

**SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT** : Sometimes such complaints are made in general, but no specific complaints have been received by us in this regard. We shall certainly look into the matter if specific complaints are received. It is our endeavour to see that good quality foodgrains are supplied through Public Distribution System.

[English]

**Model Law on Consumer Protection**

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**\*185. PROF. K.V THOMAS ;  
SHRI MANIK REDDY :**

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

(a) whether any Consumer Protection law is to be brought into being soon;

(b) whether due place will be given to the consumers voluntary organisations;

(c) whether any time frame been been fixed for the enactment of the law; and

(d) whether all goods and services will be covered as pleaded by major consumer groups ?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI A K. PANJA)** : (a) A law on Consumer Protection is under the consideration of Central Government.

(b) and (c). These aspects are under the consideration of the Central Government.

(d) Presently, the Consumer Protection law proposes to cover goods only and to exclude services.

**PROF K V. THOMAS** : Sir, the worst hit person in the country is the consumer and there is no effective step to control the quality of consumer goods. For example the sugar supplied is mixed with fine powdered sand. The rice we get contains pebbles. In

view of all these things what effective steps will be taken in the proposed Consumer Protection Law to take action against those persons responsible for contaminating food-stuffs and other consumer items.

**THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN-TARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT)** : There are various aspects of consumer protection which are under the consideration of the Government. Now, the consumer complaints are sometimes regarding quantity, quality, weight, etc. There are various categories of complaints which are there. There are number of laws. These laws are fifteen at present which are administered by the Government. Some are administered by the State Governments. As I said, there are 15 laws at present. But the fact of the matter is that we ourselves are not satisfied. The Prime Minister is keen to see that there should be effective consumer protection. To use his words 'It should not be a bureaucratic arrangement'. It shou'd be a consumer movement. We are going into all aspects of it so that we can bring a proper consumer protection Bill. With regard to sugar etc. the Hon. Member mentioned that there is a mixture with sand etc. We have asked the State Governments and also FCI that they should release sugar which is of proper quality. We have also suggested that wherever possible they can give it in packs. There may be some additional cost involved. The Delhi Civil Supplies Corporation is going to experiment after some time by supplying sugar in packs.

**PROF. K. V. THOMAS** : Sir, there is undue delay in the legal proceedings. Sometimes the case takes 3 to 4 years. What steps will be taken to see that the legal proceedings are completed within a particular time limit ?

**SHRI H K.L. BHAGAT** : It is true that under the present legislation the proceedings are prolonged and there are delays taking place. There is no doubt it. We have prevention of food the Adulteration Act for example and there are various other Acts. For example, there is check on unfair trade practices under the MRTP Act, etc. Number one, we have asked various Ministries to change their laws and cut down the delay in proceedings. The

consumer protection Bill will provide protection to a certain extent notwithstanding anything else provided for in all these legislations. That will give additional and speedy relief.

**SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK :** Unless the voluntary consumer organisations are vested with some legal powers to deal with things effectively, these voluntary organisations will not be able to serve the people. Under the proposed Act, may I know whether the powers under the Essential Commodities Act are likely to be vested in such organisations ?

**SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT :** I think the Hon. Member has raised a very relevant question and I am sorry to say that though there are about 180 public organisations dealing with consumer problems, and some of them are really doing good work, yet on the whole I can say that in this country we do not have adequate, effective consumer movement organised and the organisations—some of them are doing good work—which are there are also mostly urban based (*Interruptions*). I can come to the question of power. The Government is quite keen on having a good consumer movement. Laws will not help, you should have some kind of control, some kind of say in the matter, in policy matters and guidelines, and some agencies also who can have some kind of power to check. For example, already with regard to fair price shops certain steps have been taken where such organisations do work. This is a fact that what the Hon. Member is fighting out is also under consideration with us.

**SHRI E. AYYAPU REDDY :** Does the proposed consumer protection law include also protection of the consumer against the drug menace—drug adulteration menace—which is taking away many lives and which has wrought havoc to the health of the nation ?

**SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT :** The question again is relevant and there are a number of laws already. That is why I was saying, a number of laws already existed by different authorities with regard to drug menace. The whole question today is that we have a number of laws. Actually the nodal Ministry is the Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies,

but frankly speaking, on how this can be done more effectively and concretely, how the laws can be improved, some of these laws are being amended, some proposals are made even. What you say is a real problem and we are considering as to how we can do it effectively.

**MR. SPEAKER :** They are also no less than terrorists.

[*Translation*]

**SHRI MOHD. AYUB KHAN :** Mr. Speaker, Sir, when the officials, authorised to take samples go to a shop and take a sample, they send that sample to the laboratory which works according to the standards fixed in 1955 whereas the sample has been taken in 1986. If a blood sample of a person is taken in 1986 and is compared with the sample taken in 1955, there is bound to be some variation. Therefore, will that laboratory which is working since 1955 not be changed ?

**MR. SPEAKER :** Now the whole process has changed, Mr. Khan... (*Interruptions*)

**SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT :** Shri Khan has put his question so loudly and with such a speed that I could not follow it. I would like him to repeat his question slowly.

**SHRI MOHD. AYUB KHAN :** The officials take samples from the shops and to harass the shopkeepers, they extort a lot of money from them. Thereafter, the samples are sent for testing to the laboratory the standards of which were fixed in as back as 1955. I would like to know whether those standards would be changed and replaced with the standards of 1986 so as to benefit the shopkeepers ?

[*English*]

**SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT :** Sir, fixing standards for samples of various categories is done by different agencies, by various authorities. What the Hon. Member has said is, most of these things relate to Food Adulteration Act. In fact, the Ministry concerned is

also considering some amendments to the Food Adulteration Act.

AN HON. MEMBER : How long they will take ?

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : They are at a stage, and I hope they will be making some changes soon. They are at it. So, the fixing of samples, whether the samples are to be changed, whether the samples need to be revised and so on—these are the matters. With regard to any particular items, if suggestions are given that the samples are useless and so on, we will go into that.

**Citizenship to refugees on the outskirts of Jamshedpur.**

\*186. SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether thousands of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan have been living on the outskirts of Jamshedpur without any citizenship rights for the last more than 21 years;

(b) if so, the number of such refugees and the reasons for not granting them citizenship; and

(c) steps proposed in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL SECURITY (SHRI ARUN NEHRU) : (a) to (c). According to information furnished by the State Government refugee families from erstwhile East Pakistan who came in the wake of partition in 1947 have found jobs and settled down in and around Jamshedpur. They are enjoying all facilities at par with Indian citizens. No complaints have been received and no cases have come to notice of the Government for non-grant of citizenship to refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan/Bangladesh who are eligible for the same.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : Sir, while the Minister replies, that there is no such complaint in regard to granting of citizenship rights, however, I was told by some

of the representatives of those areas and it also appeared in the Delhi press that many of them have not been granted citizenship for the last more than 21 years. I would like to read a portion of the Press report :

“According to official sources, these Bengali-speaking Hindu refugees “trespassed” into India from erstwhile East Pakistan over a period of 21 years.”

That is, this had taken place before the 1965 Indo-Pak war.

I would like to know very categorically from the Hon. Minister, would he grant citizenship right to those refugees who have come over to India just on the eve of Indo-Pak war and just before the 1971 war also ? They have not been granted citizenship so far.

SHRI ARUN NEHRU : Sir, the Government policy is not determined either by newspaper report or the groups of people telling the Hon. Member. Our policy is very clear ...*(Interruptions.)* Let me answer. Sit down.

AN HON. MEMBER : Sir, it is not like that.

MR. SPEAKER : He has been asked to reply.

SHRI ARUN NEHRU : I do not know why the Hon. Member is smiling. *(Interruptions.)* I do not know why the Hon. Members are making noise.

SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN : Mr. Speaker, I do not like to disturb him as he is a cardiac patient and shall tell him not to utter such a word in future. Sir, please expunge the word.

DR. V. VENKATESH : Please tell him, let him behave properly. *(Interruptions.)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seat. If you are standing, then how can he reply ?