

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: We have told the State Governments that they can have fair-price shops, co-operatives, associations or panchayats. The main idea is to cover as much area as possible. Therefore, that can also be considered.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: In view of the fact that the distribution of essential commodities in Orissa is being handled by a few hand-picked men of the last regime, who are putting enough bottlenecks to see that the essential commodities do not reach the common man, what are the steps taken to streamline such distribution as well as to set up the Citizenship Committees to monitor the position?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: So far as the watch on the distribution system is concerned, it was agreed in the meeting of the State Civil Supplies Ministers that we will have advisory committees at the district and state level.

Rise in prices of Consumer Goods

*63 **SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:** Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the continued rise in the prices of consumer goods all over the country;

(b) if so, the details and reasons therefor; and

(c) what effective and stringent measures are being taken to bring down the prices?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN): (a) to (c). A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

The prices of consumer goods have registered a sharp increase during 1979-80. The All-India Industrial Workers' Consumer Price Index (1960=100) moved up continuously from 332 in March 1979 to 374 in December, 1979 showing an increase of 12.7 per cent. The index for January 1980 (the latest available) has, however, declined to 371. The group-wise details are enclosed.

2. The main factors behind the price rise are: wide-spread drought, upward adjustments in administered prices of certain commodities, sharp rise in the prices of petroleum and its products, short-fall in the supply of essential inputs like coal and power, transport bottlenecks, stagnation in industrial production and presence of speculative forces.

3. Government is determined to tackle the price situation by:

(i) increasing production and supplies;

(ii) better supply and demand management;

(iii) removing power and transport bottlenecks;

(iv) streamlining of distribution arrangements;

(v) enforcement of existing legislation to check hoarding and black-marketeering.

All India Industrial Workers' Consumer Price Index (1960=100)

	March 1979	December 1979	Per- centage- change in De- cember 1979 over March 1979 +
General Index	332	374	12.7
I. Food	341	391	+14.7

	1	2	3	4
II. Paṛ, Supari, Tobacco & Intoxicants		348	377	+5.5
III. Fuel & Light		400	457	+14.2
IV. Housing		197	200	+1.5
V. Clothing, bedding & Footwear		385	416	+3.1
VI. Miscellaneous		290	319	+10.0

Note : Though the General Index is available upto January, 1980 the groupwise details are available only upto December 1979.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:
In the statement laid on the table in answer to my question, the Minister has stated:

“The prices of consumer goods have registered a sharp increase during 1979-80. The All-India Industrial Workers' Consumer Price Index (1960-100) moved up continuously from 332 in March 1979 to 374 in December 1979 showing an increase of 12.7 per cent. The index for January 1980 (the latest available) has, however, declined to 371.”

The Minister has thereby given the impression that the prices are coming down with the installation of the present Government. But is it not a fact that the wholesale price index for all commodities base 1970-71, rose for the sixth week and touched yet another peak at 231.4 during the week ended 1st March 1980?

MR. SPEAKER: You come to the point and ask a pointed question.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:
It is a pointed question. Why does the Minister conceal the realities of life?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: I have only stated facts. The facts were that in December the consumer price index stood at 374 and in January it came down to 371. I did not imply, nor did I state in my answer, that the prices are coming down. On

the contrary, I am well aware of the tendency for the prices to go on rising persistently. I am very conscious of this fact and I am trying my best to see how to combat it. Therefore, the impression which the hon. Member says I gave may be an impression which the hon. Member has got, but it is not created by me.

So far as the second part of the question is concerned, if the hon. Member looks at the wholesale price index, she will find that for the period which she mentioned, there was an increase of 1.1 per cent. But, then, for the next week, from 23rd February 1980 to 1st March 1980 there has been an increase of only 0.3 per cent. Therefore, both figures tally.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:
Now it has come to the same thing which he has referred to. In that case, let me also state that the statement which the Minister has made is contradicted in today's news. I would like him to state which is correct. The *Patriot* of today says that the level of wholesale price index this year was higher by 23.8 per cent, when compared to the index of the like week last year. Of course, this does not deal particularly with the workers consumer index but deals with the general price rise. I want to know whether this is true.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Statistics have to be compared with like statistics. The figure which the hon. Member stated was a comparison with

the index figures of the corresponding week last year. What I am giving now is in relation to the figures quoted by the hon. Member. She quoted the figures to show that for the period from 16th February to 23rd February there has been an increase of 1.1 per cent. I have said for the next week, from 23rd February to 1st March, it has been only 0.3 per cent. Therefore, there is no conflict in figures. The only thing is that you may compare like figures and not compare different figures.

श्री छागुर राम : अध्यक्ष महोदय, कीमती पर नियन्त्रण के सम्बन्ध में मंत्री जी ने तीन चार सुझाव दिए हैं जैसे मांग और पूर्ति का बेहतर प्रबन्ध, वितरण सम्बन्धी प्रबन्धों को सरल और कारगर बनाना—में मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूँ कि आज जो वर्तमान व्यवस्था है वितरण और मांग पूर्ति के सम्बन्ध में, इस व्यवस्था के प्रतिरिक्त और कौन सी व्यवस्था है जिसको वे बेहतर बनायेंगे ? मंत्री जी बतायेंगे कि वर्तमान व्यवस्था के अलावा और कौन सी व्यवस्था बनाने का उनका विचार है ?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: When you talk of demand-supply management, the demand management consists of one series of acts like control of money supply and so on. So far as the supply management is concerned, about which the hon. Member referred, we want to utilize fully the co-operatives, the super-markets, the fair price shops and, to the extent possible, create new agencies which will honestly distribute these scarce commodities. It is an endeavour in which all of us have to see that the available commodity is equitably distributed. The difficulty today is that even the available commodity is cornered and hoarded. If we have proper channels of distribution, then it would be possible to distribute the scarce commodities equitably.

श्री छागुर राम : मेरा क्वेश्चन यह था कि मंत्री जी जो बता रहे हैं वह तो वर्तमान व्यवस्था है तो इस व्यवस्था के प्रतिरिक्त मांग और पूर्ति को बेहतर बनाने के लिए और कौन से उपाय हैं ? अभी तो जो आज है वही वे बता रहे हैं ।
(व्यवधान) ..

अध्यक्ष महोदय : क्षम कैठिये ।

DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH: If the shop-keepers are required to keep price lists for the commodities they sell then the housewives and the poor people would not be robbed by them. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether they are going to introduce such measures whereby these price-lists would become important so that the people would not be robbed by the shop-keepers.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: This question may be answered by my colleague, the Minister in charge of Civil Supplies. He is actually in charge of distribution and the arrangement for distribution.

DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH. I am sorry, I did not get the answer to the question.

MR. SPEAKER: You give a fresh notice.

DR. FAROOQ ABDULLAH: It is an important question.

SHRI K. MALLANNA: Sir, it is admitted in the statement that prices have already gone up and he has also given some reasons. The main factors behind the price rise are widespread drought and shortage in certain commodities. Apart from these things I would like to know whether it is a fact that some hoarders, black-marketeers and smugglers are responsible for the rise in prices. If so, what steps Government has proposed to take?

MR. SPEAKER: That is already known. Why to repeat this question all the time? It is all right.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, assuming that the previous government could not do anything, the accumulated legacy of the previous government....

MR. SPEAKER: Please put the question. I want the question.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: Please listen to me. (Interruptions). The previous government let loose the hoarders and blackmarketeers and thereby

created a situation of price rise at that time.

MR. SPEAKER: That has already been discussed.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: What has happened is....

MR. SPEAKER: I want the question.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: I am putting the question. The same people regroup and further worsen the situation.

MR. SPEAKER: This is not a question.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: I am asking whether he has got any scheme....

MR. SPEAKER: He has already stated that they are trying to bring hoarders and blackmarketeers....

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: I have not completed my question.

MR. SPEAKER: What is the question?

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: For the proper distribution of essential commodities, in view of the rising prices, will this hon. Finance Ministry and the Supply Ministry put themselves together and set up a special cell to create a situation of confidence in bringing the prices down and ensuring fair distribution of all consumer goods and other essential commodities in this country? I would also like to know as to how soon they will do it.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Sir, this is exactly what I said that we are trying to do it and we are trying to see that there is no blackmarketing and hoarding. We are using now the Preventive Detention Law.

MR. SPEAKER: He wants to know whether you have cooperation from the Minister for Supply or not.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: Yes.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, in the statement laid on the Table of the House he said that one of the measures which the Government is determined to take is the streamlining of distribution arrangements. I would like to say that the scheme of a comprehensive public distribution system which was given a lot of publicity during the last Government's regime was supposed to have been prepared by Mr. Mohan Dharia when he was Minister of Commerce and Civil Supplies, which was never implemented by that Government. I would like to know what is the attitude of the present Government towards that scheme, whether they have decided to discard it or intend to implement it and what is the meaning of streamlining. Is it possible to have an effective public distribution system without obtaining physical stocks in the hands of the Government of all these essential commodities? If not, what is the meaning of streamlining the distribution system?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: I will answer that part of the question relating to what we mean by streamlining. The actual distribution system is, as I said, with the Minister of Civil Supplies. When we say streamlining, we want to see that the commodities which are in short supply reach the consumer through the recognised channels like the co-operatives, fair price shops, super markets and other recognised agencies. These are the channels through which we want to distribute. The question which the hon. Member has put is: are you going to have complete control over the stocks because without complete control over the stocks, it will not be possible to have control over distribution? Total control over stocks is not contemplated at the moment, and therefore streamlining, as I said, will only relate to the distribution part of it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Would the Commerce Minister inform us

what has happened to the scheme of Mr. Mohan Dharia? Are they preparing a new scheme?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: The difficulty is that two Ministries are concerned. I do not want to step into the jurisdiction of my colleague, and therefore if he puts a separate question, it will be answered.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND STEEL AND MINES AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): I can add that the scheme is continuing. In fact, we had a meeting, and this scheme has not been abandoned.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: I would like to know through you whether the Government is aware that there is large-scale smuggling of essential commodities, particularly edible oils, sugar, onions and spices on the western border with Pakistan, and if so, how Government is going to step up punitive measures, detention and raids?

MR. SPEAKER: That has all been done.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: That is the crux of the question.

MR. SPEAKER: They are taking action against them. They have said so many times.

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Let the Minister reply.

MR. SPEAKER: He has already replied. Have you anything to say further?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: A complaint has been received in the Government that some of the stocks are being smuggled along the west-

ern borders. We have looked into this matter, and we find that it does not have much substance. We find that it is not possible to carry sugar except through camel loads, and a camel carried only two quintals of sugar. We have examined all these things, but at the same time, we are trying to see that there is no smuggling.

Self-sufficiency in Steel

*64. **SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL:**

SHRI MOOL CHAND DAGA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is self-sufficient in regard to its needs of all types of steel;

(b) if not, what has been the requirement of the country for various types of steel and their availability from indigenous sources during each of the last 4 years and how much quantity has been imported from abroad each year indicating the value thereof; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to make the country self-sufficient in this behalf?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c). A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) No, Sir.

(b) The requirement of steel as compared to actual production of all types of steel in the country and quantity imported yearwise in the last four years is given below:—

(’000 tonnes)

Years	Requirement	Actual Production	Imports	
			Quantity	Value in Rs. Crores
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1975-76	6,170	6,376	479.2	201.88
1976-77	6,340	7,857	320.6	132.39