

Has it been done in order to give a morale booster to those forces which are trying to create instability in our region, and if so, whether the Government, apart from keeping a vigil on our borders, has taken sufficient steps to see that these forces which are trying to create instability and uncertainty within India are adequately curbed?

**SHRI BANSI LAL** Sir, we are looking after our borders very carefully and there is no cause for anxiety. Our troops are alert.

**SHRI DINESH CHANDRA GO-SWAMI** That was not my question.

**SHRI G VISWANATHAN** To Part (c) of the question, the Minister has replied that he has seen the Press reports. It is the unfortunate fate of the Members to see the Press reports and put questions. But we would like to know more from the hon. Minister. He has neither denied nor confirmed the Chinese troop movements on our borders. I would like to know whether this is true or not.

If so what action is being taken?

**SHRI BANSI LAL** It is not in public interest to disclose the information.

#### **Distribution of Essential Commodities Through Government Channels**

\*24 **SHRI M KALYANASUN DARAM** Will the Minister of INDUSTRY AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state

(a) whether Government have planned the distribution of essential commodities through Government channels; and

(b) the number of items that are at present being supplied to the consumers through Government channels?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI A C GEORGE)**, (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House

#### **Statement**

(a) and (b) Soon after the Department of Civil Supplies and Cooperation was constituted, Regional Conferences of State Ministers for Food, Civil Supplies and Co-operation were held and a detailed strategy for augmentation and extension of the distribution system was planned for implementation to cover priority commodities vulnerable areas and weaker sections of the population. The public distribution system of fair price shops and retail outlets dealing with foodgrains, sugar, controlled cloth, kerosene, oil and soft coke was augmented and extended. The co-operative system was also extended. The essential Commodities Act which was amended by Parliament providing more deterrent punishment against offenders was strictly enforced in order to regulate distribution of items of mass consumption. The number of fair price shops has been increased to 2.30 lakhs. There are 29,000 retail outlets for controlled cloth, 1.66 lakhs retail outlets for kerosene and 6,000 retail outlets for soft coke mainly in the Northern region. Significant market intervention has been effected in urban areas through the consumer cooperative movement and in rural areas by service cooperatives and marketing cooperatives. The commodities distributed by cooperatives includes rice, wheat, coarse grains, sugar, vanaspathi, edible oils, soap, bread, safety matches, cloth, grocery items, exercise books, tea and baby food. The Department of Civil Supplies and Cooperation in cooperation with the State Governments and the various other Ministries concerned of the Government of India also devised an effective monitoring system for controlling prices and ensuring availability of essential commodities. Remedial action was taken to augment stocks in the pipeline, expedite movement of essential commodities to remote areas.

and to augment the production of essential commodities and manufactured items. As a result of these various measures—fiscal, administrative and enforcement—the rate of inflation which stood at its peak in September, 1974 at +31.4 per cent (the all commodities index being 328.9) has been progressively reduced specially since the declaration of emergency and stood at -6.4 per cent (the all commodities index being 295.7) for the week ending 20th December, 1975. There has also been an appreciable fall in retail prices of several essential commodities including, rice, wheat, vanaspati, edible oils, bajara, jowar. After negotiations with the manufacturers, retail prices of baby food, common brands of tea, safety matches, janta soap were reduced. Manufacturers have also agreed to earmark upto 20 per cent of their production in respect of safety matches, vanaspati, edible oils, baby food, razor blades, dry batteries, soap and washing soap for distribution through cooperatives on preferential terms.

**SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM:** Sir, according to the statement, it is claimed that there are 2.30 lakhs fair price shops in the whole country. The object of opening the fair price shops is to help the most vulnerable sections of our people. The agricultural labourers constitute the most vulnerable sections of our society. May I know, how many of these fair price shops are located in rural areas to serve the interests of agricultural labourers?

**SHRI A. C. GEORGE:** Sir, the success of the public distribution system for essential commodities, I agree with the hon. Member, depends basically upon how far we are able to serve the vulnerable sections of our society. Obviously the weaker sections are more in the rural areas. It is the intention of the Government of India to spread these distribution centres as far as possible to the rural area. About the exact percentage between urban and

rural, of this 2.30 lakhs. I am not in a position to tell him precisely now. But, as a basic policy, it is our intention to serve the weaker sections more and more in the villages and in the rural areas.

**SHRI M. KALYANASUNDARAM:** Although the answer to my first supplementary is not very satisfactory, let me put the second supplementary also. It is claimed that there are 29,000 retail outlets for distribution of controlled cloth. The number appears to be small. May I know whether there is any proposal to increase the number of retail outlets for distribution of controlled cloth and whether the shops will actually distribute cloth to the needy people or will they serve as outlets to go back to the merchants?

**SHRI A. C. GEORGE:** In regard to 2.3 lakhs of fair price shops I was not in a position to give the proportion of rural shops to urban shops. In regard to 29,000 retail outlets for the controlled cloth, I am in a position to say that 80 per cent of them are in the rural area. I do concede that 29,000 may not be enough. We have requested the State Governments to spread the network of distribution points as far as possible in the rural areas and the State Federation of co-operatives are taking necessary measures for that.

**SHRI P. VENKATASUBBIAH:** May I know whether the hon. Minister has identified certain commodities such as sugar, wheat, rice, etc., for distribution through the public distribution system? May I know whether the Government are aware that the price of onion and murch had skyrocketed at one time and in fact the price of onion was more than the price of apples and some persons have taken undue advantage of export promotion and have earned enormous profits? May I know whether those two items will also be included as essential commodities so that they may also be made available to the vulnerable sections of our people at reasonable prices?



**THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI T. A. PAI):** While the price of onion started going up in the cities, we looked into the matter and found that the crop in Mexico and Spain had failed and therefore the international prices were going up. To remove the feeling that there is a possibility of export, we had publicly announced that no export of onion would be permitted immediately and the prices started coming down. In Delhi we have arranged through the National Federation of Co-operatives *ten trucks during the last two weeks* to be brought from Nasik in order to see that prices came down. We are keeping a watch over the prices of all essential commodities which affect the life of common people and wherever necessary we shall take proper action.

**SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH:** For the provision of essential commodities in rural areas, retail shops had been opened by the educated unemployed Youth. In this connection, banks provide for areas upto 8 Kilometres only. In many rural areas there are no banks and unless the banks extend the distance of 8 kms for the provision of credit, many unemployed youth who had been given licence and other things for opening shops for selling essential commodities at fair prices, cloths and other things, are not able to start their business. Will the Government see that the banks extend the limit of distance for providing credit? Unless that is done, this scheme is not likely to succeed to the extent that we should like it to succeed.

**SHRI T. A. PAI:** We thank the hon Member for bringing this problem to our notice. I am aware that banks have a rule that they would not give credit so far as agricultural operations are concerned to areas beyond 8 kms because they thought that they may not otherwise be able to supervise those crops. In the case of rural credit of this nature there should be no such problem and I shall certainly take it up.

**SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA:** May I know whether the owners of

retail shops for distribution of controlled cloth are not lifting the requisite stocks from the mills and that is why there has been a large accumulation of stock of controlled cloth in various mills, especially mills run by the National Textile Corporation?

**SHRI T. A. PAI:** Sir, if the retailers or the whole-salers did not lift the stocks it was because that sort of cloth which was made available was not saleable. Therefore, large accumulations have remained with the textile mills and the textile mills were called upon to improve the quality of the cloth. After all you cannot expect the consumer to accept anything that is produced.

#### Schedule for Mithila Broadcasting Station

\*26. **SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA:** Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) the schedule for Mithila Broadcasting (Darbhanga) Station of the A.I.R. going on the air; and

(b) the timings for broadcasts in Maithili, Nepali and Hindi languages?

**THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA):** (a) Installation of Darbhanga Station with interim studio-facilities and arial, is complete. It will be commissioned shortly.

(b) The schedule to form a general pattern is being worked out.

**SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA:** I would like to know the exact date by which the radio station at Darbhanga will be commissioned. What is the capacity of the transmitter? Whether the Government is aware that the Maithili speaking area should be covered by that radio station?

**SHRI DHARAM BIR SINHA:** We hope to commission the station within