or Shrimati Sushma should go to the market to make purchases. I do not want to be drawn into these controversies.

I would like to submit that the plight of poor is miserable. The prices of essential commodities whether it is wheat, maize, pulses, vegetable or milk- are sky rocketting. It is the duty of the Government to provide food to the common man. The Government is accountable for this. Thousands of people have to go without food today. Can a poor man afford to purchase wheat at Rs. 10-12 per Kg. The hon. Minister has rightly pointed out in his speech that though there is no shortage of foodgrains there is something wrong somewhere. Smt. Sushma Swaraj has said that middlemen have filled their godowns. Why cannot their premises be raided? Why cannot the prices be fixed? When the Government purchases from farmers they pay a support price of Rs. 4-5 per Kgs. How much

brokerage do they get for keeping the foodgrains for 2-3 months. Prices should be fixed and raids should be conducted. Why this is not being done? There is a conspiracy to bring disrepute to the Government. There is need to look into the matter seriously.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would urge the hon. Minister to keep a check over the businessmen. Mention has been made about P.D.S. Government is accountable for the smooth functioning of the PDS. Simply opening the shops without any material therein will not serve the purpose.

The fair price shops do not have wheat, rice or sugar. Most of these goods are being sold in the black market at Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000 per quintal. There is need to seriously look into the matter. There is also need to keep check over this.

17.00 hrs.

LT. GEN. SHRI PRAKASH MANI TRIPATHI : Shri Bhuria ji this is what Sushma ji has said.

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA : What then...*(Interruptions)* You do not speak for the country where as we do. I am not speaking with political considerations. You give religious colour to national issues, that is why the composition of the House is such. We know that the people will give us clear mandate...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Bhuria ji please address the chair. Do not look here and there.

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA : About PDS I would like to say that the Fair Price Shops should get regular supplies, the prices should be fixed and the poor man particularly those living in the Adivasi areas should get foodgrains. The people in Sagar in Madhya Pradesh looted the Fair Price Shop when they did not get foodgrains from there. The police had to resort to firing. Therefore foodgrains should be available in shops so that people could get them. I hope that such incidents will not recur in future if proper arrangements of supply of foodgrains is made. If it cannot be done through railways, it should be done through roads. The rate of maintenance should be increased. Fair Price Shops for vegetables should also be opened. During 1995-96 we had an effective control on prices when we were in power.

17.02 hrs.

(Shri P.C. Chako in the Chair)

I was listening to Shri Chitta Basu. There should be a clear policy in this regard. The policy during the Congress regime was pro-poor and for the common masses. Trader is not our vote bank. I urge that the interests of poor should be safeguarded and they should be provided food...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI I.D. SWAMY : Mr. Chairman, Sir, why is this vote politics being mentioned?



[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : No interruptions please.

[Translation]

SHRI DILEEP SINGH BHURIA : We should try and get the huge stock piles of foodgrains removed from the godowns. This should be done because the common people are facing lot of problems. Lot is being said about foreign goods and liberalisation etc. but I would like to know whether the common man will have to cringe for food. My submission is the Adivasi areas should get the benefit of development schemes. There is drought in Chattisgarh region today. Same is true of Maharashtra and Orissa also. There is need to make separate provision for such areas. I would urge that the income tax payees should not be given ration cards. Only the poor and weaker sections should be given ration cards. The rice benefit from the PDS scheme whereas the poor does not get any benefit. Priorities should be fixed. PDS is a subsidised scheme for the benefit of poor and therefore the benefit must reach him.

I would like that the Government which comprises of 12-13 parties and is running with the support of Congress should adopt certain policies which are for the benefit of the poor. The problems of poor should be solved. Please do not pull each others leg ...*(Interruptions)* Some of my friends are saying that we are in trouble. Infact you are in trouble. He does not know which party is in power. As Sushma Swaraj ji rightly pointed out, he comes to us and says that the prices of atta, vegetables and edible oil is shooting up and we should help him. We are all accountable for it ...*(Interruptions)* Shri Vajpayeeji raised this issue and the Government is ready to discuss it. This discussion should be done in detail so that the poor and weaker sections of society feel that the parliamentarians are really concerned about their plight. We want that a way should be found out to solve this problem. We do not want to make it a political issue or drag it into politics.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I hail from a tribal area. We should be concerned about the plight of the poor and make efforts to see that he is benefitted. Food, clothing, shelter are the basic necessities of life and there is need to provide these necessities of life to the poor at any cost. The poor should feel that this House is concerned about them. This discussion should not be taken up merely for name sake. It should not be that we discuss it here and it is shown on TV and the House is adjourned with the net result nil. Some concrete result should come out of this discussion.

The hon. Minister read out of lengthy statement on this subject. I would request that instead of speech making he should go out and make surprise checks and see whether goods are available in the Fair Price Shops. He should visit the States. Many State Governments are indulging in irregularities. To keep a

check over this, committees should be constituted and there should be public participation in them ...*(Interruptions)*

We do not need to fight over this. The head (Sarpanch) of the Gram Panchayat should be involved in this. He should ensure whether the goods have reached the village or not. The distribution should be done in his presence. If the traders, rich businessmen and others indulge in blackmarketing, they should be arrested and put behind bars...*(Interruptions)* Merely writing letters to the States will not serve the purpose. You should visit the rural areas also. The people are conscious today. The representatives of villages, adivasis, SCs/STs should be included in those committees. Consumer Forums should be set up and Distribution should be done in their presence. A proper balance should be maintained. The poor and weaker sections should be protected and given assistance otherwise thousands of people will starve to death.

Shortage of water and electricity is another problem. The electricity bills are exorbitant. There is no check on it. Kindly make some legislation to check this malpractice. There are effective laws but in case there are many loopholes, kindly bring about a legislation in the Parliament and amend the law. We will support such laws. The Government should take stern action against blackmarketeters and hoarders. If the laws are ineffective to deal with them, please bring about suitable amendments in them...*(Interruptions)* leave aside the scam issue. If we discuss scams then all of us will have to go. There is no Government in U.P. If we embroil ourselves in the scam issue then there is no end to it. The country will go to dogs. We are here to serve the nation and Parliament is the custodian of people's rights. We should ensure that the ends of social justice are met and the poor man's confidence is restored in the system otherwise he will think more about the scam. These scams will continue but we want that the present Government should get the majority. We should not get the majority. Our Congress Party believes in principles, whether we get power or not that is unimaterial. We have not deviated from our path nor will we deviate from our principles.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, while concluding I would say that the hon. Minister should make adequate and proper arrangements for food, clothing and shelter of the poor in the country and take stern action against blackmarketeters and hoarders. With these words I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

\*SHRI HARADHAN ROY (Asansol) : Mr. Chairman Sir, I have given notice to speak in Bengali and I shall speak in Bengali. Sir, the prices of essential commodities are rising day by day. To be candid enough I must say they are rising every moment. The people of this country are realizing this hard fact with great difficulty. Those who go to the market and purchase the items for their

\* Translation of the speech originally delivered in Bangla.

daily consumptions have been facing the brunt of price rise. of course I can't blame the present Govt. totally for this price rise. The globalization, liberalization which were part of the wrong economic policy of the previous Govt. are also responsible for the price rise. This is not a sudden phenomenon. Prices of essential commodities were already rising when the previous Govt. was at the helm of administration. They had liberalized their economic policy and the present Govt. have not deviated from that policy. There is no control on price rise because this Govt. are also pursuing the same policy. The Govt. have pledged to provide essential at cheap rate through public distribution systems. The promise of the present Govt. was to give essential commodities at cheap price to the poor and people below poverty line through ration card. But it is matter of regret that this pledge of the Govt. has been confined in paper only. It has not materialized. Of course it is not my intention to compare the price of various essential commodities like wheat, rice, sugar, pulses, onion and potatoes in the last six months. This has been mentioned by my previous speakers. Still while discussing price rise of essential commodities, I cannot but mention and compare the varying price of some essential commodities in the last few months. The price of rice in last January was Rs. 733 per quintal and in Oct. it was Rs. 758. The price of wheat in last Jan. was Rs. 775 per quintal whereas in Oct. it reached Rs. 875. The prices of Jowar and bajra remain unchanged. But the price of maize was Rs. 458 in Jan. and it was increased by Rs. 62 that is Rs. 520 in Oct. The rise in price regarding wheat and rice is phenomenal. The price of pulses have also increased. The only source of protein for the poor is through pulses. Now they are being denied that right of having simple diet of 'dal and roti' even.

Sir, more than 40 percent of population in our country happen to be below the poverty line. This section of the society has been facing the brunt of price rise immensely. Moreover there are natural calamities like drought, flood etc. As a result, the repercussion is reflected in less production of crop and grain. But even if we have surplus stock we have so many dishonest people hoarding the essential commodities and thereby help in creating artificial scarcity leading to price rise. The malpractices of this trading community must be stopped by giving stringent punishment.

If the Govt. want to control this spiralling price rise, they have to change their policy. We know that price rise is linked with various factors. The rise in the cost of inputs like irrigation, fertilizer and power will be reflected in production also. We give subsidies to the farmers. We have to take into account the percentage of irrigated land and non-irrigated land. We have vast areas of land in our country. What percentage of the land can be cultivated has to be looked into. Mere shouting about subsidies will not suffice. All these factors have to be taken into consideration.

The prices of both petrol and diesel have been increased by the Govt. through an administrative order after they came into power. There is a rise in the prices of coal also. Now they price rise in all commodities has its effect in cultivations also. Crores of people in our country have no definite source of income throughout the year. They do not possess land or any other job. During agricultural season they have some work at the most for two and a half or 3 months. We cannot provide two square a meal for these people. They have strength, they want to work. But unfortunately they do not get any job for their survival. If we cannot redistribute the land among the landless by taking the excess of land from the landlords, we cannot have any productions at all. If the production is nil, it will lead to price rise. Not only have we failed in giving job to the needy, we have also been responsible for making people unemployed. So many factories and public sector undertakings have either become sick or have been closed. The workers have either been retrenched or lost their jobs. In Delhi itself, many factories have been closed. The workers are not getting their salaries or bonus. How will they survive? This gloomy economic scenario is the result of the wrong policy pursued by the Govt. They must change their policy to contain price rise. They promise in their Common Minimum Programme to do certain things for the benefit of common people. Here too we must remember that industries must not be closed. They have to be revived and must start functioning. A few days back our honourable members from Bihar were expressing their concern about non availability of fertilizer in their State. So on the one hand there is scarcity of fertilizer and on the other hand the fertilizer factories are being closed. These factories have been closed for quite some time. But the Govt. have not tried to revive and run these factories by investment. If these factories are revived and start functioning the Govt. can provide fertilizer to the farmer at cheap rate. That too the Govt. have failed to do. This has happened because of their wrong policy. They have followed the wrong economic liberalization launched by the previous Govt. and open our market to the foreigner. This policy of opening our market to the multinationals is definitely one of the reasons for price rise. The role of the hoarders and black marketeers can not be ignored too. Because of their malpractices there is an artificial scarcity in the market leading to price rise. Previously the foodgrains used to be exported. Now atleast that has stopped. The Govt. must remember that if they do not change their policy their promises in common minimum programme can not be fulfilled. Because of their wrong policy they can not curb price rise and if they fail to contain price rise the promises in their common minimum programme will go haywire. Their pledge to provide some kind of employment to the needy through various schemes can never be ensured.

Those of us supporting the United Front Govt. have always demanded full protections for the poor, for the

people below poverty line in terms of cloth, food, the essential commodities they need for their survival. All the needy people all over the country must get essential commodities at cheap and uniform rate. The Govt. must see to it that the price of essential commodities throughout the country must be uniform. If the Govt. fail in doing that, the hoarders will raise their ugly heads everywhere. But this country does not belong only to the selected few the hoarder, the blackmarketeers or the rich. The poor, the needy have equal share in the country. They have got every right to live honourably here. Our honourable partner in the United Front Shri Chitta Basu has very rightly pointed out that subsidies are given to exporters and importers. Why the subsidies are not being given to the poor, the farmer, the needy so that they can produce without much hardship. The Govt. promised to provide essential commodities to the people below poverty line at cheap and uniform rate throughout the country. This promise must be kept and implemented immediately. It is a matter of shame and disgrace that when the majority of the population can not even have their daily meals, huge collections of gold, silvers and other valuable items is being unearthed in some quarter.

I was listening attentively to what our honourable member Smt. Sushma Swaraj from that side spoke I would like to remind here that they started Ram rath and Ram shila in 1989. This move led to riot throughout the country and so many people were killed in that ugly episode. I vividly remember the present Food Minister coining a slogan said in the House - you chant the name of Siya Ram and in your back give 500 gm. instead of 1 kilo. Now these people are shedding crocodile tears for the plight of the poor because of price rise very conveniently forgetting their responsibility of creating the situation in the whole country so critical. Their unpardonable action is also equally responsible for price rise. Now they are condemning the present Govt. for their wrong economic policy. They too were in power for 13 days and their Govt. also promised to follow the same economic policy launched by the previous Govt. Why do they forget it now and blame the present Govt. for the crisis?

Now Sir, my submission is that the Govt. must take some appropriate measures to curb price rise so as to give relief to the poor and needy. They must implement their pledge of providing food shelter and employment to the people below poverty line. The promises of common minimum programme must be fulfilled. People have the right to live an honorable life by having bare necessities. The Govt. must take some appropriate actions to curb the price rise of essential commodities. They must be careful that situation does not go beyond control. The practices of the trading commodity must be looked into and the hoarders must not have a field day. The people must get their essential commodities at cheap rate. I urge upon the Govt. to take appropriate actions in this directions. With these words I thank you

Sir, for giving we an opportunity to speak on this vital issue of price rise.

[English]

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN (Trichur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir. I was very carefully going through the lengthy statement made by our hon. Minister for Food and Civil Supplies. I am sorry to say that the statement does not reflect the extremely grave situation the country is facing now because of the steep hike in the prices of essential commodities. Moreover, the scarcity of the basic items of essential commodities does not find a mention in the statement.

The hon. Minister said that the price of wheat is up by about 25 per cent. I do not know what is the source that the Minister has got for the facts that he has given in the statement. To be factually correct, I verified from far away Kerala the price of wheat. It was Rs. 650 per quintal and is now being sold at Rs. 950 per quintal. That too, every effort has to be made to get some quantity of supply from the wholesale traders. The price of maida has also shot up beyond the reach of common people. With the limited time at my disposal I do not want to repeat the points made by my learned colleagues. Almost all the essential commodities - vegetables, meat, edible oil, all pulses, fish, etc. are beyond the reach of common people and the working people with limited income. Their monthly budget has been upset not only by the price hike but by the scarcity of food items also.

The traders' community as a whole in our country is under the impression that the liberalisation and market economy means that they can loot and plunder the people by any means. That is their understanding of the liberalisation and market economy. Profit, more profit and profit by any means is their motto. For that they would do anything. They are not at all bothered about the interest of the country, the interest of the people.

Let me point out a small thing. Now-a-days, common people depend on bread for their fast food. There are thousands of big and small bread manufacturing units which are at the verge of collapse now.

They do not get the supply. If at all they get the supplies, the price is so high that bread cannot be manufactured and sold by buying maida or wheat. So, the people are facing a very grave situation. The hon. Minister has pointed out about hoarding and he has written to the Chief Ministers asking them to do something. The Government of India, the Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies has to wake up; they have to do something on a war footing. This situation demands an urgent, immediate step to get the hoarders and black-marketeers booked.

I must point out that for this very high hike in the prices there are so many reasons. One of the reasons is the hike in the administered price of petroleum products. We, from the Left, warned the Government

that if the prices of petroleum were increased that would cover all the commodities. We from Kerala are the worst sufferers. We have to get everything from the other States and the transportation charges are high and as a result the prices of the commodities are also so high.

Again, there is a talk of hiking the prices of petroleum products. I warn the Government: 'Do not do that; please find out some other way to get resources'. There are plenty of resources, ample resources. Do not be afraid of it if someone calls the Government 'a raid raj'. In order to do justice to the 90 crore people of India, you have to do something drastic; you have to do some surgery, which might hurt somebody. But the interest of the nation, the interest of the people, especially the common people must not be forgotten. There is ample wealth in the country. For example, in one Shrimati's house so much wealth was concealed. The highest profit makers are evading taxes. I do not want to cite cases. Enforcement Directorate did something good. It got hold of a company. We have seen that they have cheated the nation, that they have cheated the Government and that they have cheated the nation, that they have cheated the Government and that they have cheated the basic interests of the nation.

I feel a little bit hurt when somebody raises the bogey, 'raid raj'. We have to go in the right direction and get resources to run the Government and not by hiking the prices of petroleum products and other commodities. So, the price rise is the most immediate, urgent problem that faces the Government.

You would be assessed by the people by what you do to get the prices come down within the reach of the common people. In your statement you have said that you are releasing wheat to the open market. Is that the way to tackle the issue? I think, not. You have to strengthen the public distribution system.

The Government may give them wheat and other things. The promise of the United Front Government is to give essential commodities at half of their prices to those who are below the poverty line. You may try to implement that promise; you do not give it to the open market, but give some amount of quota to the bread manufacturing factories also. Thousands and thousands of employees are there, the interests of the consumers are involved there. As soon as you give more wheat to the open market, it goes directly to the black-marketeters and hoarders. If you have any lesson to learn from them, something new should be done to face the extraordinary situation that we are facing now.

I agree with Shrimati Sushma Swaraj, that the multinationals are very active in this country now. They are in the consumer products industry; they are having a large and extend land of our country and they are openly and in a hidden way, scuttling our economy. I must say. They are scuttling our own industries; they are scuttling our basic and strong public units; they are scuttling our service sector also. People are in action

now who are without any political motivation, pointing out these dangers. Please hear them. People are our masters. If the multinationals come to the General Insurance Corporation, Life Insurance Corporation, banking sector and other service sectors, our economy will be scattered. The multinationals want a free hand in foreign direct investment as seen in Singapore; they want complete freedom. They want to sell their goods without any tariff. They want to invest money with full rights as Indians. These are dangerous factors.

Does the Government realise it? Are they going to toe the line of liberalisation and market economy with a blind eye? They may please open up their eyes. We were arguing for a fixed rate for petroleum products, but they were not paying heed to it. We have to do something drastic to safeguard our interests. The multinationals and new-colonialists are not sympathetic to the common people of India or to the interests of our great nation. They are bent upon plundering and exploiting us. They want 93 crore markets freely for them. They want to scuttle our growing national industries. They are arguing for a wage rise now. Is it in the interest of our workers? No. It is just to scuttle our industries.

So, when we face this grave situation, all these things have to be taken into consideration. We want money, we want resources. For getting that, we have to go to the correct places and not hike the prices of petroleum products any more. Please do not be afraid, if someone raises a cry of 'raid raj' to haul up the hiddenwealth of this great nation. There are ample resources. So, some immediate steps should be taken to get hold of these black marketeers, hoarders and the hidden wealth, to run the Government under the direction which is clearly shown in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Front.

SHRI PRAKASH VISHWANATH PRANJPE (Thane): Sir, I was listening to the speeches given by different political leaders in this august House. I am not a learned person or a much experienced person to give a speech with authority. But I was remembering one thing when I was listening to the speeches of all the other Members. I remember a dialogue from the film, *Upkaar* where Shri Manoj Kumar had said :

[Translation]

"Ration Par Bhashan Milta Hai, Lekin Bhashan Par Ration Nahin Milta hai" (We get long speeches about ration but there is no ration on speeches)

[English]

Members are saying so many things in this august House about increase in prices. But the basic thing is demand and supply is the rule. When demand is in multiplication and supply is not there, then prices are bound to increase. What is the solution to reduce the

prices? Some political people have criticised the multinationals that they are playing some mischief to increase the prices. I do not agree with that. What I am suggesting may be a big thing for a small person like me to say in this august House. If all the parties are really interested in controlling the prices, what I personally feel is that, we should control our population, irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Unless and until we control our population for a further period of 25 years by making an Act that one family will be having only one child, the poor people will not be getting sufficient food. So, all the political parties, irrespective of caste, creed and religion must think very seriously about controlling the population. As I have narrated a dialogue from *Upkaar*, I am going to give a big speech here but I would definitely suggest one thing that we must bring more and more land under cultivation. And for that purpose, I would say that there are 36 proposals from the State of Maharashtra pending with the Central Government for small and big dams but we are not getting the required land as the Forest Act is creating some hindrance. So, the Government has to think very seriously about changing this Forest Act and we should try our level best to see as to how we can increase the supply or production of foodgrains and thereby control the prices. Instead of criticising each other, we have to think fundamentally to increase the production of foodgrains or necessary goods for the poor people. Only if we can increase the the supply of these commodities, we can give them at a proper rate. But we have to think on those lines very seriously.

I have suggested to bring more and more land under irrigation. I have given a proposal to the Chief of my district to find out the land which is not used for cultivation. And I do remember a scientist from Israel saying that there is no land which cannot be cultivated. The Government should take action seriously to bring out the data of land available but not cultivated and take measures to see that such land can be used for cultivation. We have to practically see that more and more land will be made available for cultivation and we have to try our level best to increase our production. It is because our supply is less and demand is more now that the prices are going up.

SHRI VIJAY GOEL (Sadar-Delhi) : In between supply and demand, there is hoarding.

SHRI PRAKASH VISHWANATH PARANJPE : I am coming to that point. There are other points like black marketeers and traders. In this regard, Government must be strict with the traders irrespective of the community to which they belong. If anybody is playing any mischief, strict action should be taken. He may be having the material with him but puts a board outside that the material is not available; kerosene is not available, wheat and rice are not available. And the Government says that they are giving the material to the State Government. As our learned, Shrimati Sushmaji said, local people blame the people whom they have voted.

They say that it is your duty to see that the State Government gets enough material from the Central Government. And we are trying our level best to pursue the matter with the Central Government. But if the bureaucrats are not helping the Central Government or the Ministry is not having a proper control on the bureaucrats, the common man is ultimately the sufferer. So, there is no point in discussing at length and criticising others. We have to find out ourselves that our machinery is going wrong somewhere in increasing the supply. At the same time, somewhere we are going wrong in distributing the material which is available with us.

I hope that the concerned authorities, the hon. people, the experienced people from this august House, irrespective of party politics, will sit together and find out a solution. The first thing is to increase the supply of foodgrains, to control the distribution system and then to control the people who are playing mischief by making a very very firm Act to punish the hoarders of the foodgrains.

Last but not least, the other important point is that unless and until we control the population, there is no point in discussing about the rising prices.

DR. LAXMI NARAYAN PANDEY (Mandsaur) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the biggest problem, today in the country is that the common man should get food and livelihood. The prices of essential commodities are rising day by day and that is a cause of concern for all of us. I would not go into the details but would like to point out that there is economic crisis in the country today. The industrial sector is also facing crisis. There is all round depression. This is the result of the policies of Government. Though the Government may make tall claims that as a result of policy of liberalisation there has been improvement on the economic front and lot of changes have taken place but infact the results have been to the contrary and there is financial crisis in the country today. If the value of rupee is estimated at the 1960 as base year the value is just 6 paise. This is the result of economic liberalisation. Inflation is also increasing by leaps and bounds, though there has been some improvement. Rate of inflation has touched 10 points. This is directly affecting the common man as the prices of essential and consumer commodities is rising fast.

Sir, an hon. member just now mentioned how the prices of wheat, atta, pulses and other foodgrains are rising. I fully agree with him that it is a cause of grave concern. The hon. Minister had assumed while presenting the budget that every effort will be made to check the prices. The hon. Minister had also admitted that the balance of payment position was not good and something would be done in this direction. There has been a continuous rise in price of petroleum. We can keep a check on it by keeping a check over our consumption. He had also said that efforts will be made

to bring about economic reforms. But very little has been done in this direction and therefore more attention needs to be paid in this regard.

Sir, in brief, I would say that the price of wheat has shot up from Rs. 430 to Rs. 900-1000 per quintal. Wheat flour which was selling at Rs. 435-500 per 90 Kgs. is now selling at Rs. 1100-1200. Parmal variety of rice has shot-up to Rs. 1600 from Rs. 600-700 per quintal. The price of Gram flour has risen from Rs. 450 per 70 kgs. to around Rs. 1500-1600. The hon. Minister may not admit this rise in prices as he has said that there was sufficient stocks of wheat and other commodities, but the fact is that the situation is not at all satisfactory. This situation has been created due to the mismanagement of the public distribution system.

One of the hon. Members had said that due to the defects in the P.D.S., situation has deteriorated to such an extent that case of looting of shops have been reported from some places. I would like to cite the example of Madhya Pradesh. Some consumers went to the fair price shop to purchase wheat in Sagar district. They were told that stock of about 200 quintals of wheat was available in the shop. But no wheat was found at the shop. The people were lathi charged there; the police fired nine rounds on the crowd which resulted in injuries to many people. Police firing led to stampede and the crowd indulged in looting. It is reported that it caused a loss of Rs. 25.30 lakh. I would like to tell the hon. Minister that this was the result of the defective distribution policy. Madhya Pradesh is being ruled by the Congress which is supporting your Government at the Centre. They are showing bullets on the people and the hon. Minister claims that the distribution policy is all right. Nine rounds were fired there. Fortunately, nobody was killed in the firing, but some people are on the death bed. Their condition may deteriorate further tomorrow. The conditions there are really bad. Chhatisgarh has been hit by drought and about 1,000 villages have been affected. No arrangement has been made there to distribute foodgrains. The Central Government is keeping silent. The reports say that starvation deaths have taken place there. Despite that, the Government claims that the situation is good. It is for the hon. Minister to see as to what is the situation there.

Reports about Delhi have also poured in during the last few days. I do not want to repeat them. The situation here is not good either. The Government claims that it distributed so many quintals of wheat and rice during the last some months. But due to the defective distribution system, foodgrains did not reach there in time. The Government says that there is no cause for concern. However, the reports suggest that we may have to go in for wheat imports in the near future. Not far back, we were in a position to export wheat, but now, we may have to import it. There was a time when in the wake of food crisis, late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the slogan of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan' and appealed

to the people to observe fast on Mondays which eased the foodgrains position in the country. The improvement in the situation came about due to the hard work of our farmers as agricultural production picked up and we were in a position to export foodgrains. But today the position has reversed for which our defective distribution policy is to be blamed. Our storage system is also defective as we have not been able to provide warehousing facility at some places. Reply to some of the questions during the last few days indicate that the foodgrains procured had to be kept in the open which resulted in rotting of foodgrains. Wheat and other foodgrains to the extent of thousand tonnes were rendered unfit for consumption. As long as the Government does not improve this system, the crisis will persist.

Now let us come to other items. The situation today is that the market is sluggish so far as marketing of other commodities is concerned. This economic crisis has been created due to the hike in petroleum products. It led to rise in fares and freights and this cycle resulted in overall recession. If we take a look at the Automobile industry, we shall find that the vehicle which was selling at 2-2.5 lakh is now being offered by the dealer at a discount of Rs. 10-15 thousand. Similarly, the markets of other products are also facing recession. The same is the situation in the banks. Our defective economic policies are to be blamed for this price rise and economic crisis. Growing influence of multinational companies is also responsible for it. They too are playing an important role in it. The way the multinational companies are laying a seize to capture the market, the people are gradually losing faith in the market. This has led to a crisis in the market. The rise in the prices of essential commodities, whether it is fare and freight or L.P.G. is adding to the miseries of the common man as well as the people belonging to the middle class. Prices of these commodities need to be contained swiftly. The Government has failed on this score.

My friend from the Congress Party, Shri Bhuria was saying that the position during their rule was good but it has worsened now. I told him that their party was supporting those who are responsible for this all.

Due to the continuous rise in prices of essential commodities, especially foodgrains, it has become difficult for the common man to make both ends meet, but it is regrettable that the Government is not paying any attention to it. The Government is entangled in political complexities, it has no concern for rising prices. The prices of wheat and wheat flour are continuously rising, but the F.C.I. is not bothered. FCI godowns are full of wheat, but due to red tapism and connivance of the officials with profitters, the stocks are not reaching the market. FCI wheat was sold in the black market a few days back. This led to hoarding by the traders resulting in an economic crisis in the market. It did have its impact on the share market and bullion market. Today, we need to bring about improvement into our fast

deteriorating economic condition. However exaggerated our claims about our economic policy being very liberal may be, the results of these economic policies are showing their face. (Interruptions)

I was saying that no attempt was made to contain the rising prices. The economic policy of the Government is to be blamed for it. It needs to be reviewed and improved upon. If that is done, it will certainly arrest the impact of the rising prices or otherwise this continuous price rise will make living very difficult for the common man. The Government claims to be the champion of the poor and middle class people and hence it should take measures to remove the crisis from the market. The investors are losing confidence in the market and they are not coming forward to invest in the market. A couple of days back, the Prime Minister himself said that they were not getting the foreign capital as per their expectations. As against our hopes of 100 percent foreign investment, not even 25 percent foreign capital has come. This clearly shows that there is some defect in the policy of the Government and it has committed mistake somewhere along the line. Unless the Government improve the market position, it can win the confidence of neither the domestic nor the foreign investors. Policy changes are must to overcome this situation.

Having said this, I would reiterate that the Government should consider it seriously. Financial sector should be set right after removing its defects. The government should associate other parties and review its policies, otherwise the crisis will further deepen. Right now, the news about firing has come only from one place. If this situation continues, similar news may start pouring in from other places accompanied by the reports of starvation deaths. It is for us not to allow room for such reports to pour in, as it will be in our own interest. Let us make the country

self-sufficient. We should see to it that we sustain our self-reliance in the fields in which we are already self-reliant. We should meet this situation with our own resources. With these words, I conclude.

[English]

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA (Puri) : Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me an opportunity to represent my Party's view on what is clearly a distressing scenario facing us in the country today. A lot of voices have been heard today, from various sections of the House, which have grudgingly admitted that over the past five years, between 1991-96 May, when the Congress Party was in power at the Centre there was a sense of general well being in this country.

There may have been criticisms of personalities on various counts; there may have been a few so-called scams which have not yet been proved in courts of law. There have been several allegations flying back and forth, and they always do in a democracy. That is the whole idea of a democracy; that is the whole idea of a free press; and that is the whole idea of being able to allege, either directly or obliquely, misdemeanour against political opponents without having to risk jail. And despite all this, Mr. Chairman, there have been grudging voices from all sections of this House which is by and large acknowledged that there was a sense of general well-being in this country amongst the people.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mishraji, you can continue tomorrow. Now the House is stands adjourned to meet again at 11 A.M. on December 12, 1996.

18.00 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, December 12, 1996/Agrahayana 21, 1918 (Saka).*