

LOK SABHA

Thursday, March 14, 1974/Phalgun
23, 1895 (Saka).

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

FOOD ADULTERATION IN GOVERNMENT
RUN SHOPS

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*311. SHRI D. D. DESAI :
SHRI V. MAYAVAN :

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND
FAMILY PLANNING be pleased to
state :

(a) whether Government's attention
has been drawn to a news item in a
local daily of February 15, 1974 that
the Government-run shops are the
largest adulterators of many commo-
dities; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction
thereto ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN
THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
FAMILY PLANNING (SHRI A. K.
KISKU) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A statement is laid on the Table
of the Sabha.

Statement

The Question apparently refers to
a news item which appeared in the
Hindustan Times dated 15-2-1974.
The news item, however, refers to
Fair Price Shops and not to Govern-
ment-run-shops. To ascertain the facts
of the case, the Consumer Council of

India were requested to furnish the
sources from which the information
given in the report was obtained by
them. In spite of reminders and per-
sonal contact, the Consumer Council
of India have not been able to furnish
the required information. No distinc-
tion is made between the Fair Price
shops and other shops so far as the
enforcement of the provisions of the
Preventoin of Food Adulteration Act
is concerned

Some of the steps taken by Govern-
ment to curb the menace of food adul-
teration are indicated below :

1. The Prevention of Food Adultera-
tion Act was amended in 1964 whereby
the penalty clause was made more
deterrent and Government of India was
also given concurrent powers to ap-
point Food Inspectors and Public
Analysis for checking adulteration at
inter-state level as well as at manufac-
turers, whole-salers or other levels
wherever considered necessary. It
is proposed to amend the Act further
to make its provisions more stringent

2. A new Food Research and Stan-
dardisation laboratory is being estab-
lished at Ghaziabad.

3. Training courses have been started
at the Central Food Laboratory, Cal-
cutta to provide for trained and
experienced analysts. Scholarships have
been sanctioned for candidates study-
ing food analysis at Andhra University.

4. The State/Union Territory Gov-
ernments have been addressed to con-
sider the question of—

- (i) utilising the existing labora-
tories in the medical colleges
in the States for the purpose
of analysis of food samples;
and

- (ii) setting up mobile laboratories that can be of great help in preliminary testing of foods in the markets, thus helping the trade and consumers in assessing the quality of food.

5. Adulteration cases relating to Delhi, where deterrent punishments have been awarded, have been flashed on radio, television and published in the press.

SHRI D. D. DESAI : I have gone through the statement carefully. The issue is about food adulteration and non-availability of clean grains at shops run by the Government. The statement laid on the Table does not satisfy me because the grains we get as rations from Government shops and fair price shops are adulterated; they contain several foreign articles. Would it be correct to say that these items are added subsequent to receipt or at the production end? And what steps are Government taking to see that the ration issued is properly inspected and no such adulterated foodstuffs are distributed. If they have any doubts, they can visit any food distribution centre in the city of Bombay or wherever foodgrains are distributed.

SHRI A. K. KISKU : There are reports from time to time about food adulteration. The Ministry of Health is very vigilant about the whole thing—more so about the mechanism of adulteration. But we do not have any specific information about adulterated food being distributed from government stores.

SHRI D. D. DESAI : I was not saying about processed foods adulteration only; I was saying about grains mixed with foreign materials being distributed in government-run shops. Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to let me know whether he has made enquiries, whether he has read the proceedings of the Maharashtra Legislature or of the Legislature of any other State where it has been pointed out how much mixing is going on? What steps are Government taking, in this

regard? It is not a question of defending something. It is a clear case of foreign and other inedible materials being mixed with wheat and rice in the city of Bombay and other metropolitan centres. I want to know at what point this adding and mixing takes place and to what extent Government or the distributing agencies are corrupt and take away the balance grains?

SHRI A. K. KISKU : As far as the Ministry of Health is concerned, we do not make any distinction whatsoever between the food given from private sources and the food given from government sources because our responsibility is to determine the quality of food. As I have said, we have no information whatsoever about adulterated food being distributed from government stores. If it is a question of some seeds or some such thing having been found in the grains, it may be that because of some agricultural operation like use of insecticides, the foodgrains may have some kind of deterioration. But we are not concerned with that.

MR. SPEAKER : The question was very simple—that the Government shops or depots get the foodgrains mixed up with foreign matter. That is a simple matter.

SHRI A. K. KISKU : We have no information, but, if the hon. Member has got any particular case, we will look into that.

SHRI G. VISWANATHAN : The Minister is totally wrong when he says that he was not aware of this. The Consumer Council of India whose President also happens to be a member of the Treasury Benches has often pointed out to the Government that practically all commodities from soft drinks to cement, from coffee to drugs, are all adulterated and the Government is keeping quiet and the officials are not at all acting. What is the Government going to do to prevent such widespread adulteration? What steps are you going to take?

जयते" की ओर जो ध्यान दिलाया है, वह बिल्कुल सही है। नियम के अनुसार जहां भी राष्ट्रीय चिह्न रहेगा, उस के नीचे "सत्यमेव जयते" लिखा रहना चाहिए। यह भारत सरकार की 1973-74 की पुस्तिका में दिखला रहा हूं। मन्त्रीय सदस्य ने ठीक ही कहा है कि सौ रुपये के नोट पर, या किसी भी नोट पर, "सत्यमेव जयते" नहीं लिखा हुआ है। इस बात की मांग की जाती है कि सरकार सौ रुपये और दस रुपये के नोटों का चलन बन्द कर दे, ताकि मुद्रा स्फीति खत्म हो। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या सरकार महीने, दो महीने या तीन महीने के अन्दर ऐसी आज्ञा प्रसारित करेगी कि जिन चीजों पर राष्ट्रीय चिह्न के नीचे "सत्यमेव जयते" नहीं लिखा हुआ है, वहां इन शब्दों को लिखा जाये, और चूंकि सौ रुपये और दस रुपये के नोटों पर "सत्यमेव जयते" नहीं लिखा हुआ है, इसलिए क्या वह उन नोटों को रद्द कर देगी, ताकि देश में मुद्रा-स्फीति को खत्म करने में मदद मिल सके।

SHRI F. H. MOHSIN: Sir, this question was referred to the Ministry of Finance and the then Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance assured the House that he would consider the question further. Later on, this question was considered in detail in the Ministry of Finance and because the addition of the motto 'Satyameva Jayate' in the printed portion would tend to increase the lettering, it was found not feasible to include it. This was the opinion of the Ministry of Finance and we had to accept it.

SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE: Cost factor was the reason.

श्री अंकर दयाल सिंह : मंत्री महोदय न कहा है कि नोटों पर इन शब्दों के लिए जगह नहीं है। मैं समझता हूं कि यह कोई सन् शेष-जनक उत्तर नहीं है। नोटों पर "सत्यमेव जयते" मुद्रित क ग्वाया जा सकता है।

श्री जगन्नाथ राव जोशी : मंत्री महोदय ने यह स्वीकार किया है कि "सत्यमेव जयते" राष्ट्रीय चिह्न का अविभाज्य अंग है। बाद में उन्होंने कहा कि कुछ तकनीकी कठिनाइयों की वजह से नोटों आदि के सम्बन्ध में इसको स्वीकार नहीं किया गया है। मंत्री महोदय ने जो तकनीकी कठिनाई बताई है, अर्थात् नोट पर जगह कम है, वह गले के नीचे नहीं उतरती है। नोटों पर सब भाषाओं में "दस रुपये" या "सौ रुपये" लिखा हुआ है। अगर शब्द ज्यादा हो जाते हैं, तो अक्षरों को छोटा किया जा सकता है। इस देश में एक चावल के दाने पर गीता लिखने वाले मौजूद हैं, और सरकार कहती है कि नोटों पर "सत्यमेव जयते" भी नहीं लिखा जा सकता है। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि जब "सत्यमेव जयते" शब्द हमारे राष्ट्रीय चिह्न का अविभाज्य अंग है, तो क्या सरकार उसको नोटों पर लिखवाने की व्यवस्था करेगी।

SHRI F. H. MOHSIN: I have already replied to this question. This was considered in detail in the Ministry of Finance and they found it not feasible to include this motto 'Satyameva Jayate' because of too much lettering involved.

श्री जगन्नाथ राव जोशी : जब नोट पर कई भाषाओं में "दस रुपये" या "सौ रुपये" नहीं लिखा हुआ है, तो क्या उस पर "सत्यमेव जयते" लिखा जा सकता है? मंत्री महोदय "सत्यमेव जयते" के बारे में झूठ बात बोलें, तो कैसे काम चलेगा?

SHRI D. D. DESAI: Mahatma Gandhi had equated Satya with God. Is Satyameva Jayate now being used was by way of slogan, or decoration, or is it a national policy to be strictly adhered to?

SHRI F. H. MOHSIN: As the non-Members are aware, the Asoka Pillar was taken from the Sarnath Temple. Satyameva Jayate was taken from the Upnishads and, later on, it was added as a part of the national emblem. But the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Communications did not agree

SHRI G. VISWANATHAN : No. Adulteration is increasing day by day. He is totally wrong. It is an outright untruth. Here is a responsible Minister making an irresponsible statement.

MR. SPEAKER : You said that there is no adulteration. Then, from where does this decline come in ?

SHRI K. GOPAL : From the hon. Minister's reply and the statement we find that the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act was amended in 1964 whereby the penalty clauses were made more stringent and also the Government gave certain additional powers, etc. I would like to know how many persons have been prosecuted and convicted for this offence so far.

SHRI A. K. KISKU : As far as the Act is concerned, the House knows that we are coming with a comprehensive amendment of the Act itself. There are certain things to be amended and for which we are coming to the Parliament in the current session with an amending Bill. As I said, about the declining trend of adulteration, I may quote from the information at my disposal that in the year 1964 the percentage of samples found adulterated...

MR. SPEAKER : No, no. That was not the question.

SHRI K. GOPAL : Perhaps, the hon. Minister has not followed my question. I asked how many persons have been prosecuted and convicted so far.

श्री रावकंबर : वस्तुओं में मिलावट होती है, इसकी जानकारी होने से उन्होंने इन्कार किया है। शायद उनके घर में अच्छी चीजे पट्टेज जाती होंगी। जो दूध दो महीने पहले मिलता था वही आज पहले के मुकाबले में बहुत पतला मिलने लग गया है और मिलावटी भी होता है। हम संसद् सदस्यों को जो खाने की चीजें मिलती हैं अगर उन चीजों को मंत्री जी के घर भेज दिया जाए तो उनकी पता चल जाएगा कि कितनी उन में मिलावट है।

अवकाश नहीद्वय : जय सरकार पूर्ण !

श्री रावकंबर : मेरा प्रश्न यह है कि पिछले दो तीन सहीनों में आपने कितने मिलावट करने वालों को पकड़ा है और अगर नहीं पकड़ा है तो क्या इससे मंत्रालय की डिस्टाई सिद्ध नहीं होती है ?

SHRI A. K. KISKU : I have not said that food is not being adulterated. What I am trying to impress upon the House is that the Ministry of Health is at war with adulteration

Secondly, it is mainly the State Governments through which the Act is being implemented and we are in close touch with the State Government and we are trying our best as far as possible to see that adulterations is brought to the minimum because, as my hon. colleague, Shri Khadiilkar who is here, had stated in the last session, that adulteration is a lucrative industry... (Interruptions).

SHRI S. A. KADER : A large inspecting staff is being maintained by the Department to inspect all types of cereals that are supplied through co-operatives as well as fair-price shops. Would it be advisable to inquire into the living conditions of these inspectors after they have joined service and how much they have physically and monetarily improved. I would like to ask the Minister whether he is prepared to ask the CBI to make an inquiry of that kind.

MR. SPEAKER : This is a good suggestion. You better make an enquiry. No answer is necessary. Please leave that out. Mr. Ishaouc, don't enter into arguments with me as if you are selling goods to me. From the question that you put I find as if I am ready to buy the goods.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : I have one question to ask.

MR. SPEAKER : I shall come to you later.

SHRI A. K. M. ISHAQUE : From the newspaper report it is now clear that the food supplies made from the government-run ration shops are unfit for human consumption. I want to know whether Government has set up a machinery which can take up all the food adulteration cases for investigation. If so, what measures has the Government taken to prevent this evil ?

SHRI A. K. KISHKU : I have already answered this question.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : The hon. Minister said that there are at least some prosecutions launched against some of the shop owners. I want to know how many cases of prosecutions were made against the persons who run the Government ration shops for distribution of food articles and how many of them were prosecuted against and were acquitted by the judiciary ?

SHRI A. K. KISKU : I am sorry I cannot answer this question. I can give the hon. Member figures about the number of prosecutions launched. In 1964 the number of prosecutions launched is 40,661; number of convictions is 26,223 but the number of imprisonments made is 857. In 1972, the number of prosecutions launched is 21,600. I may add here that we do not discriminate between government run shops and private shops in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER : The question here is only concerning the government shops.

SHRI A. K. KISKU : In 1972, the No. of prosecutions launched is 21,863; the number of convictions is 11,889 and the number of persons imprisoned is 3,795.

Very recently, in Delhi, we had made very specific efforts to see how far and to what extent food is being adulterated and how to cope with this thing. In January 1974, in Delhi, the number of samples drawn was 185 and

the number of food adulteration cases was 10. These were from the manufacturers. But from the wholesalers as well as stockists, the samples drawn were from 187 persons. The number of food adulteration cases found was 30. From the retailers, 250 samples were drawn of which ten samples were found to be adulterated.

In the Ministry, we have formed a high power Committee and from this Committee, we had been writing to the Delhi Administration as well as the judiciary about such cases. As I said, this is a good sign and we should encourage it. The point I am making is this. We have asked for some special magistrates to deal with this matter and we find the courts are becoming very strict about it now.

SHRI AMRIT NAHATA : I would like to know whether the Government have received a complaint from an employee of a food packing company of Gujarat—a copy of the complaint has also been sent to me—in which it has been alleged that the company used sub-standard and adulterated material for packing and making pickles ? If so, what action will be taken against that company as a senior Member of this House is associated with that company ?

MR. SPEAKER : The question is regarding Government-run shops. You may send a copy of the complaint to the Minister.

SHRI MOHANRAJ KALINGARAYAR : Sir, the Minister has said that his Ministry is very vigilant about adulteration and the incidence of adulteration has gone down to a certain limit. I would like to know from him if he is aware that most of the Government hospitals have sent complaints to the Consumers' Council of India pointing out that the bread which is supplied to the hospitals is adulterated with tapioca powder.

SHRI A. K. KISKU : We do not have any such information. We will be grateful if you pass on the same to us.