

sation and make up for that loss. That is what I am asking. I am not saying whether they are prepared or not.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN): The question has not arisen at all. We have sent our recommendation. Many states have accepted. Some states say they are examining it. No state has so far refused. The question will arise only if some states refuse.

श्री चन्द्रदेव प्रसाद वर्मा : अध्यक्ष जी, छोटे तथा मध्यम वर्गीय समाचार पत्रों को क्या सरकार अपनी तरफ से विज्ञापन देने के सम्बन्ध में सोच रही है या नहीं ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : यह प्रश्न इसमें नहीं उठता है।

श्री चन्द्रदेव प्रसाद वर्मा : यह राहत देने के बारे में है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : विज्ञापन की बात नहीं है, राहत की बात है।

श्री चन्द्रदेव प्रसाद वर्मा : राहत, विज्ञापन देकर भी हो सकता है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इन्डायरेक्ट तरीके से।

श्री सवाई सिंह सिसोदिया : यह प्रश्न इस प्रश्न के दायरे से बाहर है।

Scarcity of Essential Commodities in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

*67. **SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA:** Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the severe scarcity of essential commodities in the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands for the last six months;

(b) if so, what action Government contemplate to take for regular sup-

ply of essential commodities in the Bay Islands;

(c) whether it is a fact that the West Bengal Government has ordered a ban on certain items of essential commodities for sending to Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and

(d) if so, what are those items?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA): (a) According to information furnished by Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration, there has been no severe scarcity of essential commodities in the Union Territory during the last six months. However, scarcity of a few commodities like sugar, common salt and edible oils was felt during August and September, 1980

(b) Adequate supply of essential commodities to Andaman and Nicobar Islands depends on regular shipping service between the mainland and these Islands which was disrupted during August and September, 1980. Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration is planning to improve shipping services between the mainland and the Union Territory by replacing the old vessels and also increasing their number.

(c) Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration is not aware of this. West Bengal Government has informed that no such restriction has been imposed.

(d) Does not arise.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA: The hon. Minister is a good friend of ours because he had visited the Islands during his tenure as Minister in the defence ministry and he tried to do a lot of developmental activities in that Island. But I am very sorry to say that he gave this reply in an evasive manner. As you know the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are

situated in the midst of Bay of Bengal near Indonesian borders and Burma borders. Essential commodities for these areas come from Calcutta or Madras. They are again to be distributed to different islands. During the last six months there was complete non supply of many of the essential items and repeatedly this was referred to the Government of India. I have even myself personally written letters to the concerned ministries. Unfortunately nothing has been done. In view of that I would like to ask a specific question: whether he would consider having a buffer stock of essential commodities in that part of the country for at least six months so that if there is disruption of shipping services or any other difficulty, people would not have to undergo this kind of suffering?

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA:

Sir, this information has been given to us, what I have supplied to the House, by the Administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. But I am prepared to take the word of the Hon'ble Member and I would even go to the extent of assuming that the information given by the Hon. Member might be more accurate than the information given by the Union Territory Administration; and therefore I would check up the situation again and this suggestion regarding maintaining a buffer stock in the Island is a welcome suggestion and we will follow it up.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA: I am thankful to the Hon. Minister that he has understood the question. My second supplementary is this, that every now and then we face lot of difficulties to get our essential commodities either from Calcutta or Madras; these are the two feeding ports from which we get our essential commodities. Once it so happened that the Tamil Nadu Government imposed a restriction on sweet oil, i.e. groundnut oil. Again we raised the matter with the Government of India and with great difficulty we could get, after two to three months,

only some supplies. Again the West Bengal Government has imposed restrictions on Suji, Maida and other items and that is why we could not get these items. I would like to request the Minister to kindly take it up with the State Government so that our supplies are not disrupted or disturbed due to the restrictions.

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA:
The suggestion has been noted.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I would like to ask the Hon. Minister a question on the basis of the findings of the Estimates Committee of the Fifth Lok Sabha. I had the opportunity to visit that land as a member of that Committee and we found—we were unanimously of the view—that at that time one single trading party was monopolising the entire trade in that particular island and as a result of that there was lot of resentment in the general population there. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister, will he encourage the setting up of a number of co-operative societies there so that the distribution of the essential commodities and other commodities that are required will be available at proper prices any individual party will not be able to monopolise the entire trade. By 'party' I am not referring to any political party.

SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA:
Sir, it is our firm policy that the public distribution system should be developed only through the co-operatives or State Civil Supplies Corporations and in places where the fair price shops are being run by private individuals, they should be increasingly taken over by co-operative societies. Such a thing to the extent necessary, needs to be done in Andaman and Nicobar Islands even more urgently and therefore we shall certainly take it up with the Island Administration to see that they do it quickly. I do not know whether this party has anything to do with the public distribution system. There has been some confusion in the Press report and I would like to take this

opportunity to clarify this. As I said on the other day in the other House, as far as the public distribution system is concerned, we want to take out the private element out of it. That does not mean that the wholesale trade in essential commodities as it is being done by private *baniya* shops or other wholesalers will be taken over by the Government. Government is not intending to take over the entire wholesale trade in essential commodities. The intention of the Government is that all the essential commodities that are distributed through the fair price shops all over the country should be distributed through the State Civil Supplies Corporation and Cooperatives. That is to say, the public distribution system will depend for its supplies on the State Civil Corporation and/or Cooperatives and not on the private wholesaler. The private wholesaler and the *baniya* shops should have nothing to do with the public distribution system and they should get their supplies from the state agencies and/or Cooperatives set up in most of the States.

Rise in prices of essential commodities

*68. SHRI SURYA NARAIN
SINGH:

PROF. RUPCHAND PAL:

Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have failed in arresting the rising trend in the prices of essential commodities;

(b) if so, the details of the rise in prices during the last six months; and

(c) main factors responsible for increase in prices and the effective measures proposed to be taken to check the price rise?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA): (a) to (c). A statement is placed on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

Statement

(a) There has been a mixed trend in the prices of essential commodities and items of mass consumption during the past six months.

(b) The wholesale price index numbers of selected commodities for the months of April, 1980 and October, 1980 are given in *Annexure*.

(c) Apart from the general inflationary situation, the rise in prices of some essential commodities may be attributed to decline in production, widespread drought in 1979, increase in the prices of petroproducts, short-fall in power supply, transport bottleneck and the seasonality factor.

A continuous watch is being kept on the prices and availability of essential commodities. The main thrust of the Government policy is to increase production of various essential commodities, particularly of commodities in short supply. The public distribution system is being expanded and made a permanent feature of the Indian Economy. During the oil year 1979-80, 3.55 lakh tonnes of imported edible oils were lifted by the States for distribution through the public distribution system as against 93,000 tonnes during the preceding oil year. Credit policy continues to be restrictive. The export of essential commodities is being regulated/banned. Some essential commodities in short supply are being imported.

From time to time the Union Government has been stressing on the State Governments to vigorously implement the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act and the orders issued under it as well as the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980. Government will not