

[Shri F. H. Mohsin]

17.45 hrs.

Chlorination plant chlorine gas was let off making the approach to the Plant difficult. Valves of the mains taking raw water into Chandrawal and also those on the distribution mains were closed. When information was received regarding stoppage of the water, the engineers reached the spot along with an adequate number of police force. With the help of the loyal workers the first pump of the raw water intake was started at about 3.30 P.M. The supply of water in Delhi had earlier been declared as essential service by the Delhi Administration on the 3rd November, 1973. The police arrested 62 persons. By about 9.00 P.M. all the pumps in the intake plant were restarted and by midnight filtration started in one of the two plants at Wazirabad and Chandrawal. The various damages which were caused to the Plant were set right. The help of the army was also sought and a batch of 30 army-men also reached the Water Works. By about 2.00 A.M. on 23rd November all the filtration plants started working to full capacity. At about 8.00 A.M. the conditions at Wazirabad and Chandrawal and at the various reservoirs had been brought to normal. With the partial restoration of water supply it was possible to give some water to certain parts of the city in the morning between 7.00 to 9.00 A.M. But since most of the reservoirs had gone dry yesterday and because many of the mains also remained obstructed, quite a large area of the city did not get water. By now the water supply position in the city has come to normal though there may not be adequate supply in the distant areas, because of inadequate pressure. During the course of the night it is expected to restore normal water supply in all parts of Delhi. Union leaders have informed that the strike has been called off. I regret that so much needless inconvenience has been caused to the citizens of Delhi.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

PROCUREMENT AND DISTRIBUTION
PRICE OF FOODGRAINS

MR. CHAIRMAN: We now take up the half-hour discussion by Mr. Guha.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contai): Sir, yesterday in reply to the discussion on the no-confidence motion, our Prime Minister in a Spartan way admitted that the Government does not hesitate to admit its mistakes. I hope that the Government considers it a mistake that they did not increase the price of bread earlier! After the discussion on the no-confidence motion yesterday, today we find that the price of bread in Delhi has been raised! This may appear as a small incident. But it is not so. The wheat and rice quota are being cut almost everywhere. Whenever the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray, flies to Delhi and back—he does it almost twice a week if not thrice—he only brings back very good news to the people of West Bengal that either the wheat ration or rice ration is being cut!

It is admitted in the country today that since independence there had been no serious crisis like the food crisis as we are facing today. The Government is giving many pleas,—drought, floods etc. No doubt drought and floods have affected the food production last year. But if the Government had managed it properly and with the firm conviction of the ideology of socialism they are advocating, when they have accepted the basic principle of socialism or socialising the food trade and its distribution, perhaps even with the marginal shortage as the Government used to say, the food problem would not have been so acute. In the last 12 months, according to Government's admission, prices of food and other consumer goods jumped up by 22 per cent. The

retail prices in the open market have gone up by 40 to 50 per cent. There is another market which is running with impunity, the black market. It is no longer black; it has already become white market. There God alone knows by how much the prices have jumped up. There was a box news that in Calcutta, the price of a kilo of rice is more than that of a kilo of apple! The Government are saying that they are proud that they have undertaken the responsibility of feeding a large number of vulnerable sections of the people, particularly in the drought-affected areas of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The vulnerable section of the people are not only the drought-affected people. The vulnerable section of the people are those who cannot produce rice, the people in the urban areas, the landless people in the rural areas, the agricultural workers and those people who are below the poverty line, who constitute about 47 per cent according to your own figures.

There is a tall talk about distribution of foodgrains through ration shops and fair price shops which in some areas are called modified fair price shops. What is the position in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, especially in the rural areas? Is there really any distribution or supply? I say it from my own experience, in my constituency of Contai, which suffered four floods in the last four years, where according to Government's own admission seven lakhs of people out of 12 lakhs of people have been seriously affected by the floods, you will be astonished to know that in this vulnerable area per head one may get 50 grams of wheat through ration shops or modified ration shops or fair price shops or perhaps one may not get even that. This is the case not only in my constituency but also perhaps all over the country in the rural areas. The modified ration shops or fair price shops

are neither fair nor modified. I call them unfair shops because they exist in name. But in reality do not exist in the rural areas.

If the Government want to be true to their commitment to the socialist principles, it is possible for them to supply food to the people at reasonable prices. Government could take a bold step to supply foodgrains and other essential commodities, including edible oils, through the ration shops both in the urban and rural areas. If only the Government had done that earlier, the national crisis which had been created in the country in the food front, would not have been there. Why have the Government failed in fulfilling the target of take-over of wholesale trade in wheat?

As you know, in this House the Government took a very bold decision to take-over the wholesale trade in wheat? What is the fate of it? On the 18th April I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister saying that we are wholly for it, the opposition will extend all support to this measure, but if this policy of wheat takeover fails "there will be catastrophic consequences in the country".

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Begusarai): You did not get any reply to it?

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I got a reply that it has been forwarded to the Minister of Agriculture.

The Food Corporation employees made certain concrete suggestions as to how the procurement policy could be very successful. What was the answer? Many of them were arrested under the DIR and MISA. Now, according to reports, about 12,000 of them are going to be sacked very soon. I do not know what will be their fate.

Why have the Government of India failed in feeding the people? The main reason is their faltering and

[Shri Samar Guha]

halting attitude. Why has the take-over of the wholesale trade in wheat failed? Firstly, because of the bungling of the FCI; secondly, because of the working of the vested interests in the State Government; thirdly, because of the working of the vested interests in the ruling party; fourthly, because of the influence of the big farmers, who are the main prop and support of the ruling party. It is this quadrangular clique or intrigue that has ensured that the policy of take-over of wholesale trade in wheat is not successful. The Government is terribly afraid of annoying these people. There was a lot of discussion between the opposition and the Government. What is the result?

A mountain produces a mouse! Yes, they talk of rice take-over: but in reality no rice take-over. Some States have been allowed to take-over wholesale trade of rice; some States have been allowed to go as they like. This is the policy of the Government. What does it show? It shows an attitude of uncertainty, an attitude of indecision and it shows that they have failed in their own commitment to socialist principles.

The Government has to take bold steps to take-over marketable surplus of foodgrains and to have the monopoly procurement in that. They should have a machinery of distribution through statutory rationing in urban areas and for vulnerable sections in the rural areas. By "vulnerable sections", I mean those who do not produce but purchase from the market. This system is bound to fail unless there is an overall measure of monopoly procurement of marketable surplus of foodgrains and the statutory distribution in the urban areas of foodgrains along with other essential commodities through ration shops is inescapable.

Even now it is possible if the Government takes bold steps and 500 grammes of foodgrains per head per day even at a price of Re. 1 per kg. can be given. But, as I said, it is not possible because the Government is faltering and the F.C.I. is bungling. The different State Governments are being controlled by vested interests and in the ruling party, both inside and outside, there is a big resistance from big farmers and rich farmers. The result is that there is bungling.

Now, the Government is saying—the Prime Minister has said it; the Minister has said it—that they are going to tide over the crisis. In Bengali, there is a proverb:

“जब कोई तुफान में धक्का मर जाता है तो फकीर का किरामती बढ़ती है।

The meaning is, now that it is known to everybody that, after this session, the new crop is coming, the rice is coming and, naturally, it will be in the hands of the peasants and, naturally, the price will fall and, naturally, for 2-3 months, the people will have some food, the Government is going to take the credit as if it is due to the bold steps, the socialist policy, adopted by the Government.

Now, I am coming to the main point. The answer is given about the relation between procurement price and issue price. They relate the procurement price to the issue price. What is the relation? According to all statistics and calculations, the difference between the procurement price and the issue price should not exceed 15 per cent. But it is now between 25 to 33.3 per cent. What is the reason? How do you make these calculations? What is the basis of these calculations? By this, you have deprived not only the peasants but you could give more to the peasants. If you had taken bold steps, then perhaps, you could give food to the people at a cheaper rate also.

I want to ask these questions: the reasons for not introducing the policy of monopoly procurement of marketable surplus of foodgrains and distribution through statutory rationing in the urban as also for the vulnerable sections in the rural areas; the reasons for the failure of the take-over of the wholesale trade in wheat; the reasons for permitting different States to take-over wholesale trade in rice and giving freedom to others; the rationale behind fixing the procurement price of wheat and rice and the issue price of wheat and rice and the reason for the gap of 25 to 33 per cent between the two costs.

18.00 hrs.

It is known to everybody that there is wastage of food to the extent of 25 per cent in handling by the FCI. FCI has become an institution known for handling inefficiency and corruption. It is uncommitted to the principles of social change. I want to know from the Government what steps they have taken and are proposing to take in respect of the 25 per cent wastage of food in handling by the FCI, loss in storage, loss during transit by railways and truck, demurrage, pilferage during storage and free gift of the gunny bags, to the millers, each gunny bag of which costs Rs. 3.50.

I want to know what steps Government propose to take about bank interest that the Government can increase in food trade. At the district level the cash is received and distributed by the FCI employees, but the cash is controlled by the Centre. As a result, the bank interest is lost and some extra payment has to be made during the procurement and distribution of food. I want to know whether they are going to rationalise that system.

I also want to know whether you are going to reorganize this rotten, worn-out, ineffective and corrupt FCI, whether you will re-structure it

like LIC. You may divide into different zones and have Managing Directors in four zones with headquarters one in Bombay, one in Delhi, one in Madras and one in Calcutta.

Lastly, we are getting two million tonnes of rice on 7-year loan basis from Russia. Naturally we will not have to bear that cost immediately. I want to know whether the effect of benefit of this loan will be taken into account while making the calculations, while deciding on the rationale behind fixing procurement price and issue price. I want the Government to take note of this factor also.

In Anand Patrika and other papers of West Bengal, reports have appeared that thousands of maunds of wheat and rice are rotting in Cooch Behar, Calcutta, Cossipore and in my constituency. Thousands of maunds of rice, wheat and sugar are rotting and Government has not taken care of them. I want to know whether they are going to take stern measures against those officers who allowed these things to rot in the godowns.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE SHARMA (Dausa): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I welcome the rise in the procurement price of foodgrains, particularly of wheat and rice. I have been of the opinion from the beginning that the agriculturist should be paid a remunerative price, and I do not know why the Government did not take early action in this regard. Whatever may be the facts of the case, the President of the All India Federation of agriculturists has come out with a statement that in view of the fact that the procurement price is not related to the prices of the inputs, therefore, the Government should increase the procurement price of wheat or that the result would be that the area under wheat cultivation is likely to diminish. I would like to know from the Minister whether this statement of the President is true, and if so, what steps he proposes to take to see that the cultivable area of wheat and other foodgrains does not go down.

[Shri Nawal Kishore Sharma]

My second question is: is it not a fact that the prices of foodgrains which have a tendency to fall just at the time of their arrival in the market have now begun to rise? If so, what steps are being proposed to see that the prices do not rise?

Thirdly, is it not a fact that the number of fair-price shops in the country has not increased at all? It is what it was two months ago and if that is true, then how does the Government propose to meet the demand of the agriculturists areas, particularly, the country-side?

Fourthly, I would like to ask the Minister whether it is not a fact that allegations have been made that the overhead charges of the Food Corporation require a close scrutiny because they are too high or too much. If that is true, what steps has he taken to see that the overhead charges of the Food Corporation decrease so that the gap between the procurement price and the issue price is reduced?

Fifthly, I would like to know from him whether it is not a fact that a large number of complaints are coming that the foodgrains supplied by the Food Corporation of India—Mr. Samar Guha mentioned that, he was talking that in West Bengal rotten foodgrains are being supplied—are rotten and whether not only from West Bengal but from other parts of the country also, complaints have come that the foodgrains supplied by the Food Corporation are rotten and if they are rotten, may I know whether he is prepared to institute an inquiry or to find out why these grains which are issued to the consumers are rotten, whether it is because of the fact that the foodgrains were allowed to rot or it is because that the grains which were stored have been changed and in their place rotten grains were supplied.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Tellicherry): In the original answer given by the Minister, there are two reasons pointed out for increasing the issue price. One is to make the procurement successful and the second is to give adequate incentives to the farmers. There is a contradiction in it. While answering a question put by my friend, Shri Mavalankar, last week, Mr. Chavan, our hon. Finance Minister, said that this is one of the measures like the increase in the price of petrol—he narrated several measures—to overcome the difficulties that we are facing due to deficit financing. If Mr. Chavan is correct, which I think in this case is so, because I have no time to make a speech, I would like to just point out this much that this is nothing but an indirect taxation on large number of people, poor people, vulnerable sections who are dependent upon the distribution system for getting rice and wheat. I would like the hon. Minister to make it clear whether it was really an indirect tax or whether it was what was told in this answer, which I don't believe, because there are many reasons one can argue.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री (पटना) :

खाद्यान्नों की कीमतें बाढ़ने की आप बात करते हैं। क्या आप ऐसा स्वयं मूल्यों में वृद्धि करके करना चाहते हैं? यदि हां तो इसका क्या औचित्य है?

क्या यह सच है कि किसानों को उचित मूल्य पर बीज, खाद तथा खेती काम द्वारा सामान नहीं मिलने तथा पानी के अभाव के कारण खेती की पंशवार कम होनी है तथा उसका उत्पादन खर्च बढ़ जाता है? यदि हां, तो सरकार किसानों को इन दिक्कों को दूर करने के क्या उपाय कर रही है?

देश में राशन की दुकानों की कुल संख्या कितनी है? क्या यह सच है कि राशन की

दुकानों में नियमित रूप से राशन की सप्लाई नहीं होने के कारण लोगों में भारी असन्तोष है ? सरकार इसे किस प्रकार दूर करना चाहती है ?

क्या यह सच है कि सरकारी गोदामों में जिन का संवाहन एक० सी० प्राई० करती है भीषण भ्रष्टाचार के कारण राशन के दुकानदारों को समय पर गन्ना नहीं दिया जाता तथा प्रत्येक दुकानदार में गन्ने की कीमत से अधिक राशि वसूल की जाती है जैसा कि पटना तथा बिहार के अन्य गोदामों में हो रहा है ? यदि हाँ, तो सरकार इन भ्रष्टाचार को रोकने के लिए कौन सी कार्रवाई कर रही है ?

SHRI D. K. PANDA (Bhanjanagar): In view of the distress sale which has happened in wheat and sugar, I want to know whether the Government is prepared to increase the remunerative price of sugar in the greater interest of the farmer. I want to know also whether compulsory levy, as a principle, has been admitted, and if it is so, I want to know whether necessary instructions have been issued to the State Governments to follow this very same principle. As for example, so far as Orissa is concerned, they have not at all been following this compulsory levy. As a result of this what has happened is this. It is only the big landowners who constitute only 0.02 per cent of the total land owning section and who own 67 per cent of the total land are actually benefited and this sort of distress sale is continuing unabated. So, is it made compulsory on the part of the State Government to follow this policy?

Secondly as far as procurement price is concerned, till today statutory minimum price of sugar is maintained at Rs. 80 per tonne. Several times it has been brought to the attention of the Government and in

this very House, that the cane-growers must get remunerative price for cane. As far as distribution of sugar is concerned....

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is outside the purview.

SHRI D. K. PANDA: Rice is not available to poor consumers at a reasonable price. All our effort should be to see that people get adequate supplies of foodgrains at fair prices. I lay emphasis on the words 'fair prices'. But this has not been done.

Therefore, I would like to know whether to make these available at a fair price to the consumers—in most of the States, for example, it has been demanded that rice should be sold at Re. 1 per kilogramme—whether the Government is going to fix up the price? In Assam, they have done that and they are proceeding with this matter.

Finally, I have a word about the procurement system. F.C.I. is one agency for the purpose and co-operatives are the other agency. The FCI sells through the small mill owners. It is the mill owners who are cheating the Government. When the District Collector comes to check-up the stocks, they say that this is the F.C.I.'s stock but when the FCI people come to them, they say that this stock is from the other source. These two agencies are allowed by the FCI for the procurement of foodgrains. They are also given advances. I want to know whether the Government is going to ensure that only one agency, namely, the mill-owners are allowed by the FCI and not the others to procure foodgrains. There should be a proper checking.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE): Sir, at the outset, I am thankful to honourable Member, Shri Guha and other hon. Members who have put a very large number of questions to

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me. In the shortest possible time available to me I do not think that I shall be able to answer all the points.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please be brief.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: I shall endeavour to cover as many queries as possible. The hon. Members will also excuse me if some queries have not been replied to. In fact some of the points have been replied to on the floor of the House in some form or the other. If those points are left out by me, I shall try to concentrate only on the important ones.

One hon. Member, particularly, Shri Guha, as is usual with him, was very critical in his remarks when he said that everything that the Government did was wrong. Of course, he is very emotional also. I would, therefore, appeal to his good sense—he is a good colleague of ours—to appreciate the Government's point of view. Last year he made a statement in the House that the food crisis was the worst in the post-war period. I would submit for the kind consideration of the House that it is true that the drought was really unprecedented in the recent past and there was a severe set-back in production as a result of that. I am not going into the specific aspects of the problems. I would make a very humble plea with them that with the cooperation of the State Governments and perhaps with the cooperation of all of you also, this country which faced a very difficult food situation tackled it successfully. Now the worst crisis is over. Shri Guha himself has admitted that after two months the Government would claim that prices have gone down.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: That may be temporary. Because new crops may start coming up then.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: Good crops will come up. He himself concedes that this year the crop

prospects are going to be good and the prices are likely to come down. I do not know what is likely to happen. Fortunately we have got good crop prospects. There are many factors in the economy which are operating. I am not an astrologer to say what is the prospect in the years to come. But, I can make a humble claim that the worst and most difficult period as far as management of food economy of this country is concerned, is over. I would not like to claim that there would not be any difficulty. I am not saying that. I only say that it would be much better to manage our food economy now as compared to the last eight or nine months.

There was one doubt in the minds of the hon. Members as to why Government had raised the issue prices. I think Shri Nawal Kishore Sharma had referred to this point, and he had appreciated Government's decision. The Government of India took a very important decision...

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: He appreciated the rise in procurement price but not in the issue price.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: I am referring only to the procurement price at the moment. From all sides of the House, irrespective of party affiliations, there was a demand on the floor of the House that the procurement price should be raised and that every effort should be made to encourage production in our country. Therefore, the Government of India took the very important decision of raising the procurement price of foodgrains. For instance, the procurement price of paddy was increased from Rs. 56 to 70, that of coarse grains has also been raised, and in the case of bajra, it has been raised to Rs. 72, and in the case of other foodgrains it has been raised to Rs. 70, and even in the case

of millets, it has been raised from Rs. 50 to Rs. 60. Though the present phase of the food situation still continues to be difficult, the trends of procurement indicate that the farmers are responding to this new price decision of the Government of India. Therefore, I would appeal to the hon. Members to realise that this decision was taken as a result of the desire of hon. Members to give a remunerative and good price to the farmers, and as a result of it, the procurement has started picking up. Of course, it is too early to estimate the achievement, because procurement in many States picks up after 15th December, but in certain parts of the country, the crops come a little earlier. Today, we have crossed about 8 lakh tonnes of procurement, of which 7 lakh tonnes is by and large of rice and one lakh tonnes is that of coarse grains. Every day we get about 30,000 to 35,000 tonnes of foodgrains as a result of procurement. This indicates a very healthy sign for our economy. When the prices are high and the food situation continues to be beset with difficulties, this is really a very healthy trend for our economy.

What would have happened had we not increased the issue price? We would have been required to incur or give a very heavy subsidy, and heavy subsidy means deficit financing, because resources are just not available....

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: The increase in procurement price is not to the extent of even 10 per cent and yet the issue price has been increased by 25 to 31 per cent.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: I am coming to that.

Shri C. K. Chandrappan had said that there seemed to be some contradiction between what the Finance Minister Shri Chavan had said and what had been stated in the reply to the

question on the basis of which this discussion has been raised on the floor of the House. I do not think that there is any contradiction at all. If the issue price had not been raised, the subsidy would have gone up or else there would have been no other way of meeting it. Even then, I would like to explain to hon. Members that during this year itself, though the original budget provided for Rs. 130 crores for subsidy on foodgrains, that is not going to be adequate, despite the increase in the issue prices, and, therefore, I have approached or my Ministry has approached the Finance Ministry to make an additional provision of Rs. 120 crores which means that the total subsidy is likely to go up to Rs. 250 crores. This is because of two reasons. First of all, in the case of the foodgrains that we have to purchase in the international market, the price will have to be subsidised, whether it be that of milo or of wheat, to the extent of Rs. 30 to 40 per quintal or Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 per tonne, which means a heavy amount of subsidy. Shri Samar Guha has raised the point whether the increase in issue price is in proportion to the increase in procurement price. I would submit that even now, in the case of rice, an element of Rs. 4 per quintal would be the subsidy element involved; in addition to that, perhaps, we may have to give certain bonus to the State Government if they procure over and above certain targeted figures. So, even as a result of this increase in issue prices, Government have not covered entirely the economic cost or the procurement cost or the cost of storage or the cost of transport etc. Therefore, to make a charge that Government are trying to trade and get some profit is not correct. That would be a very wrong conclusion. In fact, I have personally been of the view that if the economy of this country has to be in a healthy state, deficit financing has to be avoided, and as far as the food-grain economy is concerned, we should avoid heavy subsidies because otherwise our economy would get into difficulties.

[Shri Annasaheb P. Shinde]

What has happened in the countries round about us? Have a look at Ceylon and Burma. I think it is a very dangerous thing if heavy doses of subsidies are introduced into the food economy. Our economy would then be in distress. Sometime back when I made a statement, I was criticised by one hon. member. But I think in the national interest it has been done. I continue to hold that view. I am not saying that as a result of that there has not been hardship to the people. But I think, ultimately, in the long run, the health of our economy will improve and it will be in the interest of large sections of our population including the poorest and vulnerable sections of society if we follow this policy.

Shri Samar Guha has suggested a very easy solution. Other members also indirectly referred to it, referring to monopoly procurement, levy and all that. We have no inhibition about any system. In fact, we have given freedom to State Governments. If they want to take over, we have no objection. Shri Guha suggests that the total marketable surplus should have been procured and the monopoly procurement system should have been introduced.

Personally, I am of the view that in this country, we will have to resort to compulsory levy, we will have to mop up the maximum marketable surplus and see that the requirements of the vulnerable sections are met. But while accepting this objective as a long term policy, when we think of implementing and administering the food economy, naturally as a responsible government, as a responsible party, as a Ministry which has to administer day to day matters and deal with day to day problems, we have to be practical. Suppose all market outlets are stopped. When you do not have adequate stocks, what would happen if any dislocation takes place? When there are no adequate

stocks to embark upon a plan of this kind would, I think, be a dangerous thing.

Therefore, the Government of India took a very right and wise decision in this regard. Food economy is a very delicate subject. Here sentiments and emotions are of no use. Because this has to do with the lives of millions of people, we have to be very careful in coming to any such decision. Therefore, though we have taken the position that progressively we propose to do it, we must proceed carefully. As far as the public sector is concerned, whatever may be the shortcomings ultimately we want that the public sector must play a very important role in procurement and distribution, through the cooperatives, State agencies and through the Food Corporation of India. In the matter of public distribution, we have also to lay continuous emphasis on proper distribution. Without that, there is no solution to the problem which we are facing in the country.

Some hon. members have drawn my attention to the deficiencies of the Food Corporation. I am not making the claim that everything is all right with the Corporation. In fact, I am so much worried, my Ministry is so much worried, about it.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Cut down wastage.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: Whether it is quality control, whether it is wastage, whether it is sometimes misappropriation, we are confronted with a number of problems. Our continuous effort would be to improve the state of affairs. The Government of India have taken the decision that there should be State Corporations and co-operatives also which should play an important part side by side. At the same time, consistent efforts would be made to improve the functioning of the Food Corporation. This is our approach.

As far as cost and other things are concerned, a Committee will go into these matters. Our endeavour is to see how the cost can be reduced and how economy can be effected. I will seek the co-operation of hon. members here. For instance, one of the cases which the hon. member, Shri Samar Guha, referred to concerns the Calcutta office employees of the FCI. Of course, he has a right to represent the matter. But when we went into the accounts, we found that on medical bills alone in one branch, the Port branch, the amount was Rs. 47 lakhs in one year, the next year it went up to Rs. 82 lakhs and in the third year it shot up to Rs. 92 lakhs. We are now inquiring into what had happened. A lot of funds have been really misappropriated and we are finding out what has happened.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Earlier the Employees' Union suggested some measures....

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: I am sorry the same Union gheraoed the Local Manager and issued illegal orders recruiting a very large number of people....

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It is absolutely wrong. I had a long talk, three or four discussions, with the hon. Minister, Shri Ahmed in the presence of the representatives there. Shri Ahmed said the matter is under inquiry. He himself said that it would

be inquired into. I would humbly request him not to refer to it in this manner.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kindly do not escalate the scope of the debate.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: He himself agreed that the matter will be inquired into.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: I would only say that these are some of the problems, including quality control. Unless an atmosphere is created in this country so that all these various organs of the Government and the public sector organisations also assume certain responsibilities, it becomes a very difficult thing.

I was seeking the co-operation of the hon. Member, that let us try to create that atmosphere, and I do not think he will have differences. On the fundamentals, I do not think he will have differences. It will be the endeavour of our Ministry to improve the functioning of the Food Corporation of India.

With these few words I am thankful to you for giving me the opportunity, and to the hon. Members also.

18.31 hrs.

(The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Monday, November 26, 1973/ Agrahayana 3, 1895 (Saka)