

STATEMENT RE: MEASURES FOR
MAINTAINING PRICES OF
ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

The Minister of Planning and Labour and Employment (Shri Nanda): On the 27th August, I made a statement in the House expressing Government's determination to maintain prices of essential commodities at reasonable levels. Today, I beg to place on the Table of the House [See Appendix I, annexure No. 25] a statement setting out the main decisions which have been taken by the Central Government and endorsed* by the National Development Council. In the present emergency, the problem of maintaining prices of essential commodities at reasonable levels has assumed even greater urgency. The Government will maintain a close watch on the situation and will take whatever further measures may be called for.

The statement refers to Government's decision to set up a high level Committee on Price Stabilization within the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. This Committee will keep under close scrutiny current price trends, specially retail prices, secure regular and systematic flow of information concerning ex-factory costs and wholesale and retail margins in relation to essential commodities, and also arrange for special enquiries. In the light of its studies, which will be undertaken on a continuing basis, the Committee will recommend action by the Ministries concerned and will formulate proposals for consideration by the Planning Commission and approval by the Cabinet. The Committee is intended to serve as an important common agency on behalf of Government as a whole in relation to problems of price stabilization.

Shri Tyagi (Dehra Dun): It seems to be too long. Could it not be laid on the Table?... (Interruptions).

*The word "endorsed" was substituted for the original "approved" vide the observation of the Minister of Planning in col.

Shrimati Benu Chakravartty (Barrackpore): We want to hear it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. It is very important. He may read it out.

Shri Nanda: The longer statement has been circulated.

Shri Hanumanthaiya (Bangalore City): The operative part may be read.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. He may read it out.

Shri Nanda: The present arrangements concerning collection, study and utilization for policy and administration of information on retail prices need to be improved. The available information on retail prices has to be brought together, the gaps identified, and the significance of retail price trends as well as the spread between wholesale and retail prices assessed at regular intervals. Accordingly, the existing agencies and the Central Statistical Organization are being strengthened for the purpose.

Government have sanctioned a scheme for building up a network of co-operative and other consumer stores, specially for the supply of essential commodities. In the first instance, in co-operation with State Governments, it is proposed to set up about 200 wholesale and central stores with about 4,000 branch and primary stores. These will cover all metropolitan cities, State capitals, industrial centres, cities with a population of 1 lakh or more, as well as a number of other towns. Departments and agencies of Government are being asked to set up additional consumer stores for the benefit of their employees. Trade unions will be assisted in establishing consumer stores. Voluntary organizations will also be encouraged in promoting and organising co-operative consumer stores. Arrangements will be made

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for making available adequate supplies of essential commodities for these consumer stores.

The statement sets out the decisions which have been taken by Government in regard to foodgrains, cotton textiles and drugs and medicines. Proposals for the intensification of production programmes for fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs and milk are also being drawn up and will be shortly communicated to State Governments.

For securing the objectives of price policy, the active support and participation of trade, industry and labour of consumer associations and voluntary organizations throughout the country and of the Press, are vital and necessary conditions. This is of great importance at the present time. In this context, Government have noted and welcome the recent initiative taken by responsible leaders of trade and industry and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in impressing upon businessmen and trade organizations the need for increasing production and ensuring the supply of essential requirements to the community at reasonable prices.

In the present circumstances, the decisions set out in the statement are to be regarded essentially as the first phase of action. It is of the utmost importance that through vigilance, both on the part of the community and the official agencies, on no account should prices be allowed to rise through hoarding, profiteering and other anti-social activities. Government have the necessary powers and will endeavour to ensure by every means possible that the requirements of defence and development and of civil consumption are met in a satisfactory manner.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): May I request that copies of this may be circulated? Also, I request you that in view of the close and important bearing it has got on

the war effort a discussion of at least two hours, if not more, may be permitted in this session.

Mr. Speaker: Not in this manner. Members know how to initiate a discussion.

Shri Thirumala Rao (Kakinada): Sir, on a point of order. The Minister was pleased to read out this decision of the Government approved by the National Development Council. I want to know the constitutional position of the National Development Council. Have Government's decisions to be approved by that body before they are placed before the House? Is it proper wording?

Shri Nanda: He can change the word to 'endorsed'.

Shrimati Renuka Ray (Malda): May we have copies of this statement circulated?

Mr. Speaker: Copies of that statement would be circulated to hon. Members.

12.11 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: ALLOWANCES
PAID TO MEMBERS OF RAIL-
WAY ACCIDENTS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Railways (Shri S. V. Ramaswamy): As directed by you yesterday, I beg to lay on the Table a statement giving detailed particulars about the remuneration to the members of the Railway Accidents Committee. [See Appendix I, annexure No. 26]. I might add, however, that this information has been given earlier in this House in reply to Starred Question No. 1584 by Shri Morarka on 20th June, 1962.