

17.48 hrs.

# ORISSA WEIGHTS AND MEASURES (DELHI REPEAL) BILL

**The Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri Satish Chandra):** I beg to move.

"That the Bill to provide for the repeal of the Orissa Weights and Measures Act, 1943, in its application to the Union Territory of Delhi, be taken into consideration."

This is a very simple three-clause Bill to which no amendments have been tabled.

**Mr. Speaker:** The time allotted is 30 minutes.

**Shri Ranga (Tenali):** There are no amendments, Sir.

**Mr. Speaker:** It won't take much time.

**Shri Satish Chandra:** At present, the Orissa Weights and Measures Act has been extended to Delhi. According to this Act, the old standards of weights and measures are being enforced in this union territory. From 1st October, 1958, metric system of weights and measures has also been introduced in Delhi. For that purpose, the Act passed by Rajasthan in 1958 has been extended to this Union Territory. We have been advised that while we can introduce the Rajasthan Act in Delhi by notification, under the Delhi Laws Act, an Act once introduced in Delhi cannot be repealed without the consent of Parliament. Therefore, this measure has been brought before Parliament. During the transition period both the systems are continuing. So, the Bill provides for a gradual repeal of the Orissa Act. As and when the provisions of the Rajasthan Act are enforced in Delhi, to that extent the provisions of the

Orissa Act will get repealed automatically.

I move.

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is:

"That the Bill to provide for the repeal of the Orissa Weights and Measures Act, 1943, in its application to the Union Territory of Delhi, be taken into consideration."

*The motion was adopted.*

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is:

"That clauses 1, 2, 3, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title stand part of the Bill."

*The motion was adopted.*

*Clauses 1, 2, 3, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.*

**Shri Satish Chandra:** I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

**Mr. Speaker:** The question is:

"That the Bill be passed."

*The motion was adopted.*

17.52 hrs.

## PROCUREMENT OF RICE IN ANDHRA\*

**Mr. Speaker:** The House will now take up the discussion on points arising out of the answer given on the 12th December, 1958 to Starred Question No. 901 regarding procurement of rice in Andhra.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair (Thiruvella):** I am very grateful to you for giving me an occasion to raise this discussion in spite of the fact that there was very heavy pressure of work before you.

This discussion is about the procurement of Andhra rice, but that is a problem that intimately affects our State of Kerala.

On December 12, in answer to Starred Question No. 901 the hon. Minister of Food and Agriculture was pleased to state that the Central Government was not entering the Andhra market because the Central Government wanted to give the Kerala Government a chance to buy from the Andhra market, but in answer to certain supplementaries he gave certain contradictory answers. That is the main reason why I wanted to raise this discussion.

The question was posed before the hon. Minister whether the Kerala Government approached the Central Government for the rice that the Central Government was procuring from Andhra at controlled prices. Under the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, the Central Government is procuring rice from Andhra, and after the formation of the Southern Zone the Central Government has procured nearly 2,60,000 tons of rice from the four surplus districts of Andhra Pradesh. When the question was raised whether the demand came from Kerala that they should be given first priority from this procured rice, I am sorry the hon. Minister did not give any answer to it.

You are quite aware that our biggest problem is that of food. We are unfortunately 50 per cent. deficit. We are having the biggest problem among all the States in India as far as food deficit is concerned. Before the formation of the southern rice zone we used to get nearly 25 to 26 thousand tons of rice from the Central Government at a subsidised price, but after the formation of the southern rice zone, the Central Government told the Kerala Government: "You have now to depend entirely on the Andhra market. You can go there and buy as you please. We are not in a position to supply you rice any more." At the same time we were surprised to find

that the Central Government was there in the market, and they procured nearly 2,60,000 tons of rice. That itself resulted in a rise in price as far as Andhra Pradesh was concerned. Besides, the hon. Minister himself stated in this House that large-scale smuggling was going on from the southern zone especially to Bombay. As a result of all these factors, although the southern rice zone was formed in order to stabilise the price of rice in all the four States, the fact is that not only in Kerala, but even in Andhra Pradesh itself which is a surplus State in rice, even in the four surplus districts of Guntur, Krishna, East Godavari and West Godavari in Andhra, there is a spiralling of prices. According to the information available from the Treasury Benches, the price of rice per maund in Vijayawada now is Rs. 20 or Rs. 21 or Rs. 22. The Kerala Government have been asked to go to the market. The Kerala Government have been asked to depend on the whims and fancies of the Andhra Pradesh market. The activities of the millers in Andhra Pradesh are well-known, and it is very difficult for the Kerala Government to procure rice from the open market.

As a matter of fact, the Kerala Government wanted nearly 70,000 tons of rice and they called for tenders, but it is strange that nobody was prepared to accept the tenders. So, the Kerala Government approached the Central Government, and appealed to the Central Government that from the rice that was procured from the Andhra Pradesh State—the southern zone was mainly formed for the benefit of the deficit State of Kerala—the Kerala State should be given 20,000 tons of rice per month. If we get 20,000 tons of rice per month, we can run our fair price shops. Somebody may argue that it is not possible to keep on these fair price shops. We have nearly six thousand fair price shops in the Kerala State. There is plenty of rice everywhere, there is no scarcity of rice in the southern zone, but the difficulty is that the prices are rising. In our State, per bag of rice, that is, two-

[Shri Vasudevan Nair]

maunds of rice, people have to pay something like Rs. 40, in some places, the price is Rs. 42 and Rs. 44, and everywhere, the prices are rising. These prices stood nearly at Rs 38 per bag, which comes to Rs. 19 per maund. In order to keep down the price in the open market, these fair price shops are to be run, and we have to give something through the fair price shops. Otherwise, the prices will be going up. And where are we to get the rice for these fair price shops? That is the main question. And our request before the Central Government was, is, and will be this. The Central Government cannot say that they have nothing to do with it, that they have no responsibility, and that we have to go to the open market, we have to depend on the trends in the market, we have to depend on the whims and fancies of the market. We plead with the Central Government that they should give priority to the Kerala Government when they procure rice from Andhra Pradesh.

It is now the harvesting season. But even before that, during the last so many months, they have procured 2,60,000 tons. You, Sir, will be interested to know that out of 2,60,000 tons of rice procured from this zone, the Kerala Government were allotted only 68,000 tons, and out of these 68,000 tons 24,000 tons were given on a replacement basis, that is, as loan.

As a matter of fact, for the last three months, there is practically nothing in our fair price shops. When it was found that the Central Government were not prepared to help the Kerala Government by giving rice to them from the rice that they procured from the Andhra Pradesh at controlled rates, the Kerala Government then approached the Central Government and told them they should at least be allowed to go to the open market to purchase. Sir, you will be interested to know that even that was not allowed. That is, in these surplus districts, in these four districts, in the name of

legality,—because there is the law—we cannot go and purchase; we can go outside these four districts and purchase, we have to go to Nellore and Rayalaseema and purchase rice. That was the answer given by the Central Government, unfortunately, to the Kerala Government.

We request the Central Government to reconsider this question and give priority to the Kerala Government when they procure rice from Andhra Pradesh. The price can be fixed in advance. There is quarrel about price between the Andhra Pradesh Government and the Central Government. We know that. Again, there is quarrel between the millers and the Central Government. We know that. As a matter of fact, there was a strike by millers last month. But then, the Central Government can fix the price, and at whatever price they purchase, they should give 20,000 tons of rice at least per month to the Kerala Government. That is our prayer.

There is no question of expenditure from the pocket of the Central Government. That does not arise at all because the conditions and the terms put forward by the Kerala Government are that they will meet all the expenses on transport, they will give the entire price, so, not a naya paisa need be spent by the Central Government. So there is no question of subsidising. The Kerala Government are prepared to spend nearly a crore of rupees for subsidising rice. During this budget year the Kerala Government have set apart a crore of rupees for selling the rice at subsidised rates through the fair price shops. But the problem is where is the rice to get from?

18 hrs.

I give force to my argument by citing the instances of supply of rice and wheat and other foodgrains to other States in this country by the Central Government. There may be

an argument that in other States there is no Zone; so the Central Government will have to feed them. There may be some validity in that argument. I was able to find out that from January to July 1958, the State of Bihar was given 4,80,000 tons of rice from the Central Government at subsidised rates. The State of West Bengal was given 5,16,000 tons of rice by the Central Government. You are aware that if we are 50 per cent deficit in food, West Bengal has only 15—20 per cent deficit. We are very glad that the Centre is giving rice to West Bengal at subsidised rates. We will appeal to them to give more to West Bengal. But when all these States are helped by the Central Government, why is the Kerala Government not given practically anything for the last so many months? U.P. is given 60,000 tons of wheat per month. They gave to Bombay from January to November 1958, 2,91,000 tons. In November 1958, West Bengal was again given 41,000 tons of rice and 61,000 tons of wheat. All the States in India which are facing difficulties as far as food is concerned are helped liberally. I should say, by the Central Government except Kerala. My question is: why cannot that hand of friendship be extended to Kerala?

The Central Government are spending a lot of money by way of subsidy. We do not demand any subsidy. The Kerala Government is prepared to spend nearly a crore of rupees for subsidising rice, but it has to get rice at controlled rates, at the rates fixed by the Government of India.

If the Kerala Government is just left at the mercy of the market, what is going to happen? I will furnish you with some figures. It has been calculated that for our fair price shops we should have 25,000 tons of rice per month on an average. In that case, if we have to depend on the market, the price is somewhere at Rs. 40 per bag or Rs. 20 per maund. Now there is some arrangement between the Kerala Government and the Andhra Pradesh Government for the time

being, and they supply rice at Rs. 40 per bag from Andhra.

**Mr. Speaker:** What is the price at which the Centre purchases?

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** Rs. 16 per maund

**Mr. Speaker:** Kerala is asked to pay Rs. 40?

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** We are forced to pay at that rate because the Central Government refuses to buy at the controlled rate. They bought 2,60,000 tons from Andhra, but they gave only 45,000 tons out of that quantity to Kerala. So we are forced to depend upon the open market. The result is that the entire resources of the State of Kerala are fleeced. If we have to import grain at Rs. 40 per bag, it will cost Rs. 480 lakhs per year. If a Government which has only a revenue of Rs. 30 crores—Rs. 32 crores has to spend Rs. 480 lakhs per year for importing rice at such a high cost, you can imagine what will happen to that State. But if the Central Government is prepared to supply this rice at controlled rate, that is, Rs. 16 per maund, that will be of help to us. Let it be Rs. 17 per maund; we have no objection, whatever be the price. I have no quarrel with Shri Ranga. They can settle the dispute among themselves. Whatever be the price fixed by the Central Government, at that price if we are supplied rice, we will have to spend only something like Rs. 200 lakhs. So the difference is to the tune of Rs. 250 lakhs or Rs. 280 lakhs.

In his recent statement at a Press conference, our Chief Minister calculated this difference and announced that it would be a great burden on the Kerala Government. It is only fair that the Central Government comes to the help of the Kerala Government in this great difficulty.

I do not want to go into other questions just now. Unfortunately, this question of food is made a subject of political battle in our country today. That is a very sorry state of affairs.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members are forgetting the scope of the half-an-hour discussion arising out of questions. I have allowed the hon. Member a long time already. But a general discussion about policy and political affairs is absolutely irrelevant.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** I am not going into such questions. I am only interested in getting food for the State of Kerala which is in great difficulty. I would urge upon the Central Government—this is the time of harvest—to continue purchases or procurement whatever it may be, and give the first priority to the Kerala State when they decide to send out this rice procured from the Andhra State.

If there is an arrangement between the Central Government and the State Government, many other problems will be solved. If the arrangement is between the Andhra Government and the mills and the Kerala Government, the question of transport, the question of godowns etc., are there. If it is with the Central Government, then they can store the rice even in the godowns they have got at Cochin and from there stocks can be regularly sent to Kerala. It would be a much better arrangement and it would be very good for the entire people of the State. I say the Central Government should come forward boldly and show that they are anxious to help the people who are in great difficulties; and the impression that is prevalent—the unfortunate impression—should be removed by the Central Government by its own action. That is by prayer.

**Shri Easwara Iyer (Tiruvandrum):** Sir, I would like to put one or two questions. In view of the fact .

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members do not follow the Rules of Procedure. I do not know why this book is there. Every hon. Member who wants to put a question must have given notice.

**Shri Easwara Iyer:** My name is there, Sir.

**Shri T. B. Vittal Rao:** Are we to give separate notices, Sir?

**Shri Easwara Iyer:** In view of the fact that the Central Government has fixed a procurement price for the 4 districts of East Godavari, West Godavari, Guntur and Krishna and allowed procurement of rice so far as the Kerala State is concerned and only the ceiling price is fixed, since the Kerala Government has no effective machinery to enforce procurement in another State, what is it that prevents the Central Government from making the procurement and giving it on payment to the Kerala State?

**Mr. Speaker:** Shri Ranga

**Shri Maniyangadan (Kottayam):** Sir, I had given notice.

The Kerala Government would not purchase rice from Andhra. . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** I have already called Shri Ranga.

**Shri Ranga:** Mr. Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that it should be possible for the Kerala State Government as well as the Andhra State Government to deal with each other and that in Andhra there are plenty of facilities for storing whatever food-grains the Kerala Government wants to purchase from the mill-owners and also from co-operative marketing societies, I do not know why the Union Government should have thought of themselves going into the market. The misunderstanding among the peasants there is that our Government is somehow very much fond of the Kerala Government for obvious reasons and in that way they are subordinating the interests of the agriculturists of Andhra in order to better the interests of consumers, whether they are in Kerala or anywhere else. I would like to know whether the Government of India would be willing to come to an agreement with the Government of Andhra in regard to the payment of, if not remunerative price, at least a decent

enough price so that the peasants would be satisfied—I mean the smaller people as well as middle-class people—and at the same time the Kerala consumers would not have the opportunity—the Kerala Government also—of continuing their unjust allegation that Andhra peasants and mill-owners and the Andhra Government are anxious to profit at the cost of the consumers. May I know whether the Government of India would consider these points favourably in the interest of both the producers as well as the consumers and not pursue the policy that they have been pursuing in keeping down the interests of the producers alone in order to satisfy the political fascination of the consumers, wherever they may be, in Kerala or elsewhere?

**Shri Maniyangadan:** It was stated by the Food Minister of Kerala that they could not purchase rice from Andhra because the Central Government would not allow them I want to know whether there was any ban imposed on the Kerala Government by the Central Government to purchase rice from four districts of Andhra State. Also, the Chief Minister recently at a Press Conference stated that the Southern Zone was imposed upon the Kerala State. I want to know whether it is a fact I read it in the newspaper (*Interruptions.*)

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** The statement is here; it is wrong.

**Shri Rami Reddy (Cuddapah):** In view of the fact that the procurement price fixed for Andhra rice is not commensurate with the cost of production, because all other essential commodities are being sold at a very high price and also because this rise in the price of essential commodities has not been taken into account at the time of fixing the procurement price, may I know if the Central Government which has to procure

through its own agency and supply rice to the Kerala Government would give an enhanced price over and above the procurement price?

**The Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to clarify certain matters which are more or less assuming a controversial nature. This morning we heard in the radio the charge of discrimination against the Kerala Government levelled against the Centre by no less a person than the Chief Minister of the Kerala State. There have been other leaders of the party in power in the State levelling the same charge. Responsible persons have been making statements in the Press and on the platform to the effect that the Centre is behaving in a manner prejudicial to the interest of the Kerala State.

What are the real facts? My hon friend has stated that there has been some mistake in the answer given to the effect that the Central Government was not entering the Andhra markets. What was stated in the answer which is the subject-matter of this discussion is:

"Fresh requisition orders are not being issued at present. Requisitioning is resorted to only when substantial stocks of rice are available with the millers or the stockists but are not offered to the Government."

That is the position of the Central Government. At any rate the policy of the Central Government is only to procure the net surplus of rice that will be available in Andhra after allowing free movement of rice to the scarcity areas and also satisfying the needs of Kerala. The Central Government intends to procure if there is any balance left from the regions in Andhra.

My hon friend has stated that although it has been stated that the

[Shri A. M. Thomas]

Central Government is not entering the Andhra market, more than two lakhs tons of rice have been procured from the four delta districts. It is true that 2,57,000 tons of rice have been procured from Andhra. 77,000 tons in 1957 and 180,000 tons in 1958. But, Sir, you will notice that although this quantity has been procured, during the very same period, 1,96,000 tons have been made available to, not only the Kerala Government but the States of Madras and Mysore as well—small quantities to the States of Madras and Mysore, and the major portion has gone to Kerala.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: What is the separate figure for Kerala?

Shri A. M. Thomas: I have got separate figures also.

Shri Ranga: More than 50 per cent.

Shri A. M. Thomas: In 1958 itself the Kerala State has been given 68,000 tons out of Central stocks, so that what is moved from Andhra outside the zone is a negligible quantity.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: There is 24,000 tons replacement also.

Shri A. M. Thomas: Whatever it be—you have not replaced—we have made this quantity available to the Kerala Government.

Mr. Speaker: The whole thing has been eaten; replacement will come up later on.

Shri A. M. Thomas: Sir, the formation of the southern zone has not been given the proper significance in the arguments that have been advanced by my hon. friend. This southern zone consisting of the States of Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Madras and Kerala has been formed mainly with the idea of helping the deficit State of Kerala. It was done inspite of the

opposition from the Andhra Government and inspite of the unwillingness of the State of Madras to have such a zone. Mysore was more or less amenable, but as far as Madras was concerned their case was that Kerala should be cordoned off. Anyhow, Madras was not sympathetic to the idea of the formation of a southern zone, but we persuaded them to accept this arrangement, and it was done mainly with the idea of helping the State of Kerala.

After the formation of the southern zone, you will agree, Sir, that some time is necessary for things to stabilise. It was in the month of July that this southern zone was formed. Even after that, although it was estimated that at this stage the southern zone will be not only self-sufficient, but there will be a little surplus we have been giving to the State of Kerala large quantities. As I said, the southern zone was formed in July. In the month of July itself we gave Kerala State 26,000 tons. In August, we gave another 26,000 tons.

Mr. Speaker: What is the total quantity that they require?

Shri A. M. Thomas: The total quantity required, according to my hon friend for running fair price shops is 25,000 tons.

Mr. Speaker: Per month?

Shri A. M. Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: What is the total quantity supplied by the Central Government?

Shri A. M. Thomas: Now, Sir, we are not giving any further supplies because, according to us, the zone is self-sufficient and since there is movement on private account to Kerala State, if, as a matter of fact, the Kerala Government wants to run these fair price shops it must purchase rice on its own responsibility and make distribution.

One fact which we have to bear in mind in this connection is that we have to take the price level in the various States in the southern zone. In spite of the fact that Kerala is deficit the price level in Andhra, in Mysore, in Madras and in Kerala is more or less the same.

**Mr. Speaker:** What is the price in Andhra?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** The price in Andhra now ranges from Rs. 17 to Rs. 21 or Rs. 22 per maund.

**Mr. Speaker:** What about Madras?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** In Madras it goes to even Rs. 23 in certain parts.

**Mr. Speaker:** It was Rs. 40 in Kerala.

**The Deputy Minister of Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa):** That was per bag of two maunds.

**Mr. Speaker:** Therefore, the people in Kerala do not pay more than the people in Andhra.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** The people in Kerala do not pay more.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** That is a petty argument of the Ministry. The point is, what was the price and what is the rise. What is the rise in price? That is the point, because, always in Kerala, traditionally, the price is very low there. (*Interruptions*).

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** I am replying to the points. There is no use of arguing like that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Let me put one question. Does Kerala want to have rice cheaper in its own place than even in Andhra?

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** Than in Bengal.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am afraid the hon. Members are forgetting one thing.

There are 20 districts in Andhra, while only four districts are surplus, and the other districts are as badly famine-stricken as the districts in other States perhaps. What is the price in those districts and what is the price in Kerala?

**Shri Ranga:** It is lower in Kerala.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** The position is thus. I may also mention that in certain months the price level in Kerala was even lower than the price level in Madras. I have got the latest price bulletin.

**Mr. Speaker:** What is the price in Chittoor?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** What my friend wants is, you should not have any regard to the claims of such areas as Chittoor or to the claims of Madras, but just give attention only to the situation in Kerala. That is the position of my friend. After the formation of the zone, in February, 1958, when things stabilized themselves, when the price came down to a reasonable level we reviewed the position. During the months of January to June, 1958 the wholesale price of rice in Kerala rose between Rs. 17 and Rs. 19 per maund, as compared to Rs. 19 to Rs. 24 in West Bengal, Rs. 20-25 per maund in Bihar and Rs. 20-28 in Bombay. That is for coarse rice; it is not for medium rice.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** What is the meaning of this argument?

**Mr. Speaker:** The argument is that the Central Government is interested in seeing that every part of India gets its due share and is not starved.

**Shri Nagi Reddy:** Even though a lot of rice is given to Bengal, because of maldistribution their price is rising, and because of proper distribution in Kerala the price is reducing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Therefore, the Kerala Government must take charge of the Bengal Government also!



Shri V. P. Nayar: Wait till next time.

Shri A. M. Thomas: The position of the Centre vis a vis the other States is this. After the last crop in the south was harvested, the price of rice got stabilized and we informed the various Governments that hereafter we would not be in a position to make supplies from the Central stocks, but even then in spite of that, the Kerala Government was being supplied rice, when we refused supplies to Madras and Mysore. The quantity that has been supplied to the Kerala Government, as stated by me, is 67.8 thousand tons of rice in the current year, whereas, during this period in question, neither the Madras Government, in spite of their request, nor the Mysore Government were supplied any rice. In spite of the request made from places in Andhra like Chittoor, we were not able to supply any rice

Shri Braj Raj Singh (Firozabad): We have already exceeded the time

Mr. Speaker: I allowed the hon. Members to raise a discussion. The Minister must explain.

Shri A. M. Thomas: From February the Kerala Government wanted to maintain fair price shops, and we told them, "If you want to maintain fair price shops, it would be your own responsibility to have to procure stocks to maintain the fair price shops." We have also been helping the Kerala Government to procure rice. We issued instructions to our procurement officers in Andhra to render all possible assistance to the Kerala Government to make purchases in Andhra and not to requisition any of the stocks purchased by the Kerala Government from any rice mill in Andhra.

Then we also rendered assistance in arranging wagon supply for despatch of rice from Andhra to Kerala. We have also to take into account the movement on private trade account

from the Andhra region and also from the Madras region to the State of Kerala. You will notice that by railway alone the quantity moved for one year from the districts of Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli in Madras and from the Vijayawada Division in Andhra Pradesh to Kerala amounted to more than three lakh tons. I am not taking into consideration the other heavy movements made by lorries. The Madras Government was complaining about it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Minister's contention seems to be that there is sufficient food available for Kerala. The only question is that they want it at a lower price.

Shri A. M. Thomas: For that they will have to subsidise it.

Mr. Speaker: They want the Central Government to subsidise it.

Shri A. M. Thomas: We have told the Kerala Government that as far as we are concerned we are not insisting that they must bear the same burden as the previous Governments were bearing. The previous Governments were giving subsidy to the extent of Rs 1½ crores per year. We have told them, "You bear the burden to the extent of a crore of rupees and if you go above a crore of rupees, we will also share in it."

Shri Ranga: 50 per cent

Shri A. M. Thomas: Can there be a more reasonable offer to the Kerala Government than this? Even now, my hon. friend is saying, we have to pay Rs 3 or Rs 4 more. If they have to pay and subsidise more than a crore of rupees, the Central Government will also share in it.

Shri Easwara Iyer: Can we purchase now from the East Godavari, West Godavari and Guntur districts at the open market price?

Shri A. M. Thomas: With regard to this, we have deliberately announced

this control price for these districts to maintain prices at a reasonable level in the southern zone

**Shri Nagi Reddy:** But it is not available at controlled rates. It is never available except for Central Government.

**Shri Thirumala Rao (Kakinada):** How much out of this Rs. 1 crore subsidy have the Kerala Government saved? They want to save on it and throw the burden on the general taxpayer.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** I have read in the papers what the Food Minister has said in the Assembly that he was not quite definite about the figure but in another context it seems to have been stated that Rs. 40 lakhs they have had to spend.

**Mr. Speaker:** What is the price at which they sell at the fair price shops?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** At Rs. 16 per maund. I do not know at what price they are selling now.

**Mr. Speaker:** They are selling at Rs. 16 in Kerala?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** Rs. 16 is the price that has been fixed by us to sell the stocks that we make available to the State Government. With regard to the other thing they can stipulate their own price.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** That is Rs. 16.

**Shri V. P. Nayar:** Central Government stocks at Rs. 16 and local stocks at Rs. 20.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** We have fixed these control prices for these Delta regions mainly because we wanted to stabilise prices in the south and to meet the situation arising from the millers hoarding and not releasing their stocks in the open market.

**Shri Ranga:** Why do you again use the wrong word 'hoarding'? When you take it away, it means robbing.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** Shri Ranga's complaint is different. That is not the subject matter of the half-hour discussion here.

My hon. friend's complaint is that the Kerala Government is in a helpless position. The Kerala Government has entered into some arrangement with the Andhra millers through the good offices of the Andhra Pradesh Government for supply of rice to the Kerala State. They could have entered into this arrangement long before. They could also have called for tenders for supply of rice within the State or they could have also procured from another region rather than from these Delta regions.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** What is your objection? What is the objection of the Central Government to give rice at controlled rates?

**Mr. Speaker:** It is Andhra's objection. (Interruption) We have heard sufficiently.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** In short, what my hon. friend wants is that the Kerala Government should be given favourable treatment.

**Shri Vasudevan Nair:** No, no.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** which we are not in a position to give to other States within the zone.

I submit.

**Mr. Speaker:** What about Madras and Mysore? Have they to procure in Andhra or are they supplied?

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** They are not supplied.

**Mr. Speaker:** Are they supplied any rice by the Centre or are they also obliged to procure some quantity in the open market or elsewhere in the same zone?

Shri A. M. Thomas: If they want, they have to procure; we are not supplying them anything

Mr Speaker: Nothing is supplied to them?

Shri A. M. Thomas: No

Mr. Speaker: As is supplied to Kerala?

Shri A. M. Thomas: No (Interruption)

Mr Speaker. Let him conclude

Shri A. M. Thomas: This is the lean season and naturally the prices are high. With the arrival of the new crop, the situation may improve. When the prices are a little high, what the Kerala Government and my friends of the Communist party want is, to just absolve themselves of all responsibility and put the blame on the Centre. When the price level stabilised itself and there was more or less a comfortable position from February to July and when we were experiencing a situation one of the most difficult in recent years in the States in the North, what the Kerala Government as well as the Communist party were saying was as disclosed by their resolution in Amritsar, pointing out how the Kerala Government has handled the food problem, the Centre has made a muddle of itself and it has hopelessly failed, whereas the Kerala Government has succeeded. Let them take credit, I have absolutely no objection, for the formation of the Southern zone and for making things easier for the free flow of rice to Kerala. Let them take credit, I have no objection. When they are experiencing some difficulty in the matter of prices and other things, then they put the blame on the Centre and they want to absolve themselves of the responsibility. That is the position.

I have not got the time. The proceedings at Amritsar are there. It was in last April or May. (Interruption)

Mr Speaker: Order, order. They have by their own statement said that they are absolutely well off.

Shri Nagi Reddy: What we said was, because of proper distribution the prices in Kerala were better than in any other State.

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: Even without the Communists, things are much better in Madras and Mysore.

Shri Nagi Reddy: Take credit.

Shri A. M. Thomas: It was on the 5th April 1957 that the Communist party came to power in Kerala. Taking stock of the situation after one year they were of opinion that things were all right. What they said was like this:

"Even in normal years, there is scarcity during the lean months of June and July. This year it was much worse because of the price rose all over the country. But, the Government by timely effective steps had been to a great extent able to save the situation."

Then they say—they also take credit—

"Extension of fair price shops, introduction of family identity cards etc., had kept the price during the lean months this year at levels more or less the same or even lower than in previous years and thus while prices had shot up in the other States to unprecedented heights."

Shri Nagi Reddy: Which other States did not do?

Shri A. M. Thomas: This was the claim. Is it the case that after one year, the Central Government is discriminating against Kerala?

Shri Vasudevan Nair: We are prepared to give the credit to Shri A. M. Thomas. Please give us rice.

**Shri A. M. Thomas:** Since we are in some difficulty in these lean months it is said that the Central Government is discriminating against Kerala. I leave it to the House to judge whether there is any substance in the arguments advanced by my friends.

I do not think it is necessary to take the time of the House. My hon. friends' points are absolutely devoid of any merit. Whatever was possible for the Centre to do, it has done. It

has never shirked its duty or responsibility.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Food Minister comes from Kerala. He won't let it down.

**Shri Nagi Reddy:** We expect so.

**Mr. Speaker:** The House will stand adjourned *sine die*.

18.35 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned *sine die*.