

PROF. VJAYKUMAR MALHOTRA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, will they demolish these 10,000 houses?.....(*Interruptions*) The matter should be reviewed and the directive should be withdrawn.....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: All right.

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

**Raids on Hoarders and Black
Marketeers**

+
*64 SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRI PARASRAM BHAR-
DWAJ:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether inspite of the fact that there is sufficient stock of essential commodities with the Government, not only the prices have shot up considerably but the stocks have also disappeared from the market;

(b) whether these essential commodities are being sold at exorbitant prices;

(c) if so, the corrective action taken in the matter;

(d) whether the Government's enforcement agencies have carried out raids recently against hoarders and blackmarketers to unearth the essential commodities;

(e) if so, the details of raids conducted in different States and in Delhi;

(f) the action taken against those found guilty; and

(g) the success achieved in bringing down the prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (RAO BIRENDER SINGH): (a)

to (g). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

There was some increase in prices of essential commodities after the outbreak of Gulf War. To a large extent panic buying by consumers contributed to the price rise and there arose a certain degree of artificial scarcity of essential commodities in the market. The Central Government as well as the State Governments swung into action to reassure the people that there were adequate stocks of all essential commodities available and, therefore, there should be no apprehension of their non-availability in future and that panic buying in excess of the normal requirements should not be resorted to. This had a salutary effect and after a while, general consuming people stopped purchases in excess of their normal requirements. Further State administrations were requested to launch intensive campaign for dehoarding operations and enforcement of stock control orders. These steps resulted in the prices of essential commodities stabilising at slightly lower levels in spite of the War continuing and the stocks appearing in the market.

2. In addition to allocation of normal quantities of rationed items in the Public Distribution System, FCI was permitted to release 1.5 million tonnes of wheat at lower than the market prices into the open market.

3. In respect of edible oils, Government continued to import the same and make the stocks available to PDS, besides NDDDB and HVOC launched their consumer packs in edible oil and vanaspati in convenient consumer packs under brand names "Dhara", "Shankh" and "Champion", which resulted in prices of private brands also softening.

4. A statement about the number of raids conducted during the period 1.1.1991 to 22.2.1991 as reported by the State Governments/UTs is given in the attached Annexure.

5. 738 persons were arrested. 775 1136.63 lakhs seized during the course of prosecutions launched and goods worth raids conducted in this period.

ANNEXURE

Number of raids carried out by States/UTs during the period 1.1.1991 to 22.2.1991 (as reported upto 25.2.91)

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>State/UT</i>	<i>No. of raids</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
1.	Andhra Pradesh	290
2.	Assam	30
3.	Bihar	3
4.	Goa	3
5.	Gujarat	1302
6.	Himachal Pradesh	2807
7.	Kerala	737
8.	Madhya Pradesh	441
9.	Maharashtra	1599
10.	Meghalaya	33
11.	Mizoram	35
12.	Orissa	79
13.	Punjab	1431
14.	Rajasthan	293
15.	Tamil Nadu	407
16.	Uttar Pradesh	6778
17.	West Bengal	116
18.	A & N Islands	141

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>State/UT</i>	<i>No. of raids</i>
1	2	3
19.	Daman and Diu .	7
20.	Delhi	471
21.	Pondicherry	136
Total		17139

[*Translation*]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Sir, I am on 'Anshan' and I am raising this question on behalf of those millions of people who are being forced to resort to 'Anshan' because of rise in prices. The hon. Minister has stated that after the outbreak of Gulf War, panic buying by consumers contributed to the price rise to a large extent. It may be true. But the Government should have thought over it because the conditions leading to the Gulf War did not crop up suddenly. Knowing that this situation could lead to hoarding and the traders could take undue advantage of the situation the Government should have swung into action. I have asked about the details of raids conducted in different states so that the person found guilty could be brought to book. Only three raids have been conducted in Bihar and three persons have been arrested for indulging in hoarding. The position in UP is far better than West Bengal. 115 raids have been conducted in West Bengal whereas in UP.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put the question.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: In UP, 6778 raids have been conducted. I would like to know when the Government had an apprehension that hoarding might increase during this period why necessary steps were not taken to contain hoarding. The steps Government propose to take to reduce the prices of petty consumer items which have shot up.

The reply given by the hon. Minister does not clarify these points.

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Drive against hoarding is launched only when the hoarding activities start and the Government feels that if strict action is not taken the situation will go out of control. We were aware that war was imminent but we did not feel the necessity of enacting any new law because the laws have already been enacted by the Parliament in this regard. In order to contain hoarding and blackmarketing and to ensure the smooth supply of essential commodities, special provisions have been made in the Essential Commodities Act. But these provisions can be applied only in a particular situation. After the outbreak of Gulf War the people become panicky, they started hoarding and started buying things more than their usual requirements and traders also resorted to price rise. When there is scarcity in the market the traders resort to hoarding. For this, the first measure we have taken is that we have instructed the State Governments to take the strictest possible action for de-hoarding. We have asked them to submit a monthly report giving details about the raids conducted number of people arrested, goods recovered as well as seized, number of person convicted and detained. For this purpose, we have used the laws already enacted to curb the illegal trade practices. Another thing that is required to arrest the prices is, to augment the supplies. The shortage of commodities is created and you have also mentioned about it. We have large

stocks of essential commodities like foodgrains, rice, sugar and edible oil. There is no shortage of foodgrains in our stocks. We have rather more stocks of rice and wheat than what we require and there will not be any shortage of these items in the markets. In the month of February, we have increased the quota of wheat for public distribution by more than one lakh tonnes... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: The Honble Minister has just now enumerated the steps taken by him for augmenting the supplies of certain edible commodities. What has been the effect of these steps, is known to all. The Honble Minister is aware that the prices have not come down. Pulses are essential commodities. The Government has put the pulses under the OGL and these can be imported freely. Duty on them has also be reduced by 10 percent. I want to know as to how much quantity of the pulses has been imported. Whether, in spite of this, there has been any reduction in their prices and if not, what are the reasons therefor?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question of pulses is different one but if you allow me, I can reply to his query.

MR. SPEAKER: Alright. You may reply to his question.

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reason for shortage of pulses in the country is because of the gap in production and demand. It has been estimated that we require between 16 to 18 million tonnes whereas during the last few years the production of pulses has not increased much; it has increased to 11 million tonnes to 13 million tonnes. During the last few years country has been importing pulses to the tune of 4 to 5 million tonnes. This has not bridged the gap fully. We need to increase the production in our country and the Agriculture Ministry has been trying to do the needful for quite a long time.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to know from the Honble Minister

whether the imports have helped in bringing the prices down or not?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Imports have been reduced but there is no doubt that the prices have not come down. Duty has also been slashed down from 35 percent to 10 percent. This has been done on the recommendation of the Food Ministry so that the consumers may get the pulses on lower rates..... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI CHHAVIRAM ARGAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, wheat, sugar, edible oils, kerosine oil, diesel etc. are distributed by the Centre but as the distribution is not done properly, the prices are increasing. Somewhere the quota is fixed more and somewhere it is less. Madhya Pradesh has been given very less quantity. Will the Government take some steps to end this kind of political dishonesty?

MR. SPEAKER: Are you talking of diesel?

SHRI CHHAVIRAM ARGAL: I am asking about the foodgrains and edible oils. Why Madhya Pradesh has been allotted such a low quota.

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have increased the wheat quota of Madhya Pradesh according to their demand for public distribution and as per the system, the Government of India fixes a definite quota for the States and they in turn distribute the essential commodities. This is a State subject (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI AJIT PANJA: It seems that for any ills in the country we are trying to blame the Gulf war. The Minister started by saying that because of the outbreak of the Gulf war there was increase of prices of essential commodities. Even before the Gulf War the prices from salt to cement, for everything, increased as on record from 5 per cent to 35 per cent as compared to the prices of November, 1988. The Minister also stated that there is enough

supply of essential commodities and there is no dearth of essential commodities. In Bengal Long queues are seen in the streets of Calcutta in front of every ration shop. The State Government is saying that the Central Government is not supplying as demanded by them and that is why, there is scarcity. You will be surprised if you see the chart of raids conducted in various States particularly West Bengal. The intensive raids conducted in different States for de-hoarding essential commodities during the period mentioned in the statement i.e. from 1st January to 22nd February are West Bengal-116, Pondicherry-a small Union territory-136, Delhi 471, Bihar only 3 and Orissa 79. Would the hon. Minister look into the fact as to why there are only 116 raids in Bengal and whether the State has taken effective steps in the drive for de-hoarding essential commodities? is it a fact that because the Central Government failed to supply essential commodities to the State of West Bengal as required by them there is a scarcity there?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: West Bengal Government has carried out a large number of raids and also arrested a very large number of persons. Out of 116 raids that were conducted 100 arrests were also made. That shows that there was hoarding in the State. When hoarding takes place, it can be presumed that there is enough of stock in the State for traders to keep in excess of the stock required. West Bengal Government is quite satisfied so far as I know, about the supply of essential commodities.

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH: Sir, we are hearing lot of comments about not many raids being carried out in Bihar, but what about Delhi? Why the prices have gone up in Delhi? The Prime Minister has been appealing to the traders and hoarders for the last two months not to increase the prices, but what has been the impact of those appeals? Or is there any collusion between the Government and the hoarders in the city of Delhi—the capital city? The Government is not able to control the prices. What is the matter? Are they not supplying commodities adequately or there is some other reason?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Sir, Delhi Administration is taking very effective measures for dehoarding. They have been conducting raids and arresting the people. It is wrong to say that there is any collusion between the Government and the traders indulging in unfair practices. Everything is being done to stop unfair practices and in Delhi, as in other large cities in the country, in spite of the war continuing, prices of some of the essential commodities have not only stabilised but they have also come down. As for instance, wheat had gone up to Rs. six hundred per quintal during a short period and now it is available at Rs. 350 per quintal. Wheat atta was selling at Rs. 5.50 per kg., now it is freely available at Rs. 4 or Rs. 4.20 per kg. in Delhi.

SHRI NANI BHATTACHARYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the Hon'ble Minister as to why inspite of the measures provided in the anti-hoarding and anti-profiteering laws, the prices of the commodities keep on increasing? Secondly, when the prices are increasing and we are unable to check them, why do not we adopt other measures? Rice, pulses, oils, Salt, match-box, kerosine oil, coarse cloth etc. are essential items. Why these are not sold through public distribution system to the common man?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the laws are framed to curb offences like theft etc. Theft has always been an offence and strict laws have been enacted to check it but till date, this offence continues to be committed. To the extent it is possible to check theft, the available laws are being used for the purpose but in certain circumstances, sometimes the incidence of these offences increase. When people find that a particular situation can be taken advantage of, they exploit it. They lift the foodgrains from the market and indulge in hoarding. The remedy for this is to take strict action. For this we have been repeatedly requesting the states to take proper action.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri A. N. Singh Deo.....

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI A. N. SINGH DEO: Mr. Speaker, Sir, is the Minister aware that there is shortage of Palmolein oil in Orissa due to non-release of quota for the last three months?

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Sir, for the month of February, 1200 MT of palmolein oil has been allotted to Orissa. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, if there is any Government worth the name, it has failed to control the prices. I will like to cite the instance of Madhya Pradesh. Wheat and sugar quotas have been fixed for the State. In Madhya Pradesh 50 grams sugar is being given per head. I would like to know whether the Government considers this quantity sufficient... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You may sit down.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN: I would like to tell that Oil Corporation has increased the prices of the edible oil being sold with the brand name of 'Dhara'. Can you give even a single example where the prices might have come down....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: She is asking about the situation in Madhya Pradesh.

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the supply of wheat has been augmented for Madhya Pradesh according to their demand and 1200 tonnes of popollne oil have been supplied to them in the month of February. We will keep on supplying this in future also...

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI K. S. RAO: Sir, we might not be manufacturing the missiles and the atomic weapons. But our farmers have got all the capacity to produce pulses required in the country. There is not any shortage in this regard. But I am sorry that pulses are being imported from outside thereby the farmers are foregoing right price for pulses in this country. So, I wish to know from the hon. Minister whether he promises or recommends from his Agriculture Ministry to assure the remunerative prices to the farming community of this country and also seen that the production is immediately increased and supplied through the public distribution system.

RAO BIRENDER SINGH: Sir, the farmers are getting remunerative prices for pulses because the prevailing prices in the market are much higher than the minimum support prices announced by the Government. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Next Question-Shri Kailash Meghwal.

(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

Effect of Chemical and Biological Weapons Used In Gulf War

*65. SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a study has been made in regard to the likely immediate and long-term effects of threatened use of chemical and biological weapons in the Gulf war on the human and animal life in the Indian sub-continent;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details of the immediate and