

the people of Kerala do not like that quality of par-boiled rice, we will not force this upon Kerala.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: May I know whether the Government of Kerala have shown any preference for any quality of rice?

SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO: The Kerala Government has shown preference for par boiled rice to be issued to people but the quality of rice supplied in the past was not found satisfactory. We have agreed to improve the quality of the rice. We have stopped millers from producing that quality of rice. We will improve the quality of rice and supply rice to Kerala to their satisfaction.

Shortage of Diesel

*8. **SHRI AMAR ROYPRADHAN:** Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that diesel shortage is prevailing in the country;

(b) if so, the extent thereof indicating the annual requirement and availability for the current year; and

(c) the reasons therefor and steps taken by Government to remove their shortage?

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS (SHRI P. C. SETHI):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). It is not possible to indicate the exact shortage of diesel, as it has been caused by a number of factors which are difficult to quantify with precision. These factors include a growth in its demand arising out of steep increase in the movement of goods by road, power shortages and the drought conditions in certain parts of the country. Again, on account of the disturbed conditions in Assam, the three refineries in that State and the Barauni refinery in Bihar have been shut-down, entailing a loss in production of diesel to the extent of about 5,000 tonnes per day. This develop-

ment has seriously affected the availability of HSD in the areas fed by these refineries and which cannot be easily fed from other sources. Arrangements are being made to meet the demand for diesel, to the extent possible by imports, subject to certain unavoidable restraints in movement by road and rail to areas traditionally served by the North-Eastern refineries and pipelines in Assam, Bihar and U.P.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: It is clear from the statement of Minister that there is acute shortage of diesel. The hon. Minister did not reply to my questions regarding the quantum of diesel necessary for production and distribution. But it is a fact that 70 per cent of the diesel transport has stopped plying on the roads, particularly in North Bengal, North Bihar and Eastern U.P. It is a fact that agriculturists who had diesel for their pump sets and tractors, they are not getting diesel now. It is also a fact that in the tea garden areas in the North Bengal and North Eastern Area, the tea garden factories are going to be closed down. It is also a fact that the entire area—North Eastern Region, West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have been threatened due to shortage of diesel. So, in the circumstances, I would like to know from the hon. Minister very categorically whether he will re-allot 25 per cent of the diesel quota which was curtailed during the time of the previous Government i.e. on 5th January, 1980 in the case of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh? Will the hon. Minister arrange special quota for West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to meet the present crisis of the diesel there?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: As far as this cut is concerned, 20 to 25 per cent cut was introduced by the previous Government on 5-1-1980 i.e. much before we took over. Now it is being said that the present Government has made this cut, which is absolutely a false propaganda.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: Will he re-allot that?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: As far as allotment is concerned, the allotments were increased by the previous Government in October, in November and much more so in December.

I would like to point out that in the case of Uttar Pradesh alone where the supply was to be 5 per cent more as compared to last year's supply from 80,000 (for U.P. alone) it was raised to 1 lakh tonnes. In rest of the States there was no rise as compared to this. Now, therefore, the shortage is there. As I have said in my statement, particularly in the North Eastern Region the shortage is on account of the closure of Assam Refineries and also closure of the Barauni Refinery. We are trying our best to meet the shortage. But as far as the other parts of the country are concerned which are not dependent on Assam Refineries, for example, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, in West Bengal there is no shortage whatsoever. I would like to give....

(Interruptions)

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: What about the northern part of West Bengal?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: I would like to inform the hon. members that tomorrow I am meeting the Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries, Civil Supplies Ministers, Secretaries of nine States. On 1st Feb. I have called the meeting of the Northern Region—Governors, Lt. Governors, Chief Ministers and all the concerned Secretaries to discuss the situation. Yesterday, we had full fledged discussion in the hon. Railway Minister's room, where the Home Minister was also present and we are trying to tie up the arrangements. Hon. Members would be glad to know that as far as Bengal is concerned, only a certain part of Bengal is in shortage. There is no shortage otherwise. There is definite....

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: What about North Bengal?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: I am saying, in a certain part of Bengal there is shortage. In a certain part of Bengal which is dependent on Assam, there is a shortage. There is shortage in Assam. There is a shortage in other parts of North-east. Not that the oil is not there, but the oil wells are not allowed to be worked. The oil is not allowed to be pumped. Actually, this oil which was to go to Tripura—I would like to point out for the satisfaction of the hon. Members that the Chief Minister of Tripura met me yesterday and said that diesel is going to last there only till 31st. They sent the tankers to a place at Gauhati for being filled up. They were to be filled up, but they were captured by the students. Fortunately these tankers reached in safe custody under the police patrol and I am glad to inform the hon. Members that they were allowed to be filled up under police protection and it started, and in two days the requirements of Tripura which were to be given from Gauhati would reach them and the Chief Minister of Tripura is very happy. Similarly, I am glad to inform that the Gauhati Refinery has started working. I am hopeful that the other two refineries in Assam are likely to start working in another two or three days. I am also hopeful that the crude which was being pumped to Barauni is likely to start being pumped and in another one week or so and in the meanwhile what we are doing is—we are short of tankers also, particularly road tankers and all others. We are trying to make arrangements somewhere by making adjustment in the fertilizer factory and a decision has been taken to withdraw a few tankers from the fertilizer factory. I would not like to name the fertilizer factory at the moment, but we have made those arrangements and under adequate protection tankers will be sent to these areas even from the areas where from these areas cannot be fed and I can assure the hon. Members that as far as U.P. and Bihar are concerned which were also dependent on Assam, there is shortage. But in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, for

example, there is no shortage whatsoever. If the hon. Members like I can give the figure, but it is absolutely due to maldistribution, blackmarketing and irresponsibility of the State Governments is not taking action against the blackmarketeers and hoarders under the Essential Commodities Act. In spite of the fact that the Ordinance has become the law, these two States Governments have not taken action. There is no shortage; On the contrary, the actual prorata allocation for the 1st fortnight of January in the case of Rajasthan was 15,619 tonnes of HSD diesel, the actual sale to them in the first 15 days of January was 19,304 tonnes, about 4,000 tonnes more. In spite of that, there is a clamour that Rajasthan petrol pumps are dry. This is absolutely wrong. Rajasthan petrol pumps open in the night by 12 O'Clock and any quantity of diesel is freely available at premium. Similar is the case in Madhya Pradesh.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about Maharashtra?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: About Maharashtra there is no problem.

SHRI MAGANBHAI BAROT: What about Gujarat?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: About Gujarat there is no problem.
(Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the way. Let the Minister reply. Don't interrupt the Minister.

SHRI P. C. SETHI: Let me answer his question. The other hon. Members have raised a question and if the hon. Speaker allows.

MR. SPEAKER: He has made a lengthy statement. Do the Members need more elucidation on this.
(Interruptions).

SHRI P. C. SETHI: Our State has the same problem. Lastly, Sir, I would only urge on the hon. Members. (Interruptions). If the hon. Speaker

gives the time, I have no objection.
(Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: No, no. Please don't interrupt.

SHRI P. C. SETHI: Lastly, I would like to state that there is no reason to be panicky at all. You have spoiled everything in the last three years, particularly the last three or four months. Please give us at least 15 days time, and I assure you that there will be no shortage of diesel, no shortage of kerosene and no shortage of crude.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: It is clear from the reply of the hon. Minister that there is an acute crisis in North Bengal, North Bihar and the northeastern region. So, I would like to ask a simple question, whether the hon. Minister will supply diesel from the other available sources such as the port refineries to these areas which are affected most by diesel shortage.

SHRI P. C. SETHI: Would the hon. Member suggest that I should cut down the meal of somebody else and provide it to him?

SHRI AJOY BISWAS: The hon. Minister has informed the House that there is an acute problem in Tripura. You know that the movement of kerosene to Tripura has totally stopped due to the disturbances in Assam. Seventyfive per cent of the lorries have stopped plying, and the workers are unemployed now. So, can the hon. Minister specifically tell us what steps he is going to take immediately to send diesel and kerosene to Tripura?

SHRI P. C. SETHI: Everything humanly and administratively possible to meet the requirements of the northeastern region is being done on all fronts, namely the Home Ministry, the Railway Ministry and the Ministry of Petroleum. We are working in complete harmony and co-ordination, we are working day and night.

MR. SPEAKER: That should satisfy the hon. Member.

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMAD KHAN: I would like to know whether it has come to the notice of the Government that in some states diesel has become almost non-available and that especially in U.P. it is being sold at a very high rate with the connivance of the State Government; if so, I would like to know what steps Government proposes to take to check both the delinquent traders and the Governments.

SHRI P. C. SETHI: The actual quota allotted to U.P. in the first 15 days of January was 30,000 tonnes HSD, and the actual sale which the U.P. Government has already made till 15th January is 34,472 tonnes. Therefore, hon. Members would realise that as far as this Ministry is concerned, we have not only given them the requisite allotment, but actually 4,000 tonnes more than what was allotted to them. The Essential Commodities Act has to be administered by the State Governments, and they have to take steps for fair distribution. I have myself received complaints that during the elections most of the quota which was allotted to U.P. was diverted to Western U.P. while Eastern U.P. and the Jhansi Division were completely kept dry. This is the state of affairs in that State unfortunately. Civil supplies and distribution within the State are the responsibility of the State Government, as also checking of blackmarketing. I have called a meeting at the topmost level, of the Chief Ministers, in order to urge upon them that this is not a party matter and that here we should have no confrontation, that we should actually work in harmony. I am sure they would respond to it.

In the answer which he has given he has stated that arrangements are being made to meet the demand for diesel by imports. I would like to ask him, if there is sufficient diesel to flood the country, why is it necessary to import diesel, whether any order has been placed and if so with which countries, the quantity and the price of imported diesel which we intend to import.

SHRI P. C. SETHI: I fully appreciate the innocence of the hon. member. When I said that there is no shortage of diesel, I did not mean to say that India is self-sufficient in the production of crude oil and diesel. India is meeting its requirements of crude oil, diesel and kerosene by indigenous production as well as imports and the import bill, if the hon. member is interested to know, is rising every day because of the OPEC prices going up. But our indigenous production is also going up. The only difficulty is because of the law and order situation. Otherwise indigenous production, there is no shortage. As far as tying up with the other countries are concerned, we are trying, the previous Government could not tie up because other countries were perhaps not in a mood to give it to them, but we are happy to announce that now we are receiving offers from friendly countries, from the Middle East countries, who were our old friends and who are now our friends and I am hopeful that we will be able to tie up imports with them and it is not in the nation's interest to give the names of the countries at the moment.

MR. SPEAKER: Q. No. 9.

SHRI C. P. N. SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, On this very issue, I had given notices of a call attention, which has not been admitted. Will the hon. Minister state... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I have called the next question.

SHRI BAPUSAHEB PARULEKAR: While replying to a call attention motion on the same subject, the hon. Minister had stated that there is absolutely no scarcity of diesel and that he would flood the country with diesel and I believe that even today he is reiterating the same position.