

Committee on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs for the year 1997-98.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now Dr. Manmohan Singh.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (Delhi): Sir is it a Short Duration Discussion?

यह शार्ट ड्यूरेशन डिस्कशन है या स्पेशल मेंशन है?

I am only asking this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is only a Special Mention.

Price Rise

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH (Assam): Mr. Chairman, Sir, with your permission, I beg to draw the attention of this House and of the Government to the alarming and grave price situation that prevails in our country. According to the official statistics, in the current year, the wholesale price index has shown an increase close to 9 per cent. What is much more disturbing is that this year's price increase has been concentrated on essential commodities, particularly the primary commodities. Whereas in the week ended 7th November, 1998, all commodities' wholesale price index showed an increase of 8.85 per cent, the index of primary articles showed an annual increase of 18.24 per cent. Over the year, the cereal index shows an increase of 13.24 per cent and the oil-seeds index shows an increase of 23.62 per cent and the edible oil index shows an increase of 23.37 per cent. Sir, we all know that the wholesale price index grossly under-states the actual increase in prices and the annual index of the consumer price index, according to the Government's own statistics, is already 15 per cent to 16 per cent. This disturbing increase in prices, of course, further gets accentuated when we look at the prices of articles of mass consumption. For instance, in the case of onion, there is an 800 per cent increase. Prices of potatoes, tomatoes and all other vegetables have registered a steep increase, and therefore, a situation exists today when our country is heading for a double-digit inflation. The people of India have had an opportunity to express their views on this grave situation and

I believe, there is, today no difference of opinion, whether on the Opposition Benches or on the Treasury Benches, that the price situation that prevails in our country is a cause of grave national concern. I recall, Sir, that some weeks ago, the Prime Minister, commenting on the price situation, mentioned two reasons for the possible price increase; one he termed as *asmani*, the other he termed as *sultani*. Sir, my charge is that this Government has overstated the role of *asmani* factors, and it has underestimated the role of *sultani* factors. Sir, the price increase this year has taken place in the background of a three to four per cent increase in agricultural production projected by the official statistics of this country. In the past also, prices has risen, but these price increases, especially for articles of mass consumption and primary articles usually were associated with the severe drought situation. This year, on the whole, the agricultural situation points to an increase of three to four per cent in production. That prices of essential commodities and primary articles, should be rising despite this large increase in agricultural production is a reflection of the gross mismanagement on the part of this Government.

Secondly, Sir, in the past, sometimes prices in our country rose because of international factors the increase in oil prices, the increase in prices of articles coming from outside. That factor also is missing this year. The prices of petroleum products in the world market are now lowest then drawing. The last twenty years. What is more, all over the world, the prices of most articles have been falling, not rising. India is only one of the few unfortunate countries where, despite what is happening in the world, the prices are getting out of hand. Therefore, Sir, I submit to you that this is a classic case of utter neglect of the price situation, utter mismanagement of the economy.

When this Government came to power, and when the Government presented the Budget, I had warned on that very day that this Government's fiscal policies were going to perpetuate stagflation. At that time, the Finance Minister and the other members of this Government had ridiculed that suggestion. In fact, Sir, our country is today faced with

declining production, declining rate of growth, but accelerating prices. The only index which is increasing is the index of prices. The index of industrial production is down, the index of exports is down, the capital inflows from institutional investors show a negative growth this year. The foreign direct investment inflows this year point to a fall as compared with last year. As I said, the only thing that is going up is the misery index, the price increase that is taking place.

Sir, why is this price increase taking place? Whatever factors have been blamed by the Government, basically, the fault lies with the overall macro-management of the economy, the taxation policies of this Government, the monetary policies of this Government, the foreign trade policies of this Government, the faulty implementation of the public Distribution System of the country and the failure to anticipate the seasonal and other factors which sometimes affect the prices. On all these points, I find that this Government has been lax to a point of criminality. Take the case of fiscal management. The Finance Minister presented a Budget with tax proposals, the increase in petroleum prices; firstly, there was an increase by four rupees a litre; next day it was rolled back! The increase in the prices of urea within two weeks was rolled back! Sir, we all know once prices go up, the trades don't follow the Government's instructions even if excise duties go down subsequently and, therefore, the fact that the Government has such a mistaken idea of what the system can absorb by way of excise duties is one of the major factors which boosted the inflationary psychology in our country. Then there is the special import duty, a generalised increase in import duty of 8%. Subsequently it was lowered to 4%. But the damage was done. The psychology of inflation got emmed into the system. Overall, the Government had presented a Budget which said that they would contain the fiscal deficit of the country at 5.6% of GDP. It outlined a programme of tax measures. It outlined a programme of expenditure. The situation today is that nobody in the world, no serious economist in our country, believes the word of this Government that it is going to contain the fiscal deficit at 5.6% of the GDP. Every day newspapers are coming out with the news that

the tax projections are going haywire and that the expenditure projections are rising far beyond what the Government had projected. You see it all every day in the statistics published by the Reserve Bank of India with regard to the growth of money supply. This Government, at the time when it presented the Budget and subsequently, had declared that they have a target of 15% growth rate of money supply. But for all these months the annual growth rate of money supply has been of the order of 20%. If the fiscal indices point to the reverse direction, if the monetary indices are in different directions from what the Government has projected, it is not surprising that the people of India do not believe the word of this Government when it says that the prices are under control or that the prices are rising for reasons beyond the Control of this Government. Therefore, I charge this Government of having a mistaken fiscal policy, a mistaken monetary policy, and I also charge it of having a foreign trade policy which does not recognise that this is year in which there should have been a moderation of exports of commodities like onions and vegetables. They did not take action in time and the result is that we have a major crisis in the country with regard to steep increase in the prices of all essential commodities. The situation in which the production of onion decreases by 10 per cent to 15 per cent but the price of onion goes up by 1,000 per cent, I think, is a classic case of failure of management of the economy. It is not simply an act of God. It cannot be simply explained away by seasonal factors. Overall during this Government's regime the public distribution system has been grossly neglected. The Government has failed to ensure that hoarders, the unscrupulous elements in trade, are disciplined. What is the use of the Prime Minister calling a conference of Chief Ministers on the 26th or 27th of November? These things should have been done much earlier. Our fear is and our suspicion is that the Government has been unduly soft on these unscrupulous elements and they have taken full advantage of the scarcity in certain sectors to push the price index of all essential commodities in such a manner as I have described. As I have mentioned, the alarming Price situation is something which is not

disputed. The Members of the ruling coalition themselves have said that the rise in the prices of essential commodities is a major factor for the debacle of the ruling party in the recent elections. Yet, we find that even today there is no consistent and coherent plan of action. Calling conferences without outlining practical measures is not going to make the situation any better. Sir, my fear, as I said, is that our country is today in the midst of an unusual stagflation. The output is declining. The prices are going up. My fear is that if this Government continues to be as lax in its economic management as it has been doing during the last seven or eight months, our country is heading for a major economic crisis. It is in some way the stagnation of output, the stagnation of the industry, which has saved this country from a balance of payment crisis. Suppose the industrial production picks up in a manner in which the Minister of Industry wants, it and we all want it, what will happen?

If our imports rise in a big way, if our exports decline, if the capital inflows decline, then we have all the makings of a major balance of payment crisis. Therefore, I urge upon the Government to wake up now. Do not push this country into another grave economic crisis, balance of payments' crisis. It is time that effective measures are taken to improve the economic management, to bring the price situation under control.

CHAIRMAN: Some hon. Members want to associate. I would call them but they should finish in two minutes.

SHRI GURUDS DAS DUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, it is really fine to hear Dr. Manmohan Singh because today he says that the wholesale price index does not reflect the price increase. It is a departure from the original position. We say that the wholesale price index is a total fraud. We have always been saying this. No Finance Minister accepted that position here in the House. At least now the situation has brought many of us close to reality and close to life.

Firstly, I charge the Government that it has been friendly towards the delinquent traders. I am not going into the details of economic fundamentals. Let us discuss the economic

fundamentals in a structured way. The specific issue here is the price rise. Why has there been this price rise? The economic policies are wrong.

The economic policies need to be changed. This unbridled liberalisation must be given a go-by. That is a broader question on which many of us may differ. That is a different issue. But so far as the price rise is concerned, it has taken place to such a magnitude because the Government has been found to be friendly towards the delinquent traders. That is my first charge.

The second point is this and unfortunately I have to say this. We find a total collapse of the Government because you will kindly remember that this House discussed the issue of price rise in the month of July, when I had raised the discussion. At that point of time, the hon. Finance Minister had categorically stated that it was a seasonal price-rise and that within a month or two there was bound to be a decline. It only betrays the ignorance on the part of the Government. The Government failed to see what was in the offing, what was the future. The Government failed to estimate the dangerous potentials of the situation. Therefore, my second charge is that the Government is absolutely incapable of discharging its responsibility as a constitutionally-constituted Government of the country.

My third charge is that this Government has been deliberately sitting on the amendment of the Essential Commodities Act. The Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Jyoti Basu, stated that the question of amendment of the Essential Commodities Act was held back. It was introduced in the Parliament. It was again referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee. The Standing Committee gave its approval. There was a discussion that took place. The Government took the plea that the discussion was inconclusive and it was again sent to the Select Committee. It was a pre-determined plan not to pass that amendment, not to give the additional powers, not to give the administration the power to take adequate punitive measures against those who, taking advantage of the scarcity, take to black-marketing and hoarding. The Government

deliberately did it because this is a Government which is friendly towards the delinquent traders.

Thirdly, this Government has been totally inactive since July. This Government not only failed to read the situation, it also deliberately did not take any steps. No step was taken. We pointed out in the House that there was bound to be scarcity in the supply of a large number of essential commodities. We demanded a temporary ban on exports. But the Government refused to oblige. The Government refused to oblige the nation. We demanded that some sort of action must be taken against the delinquent traders. We demanded that they should be put behind bars. Not a single person was sent to jail. There is not a single case in which punitive action was taken.

The traders were allowed to do their job. I do not know in exchange of what that the traders were allowed to do their job. And after they have done their job, there was only a comic action on the part of the Government just one month before the election. As a stunt some people were arrested. Even there was a suggestion by their allies that the Chief Ministers' Conference should be called to discuss measures to tackle the situation. That was also not taken care of. Therefore, Sir, it is not a question of failure. It is a question of deliberate failure. It is a question of collapse. It is a question of collusion. It is a question of the Government failing to discharge its responsibility as a constitutionally constituted Government....

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Therefore, Sir, since the Government has totally failed to discharge its responsibility, I demand immediate resignation of the Government that is in power today. The Government must see the mood of the people. The Government must read what is the writing on the wall. The Government must be sensitive to understand what is in store for them. If even today the Government is insensitive, greater reverses await them in future. Therefore, Sir, in order that a greater disaster does not befall the country and a greater disaster does not befall the Government, it is better that the Government clear out of office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Biplab Dasgupta. Associate yourself in two minutes.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal): Two minutes are not enough...

MR. CHAIRMAN: A number of people are there. You take two minutes only.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Sir, I thought that we had asked for a much longer discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is a different thing. We are on Special Mentions.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Sir, the issue is not simply one of the prices of onions and potatoes. Last year during this time the rate of inflation was three per cent. Even at the time of election, it was around five per cent. Now it is approximately 10 per cent. So, one has to explain what policies, what factors, have led to this rise in price, this galloping inflation. And this inflation is not of a general type. It is hurting the common masses, hurting the people who want to buy the essential commodities. But these are not coming. If the Government says that it was due to natural disaster, then the red signal was flashing for the last three or four months. As far as I know, the experts advised the Government to make imports. Why were these imports not made when many other smaller items were imported? Why were these important items not imported? I also want to ask why distribution was not stringent. I know that some attempts were made here and there later on. Why was no attempt made to make a proper distribution? Also, why was no administrative action taken against the traders who were responsible for manipulating the prices? We all know—Dr. Manmohan Singh and all of us—that inflation is caused by a situation where too much of money chases too few goods. You have allowed the money to be generated. By the policies which you followed, whether the policies in relation to banking, trading or other things, you allowed the money to be generated, but production collapsed. It is not only production of onion or potato, but as Dr. Manmohan Singh has said, taking the entire country's economy into account, there has been an all-round failure on the part of the BJP Government to raise production. My question is, why did it happen? The Government gave all kinds of support to the private sector. Still

the private sector did not respond. Why did they not respond? The Government gave all kinds of support to the foreign private investment. Still they did not respond. Our Finance Minister spends more time in the United States than here. Swadeshi has been ditched. There is no more talk of Swadeshi. Still foreign private investment does not come. And the lack of confidence in the Government has not only been expressed by the voters of Delhi or Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan, it has also been expressed by foreign investors because the value of the rupee is going down.

It is also reflected in the share market in our country. The share index was around 4,000 a few months ago. Now it is less than 3,000. Why is there this lack of confidence? The lack of confidence has come because of the way the economy has been managed, the policy has been managed, the society has been managed. I do not have the time to go into the details of these things. It is a reflection of the all-round failure of the Government in the last six months. That is reflected not only in the election but also in the prices quoted in the share market, in the price quoted for the Indian rupee in the foreign market and also in the price of onions. I was told by the Minister when he was replying to another question that we must be happy that the East-Asian debacle was not repeated in India. He was very happy about it. As an economist my question is just the opposite. If East-Asia was suffering, why could not India gain at the cost of East-Asia? What I am saying is, if the investors were withdrawing money from South East-Asia, then why did not they invest in India? If South East Asia and East-Asia are competing with India, then why was there a collapse, why was there unwillingness on the part of the foreign investors? I am not in favour of foreign investors but what I am saying is, you encouraged them.

Earlier, when there was a crisis in India, the investors sent money to East-Asia. Why this time they did not come to India? It was because of the lack of confidence which is reflected not only in the way the voters have turned out over the last two days but also by the Indian people in general, by the foreign investors, even by the supporters of BJP. The supporters of BJP had no confidence in the BJP.

There is another reason why there was rise in prices. When the Government came to power they gave a pledge that they had an agenda of their own which they did not want to implement and that they would only implement the national agenda which had been worked out by all the allies together. That was the pledge made publicly, a pledge made after the elections, a pledge made in the House also, that they would only stick to the national agenda, they would not implement their own agenda. Take the Pokhran issue. What does Pokhran imply for inflation? Pokhran implies a heavy diversion of economic resources for having military establishment along the border. Pokhran implies a heavy transfer of resources from money which could have been spent for production, in infrastructure which has been mentioned, or in hospitals, in schools. This money is now being invested for things which are not giving us any competitive advantage. So, whatever inflation is taking place, it is also largely because of whatever money we have, not very much, but a lot of money is being wasted in expenditures which are not productive. That is also a major reason. We do not have the figures. The Government does not give us all the figures for all the expenditure they make on military, on defence. These figures would make it clear as to why this inflation has been contributed by this defence expenditure. All I want to say is, the Government should take a lesson from this. People are not fools. They can be fooled only for a short while. Some of them can be fooled all their life but you cannot fool all the people all the time by all these tricks. So the people have learnt the lesson and I hope the Government will also learn the lesson. Certainly, the allies of the Government will learn the lesson. Thank you.

श्री अचिन राय (परिचयी बंगाल): सर, जहाँ तक प्राईस राइज का मामला है, भारत की जनता द्वारा इस नतीजे का जवाब तीन स्टेट में बड़े अच्छे ढंग से देने के बावजूद भी जनता का प्याज को लेकर के जो मामला उठा है, उस मामले में जो दाम बढ़े इसके लिए इस सरकार की उधर कोई सोच नहीं है। जनता की ओर हर चीज में इनकी दृष्टि बहुत ही कम है। चाहे वह लेबर चाइल्ड हो, चाहे दूसरी कुछ चीजें हों किसी भी चीज में इनका कोई ध्यान नहीं है।

श्री सभापति: आप प्राइस पर बोलिए।

श्री अवनि राव: प्राइस पर ही कह रहा हूँ। हर चीज इसके साथ जुड़ी हुई है। तो इतनी महंगाई के बावजूद अगर यह सरकार ध्यान से नहीं सुनेगी तो यह सरकार चलाने का हक इनको नहीं है। यही मेरा कहना है और इसी मामले में इनको रेज़िगनेशन देकर आम जनता की जो राय है उस ओर अपना ध्यान आकर्षित करना चाहिए।

प्रो. रामगोपाल यादव (उत्तर प्रदेश): श्रीमन्, आजाद हिन्दुस्तान में पहली बार जितनी बेतरतीब ढंग से और तेजी से आम उपभोक्ताओं की जरूरी चीजों की कीमतें बढ़ी उससे ऐसा लगता है कि सत्ता के शिखर पर बैठे हुए लोगों को या तो यह अहसास नहीं कि गरीबों की क्या दिक्कतें होती हैं या वह कुछ निहित स्वार्थ के लोगों को बचाने के लिए अपनी आंख बंद किए बैठे रहे। अर्थशास्त्र के सारे सिद्धांत, सारे नियम, सारी चीजें फेल हो गई। मुझे याद है इसी हाऊस में जब टमाटर की कीमतों के बढ़ने की बात हुई थी तो कृषि मंत्री ने वहां खड़े होकर कहा था कि टमाटर से स्वास्थ्य खराब हो जाता है उसे लोग क्यों खाते हैं। बहुत लाइटली इस चीज को लिया गया था और जिस तरह से चीजों के दाम बढ़े, मुझे नहीं मालूम कि इधर बैठे लोगों को अहसास है या नहीं लेकिन मैंने देखा है कि पिछले दो महीने में किसी सब्जी या दाल के साथ रोटी खाने के लिए भी आम आदमी, गरीब आदमी भी परेशान हो गया। जिनको दो बार खाना नहीं मिलता था तथा एक बार खाना मिलता था वे लोग भी सूखी रोटी खाने के लिए विवश हो गये। आपको याद होगा, सर, कि एक स्थिति ऐसी भी आई इस देश में केवल अफवाहों के आधार पर नमक 60 रुपए किलो तक बिक गया। अब आप यह मत कहिए कि यह अफवाहें किसने फैलाई, लेकिन आप बैठे हुए हैं, इट वाज योर रेस्पोंसिबिलिटी कि किन लोगों ने अफवाहें उड़ाई या कौन गरीब लोगों की जेबों में डाका डाल रहा था। एक-एक दिन में करोड़ों रुपए गरीब उपभोक्ताओं की जेब के अनावश्यक रूप से ज्यादा कुछ पूंजीपतियों और व्यापारियों के हाथों में चले गये और एक भी व्यक्ति के खिलाफ कोई कार्रवाई नहीं हुई। इसलिए लोगों को यह संदेह था, शक था और लोगों ने अपने शक, संदेह और गुस्से का इजहार भी किया मतदान के वक्त कि कुछ लोगों को लाभ पहुंचाने के लिए, कुछ व्यापारियों को लाभ पहुंचाने के लिए या तो व्यापारियों का संबंध बी.जे. पी. से रहा या कुछ सोफ्ट कॉर्नर बी.जे.पी. से जुड़े लोगों के साथ रहा, इसलिए उनके खिलाफ कोई कार्रवाई नहीं हुई और गरीब दबता चला गया, पिस्ता चला गया और वह रोटी एक सब्जी या दाल के साथ खाने से वंचित हो गया। श्रीमन्, सारे सदन को मालूम है कि जब सरसों के

तेल की मिलावट की वजह से डीप्सी हुआ तो तेल प्रतिबंधित कर दिया गया। तब 30 रुपए किलो वह तेल बिक रहा था और अब वही तेल जो स्टोर में बचा रहा अब वही तेल 60 रुपए किलो, 70 रुपए किलो पैक हो करके बिकने लगा। वही तेल जो कहीं पैका नहीं गया, कहीं डेस्ट्रॉय नहीं किया गया तो वह तेल जो 30 रुपए, 35 रुपए प्रति किलो बिक रहा था अब 70 रुपए किलो बिकने लगा। मैं एक और चीज बताना चाहता हूँ कि अगर इसी तरह का मिस-मैनेजमेंट रहा जिस तरह से डॉयअमोनियम फस्फेट खाद उत्तर प्रदेश में किसानों को नहीं मिल रही है तो आने वाला समय और कष्टप्रद होगा। इस प्रकार आलू, गेहूं और सेब की प्रोडक्शन बहुत कम हो जाएगी जिसकी आप कल्पना नहीं कर सकते हैं। मुझे खेद के साथ कहना पड़ रहा है कि बी.जे.पी. रूलड स्टेट्स में बैठे हुए लोगों को संभवतः यह ज्ञान ही नहीं है कि किसानों को अगर आप इस तरह की चीजों को उपलब्ध नहीं कराएंगे तो आने वाले समय में क्या दिक्कतें होंगी। इसलिए जो अभी कह रहे थे गौतम जी कि कुछ सजेशन दीजिए, सजेशन सिर्फ यही है कि अगर इस देश को ठीक तरीके से रखना चाहते हो, आने वाले दिनों में और ज्यादा गंभीर संकट से बचाना चाहते हो तो नैतिकता के आधार पर ही सही, हालांकि नैतिकता शब्द को जोड़ना मुझे उचित नहीं लगता इन लोगों के साथ, इस सरकार को त्यागपत्र दे देना चाहिए। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now Shri Jayant Kumar Malhoutra.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH (Gujarat): Sir, he has given my name.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will call one by one.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Sir, he has given my name.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then I will call you later on. Now Shri Virumbi.

SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, I have suggested his name.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Actually, we are calling according to the names which have been given.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: No, Sir. ... (Interruptions)....

MR. CHAIRMAN: I will give you time. There is no doubt about it. Now Shri Virumbi.

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, now we are dealing with an important issue that rocked the country. For the last three months, the people who are

working from dawn to dusk are suffering like anything because of the price rise. But, fortunately, south of the Vindhyas more or less, the inflation is three per cent less than the national average. When the inflation in the south of the Vindhyas is three per cent less than the national average, in the north of Vindhyas, in some areas, it is double and in some areas, it is triple the average prices. Sir, the primary articles had contributed more than 60 per cent to the growth rate of inflation. The manufactured goods, including edible oils, have contributed more than 38 per cent to inflation. What is wrong with this? Is there any drought continuously in this year also? No. When there is no such situation, why is the price rise so abnormal? It is not commensurate with the production size. Even if we believe the statement issued by the Treasury Benches, the decline in the production of onions is between 10 to 20 per cent. Then the rise in prices should be commensurate with this. The prices are increasing six times or seven times and they are not commensurate with the actual production. Therefore, the mistake lies not with the reasons attributed by the Government. The reason actually lies somewhere else, i.e., complete mismanagement. When the prices of food products increase, automatically, the percentage consumption of those people who have an average family also increases. When the people spend more for the consumer and food products, ultimately, it is going to have an impact on the prices of these products. Their purchasing capacity will also be affected. Therefore, when the consumer products are affected, automatically, the market is affected. It affects the production and recession also takes place. Since the time at my disposal does not permit me to explain it in detail, I directly come to the main points.

Sir, the *ad hoc* OGL policy is being applied by this Government. Because of this *ad hoc* OGL policy, the farm production system is being affected in this country. All of a sudden, one morning or another evening, they take some *ad hoc* policy decisions. These *ad hoc* decisions, particularly the OGL policy, have affected the farm production system in our country. The traders have now come to know that once an artificial scarcity is created in the market, automatically, the Government will

give permission for the import licences. Sir, one section of the trading community has decided to create an artificial scarcity and they think that they have more or less won the battle. They made the Government to bow before them and they are able to import items which are not at all required. Have the farmers been benefited? No. Have the consumers been able to buy at affordable prices? Neither the farmers nor the consumers are benefited from this. Who has benefited from this policy? The intermediate traders who used to loot public day in and day out are being benefited now. Your policies have benefited the people who stand against the people. I feel, this is a complete failure of Governance. Debt manipulation forces and unregulated private trading community is dictating the market now. We are unable to control the export and import policy. What I say is that the Government should ponder over this.

Now the growth rate for the Ninth Five-Year-Plan has been reduced from 7 per cent to 6.5 per cent. Experts in the economic field feel that it will further shoot up the fiscal deficit to Rs. 63,000 crores. Therefore, I feel, the policy being pursued by the Government is going to end up in further price rise and it would shoot up the inflation rate again. What steps have you taken? You said that the list of commodities for import licence is being reduced. What for? You have reduced it for sugar which is abundantly available here. When the State Governments requested that sugar import should be stopped, you did not yield. What prevented you from stopping the import of sugar? When you allow import of sugar when it is abundantly available in India, automatically, there would be a glut of stock in the market. The sugar factories are affected. Ultimately, the people who are working in the sugar factories are affected. When we want import, you do not bother. You are allowing import when we do not need. When you are allowing the import of sugar across the border, there is a fear that chemical poison will be automatically imported into India through sugar. Has the Government gone through this? Has it gone through this type of issues? You have not only failed in the export and import policy or fiscal policy, but you have also failed in controlling the money supply. What is the

money supply rate now? It was below 14 per cent in 1996 but now it is above 17 per cent. When the money supply is increased, when there has not been so much increase in production, automatically it leads to inflation. It is a simple understanding. The market mechanism has totally failed or this *ad-hoc* import-export policy has added fuel to the inflation. Because of all these things, what we feel is that the prices have increased not because of shortage of commodities, but because of the wrong policies pursued by this Government. Therefore, I feel, at least, after the elections, you should know the feelings of the people. I request you to please ponder over these issues. When we said this in the last Session, you ignored our plea. I feel, the time has come for the Government to sit and think over the price rise, whether the actual production has gone down. If the production has gone down then the Government should look at as to how much it has gone down and what is the actual import necessity. All of us are told that you are going to bring onions from Iran by air. It means, automatically the international prices would increase. They would come to an understanding. Is the scarcity to such an extent? No, it is not so. There was no need for us to bring onions by air. When you say that you are going to import onions from Iran by air, the international market people think that so much scarcity prevails in India. The scarcity is not because of shortage but because of hoarding. But hoarding cannot be done for more than a fortnight. Then, why are you not able to bring the onions from out of the hoarding? You have accepted that decline in production is not more than 20 per cent. Then, how the prices have increased six times or seven times? Therefore, I feel, you have failed completely. I hope the Government, at least now, will ponder over this issue and accept the ideas given by the Opposition. Also, please discard the things you have previously done to find a new way. I feel, at least, in the coming months you would rectify the errors and the nation should overcome the rising prices. With these words, I conclude.

श्री संजय निरुपम (महाराष्ट्र): सभापति महोदय, पिछले कुछ महीनों में निश्चित तौर पर महंगाई बढ़ी है और खूब बढ़ी है। उसका नतीजा भी सामने है, जनता का गुस्सा भी सामने है। पिछले दो दिनों से विश्लेषण हो रहा है

अखबारों में कि महंगाई के कारण बीजेपी हार गई और कांग्रेस जीत गई। सच्ची बात यह है कि जब भी महंगाई बढ़ जाती है तो इस देश की जनता हारती है और पिछले कई महीनों में हारी, रोई, दूटी। प्याज और आलू का जिस तरह से भाव बढ़ा है वह निश्चित तौर पर अप्रत्याशित था। इसके कई कारण थे। थोड़ा आसमानी भी था और थोड़ा सुल्तानी भी था। आसमानी के कारण हम देखते हैं कि पिछले एक-दो साल से लगातार अकाल पड़ा है। किसी कोने में अकाल पड़ रहा है, किसी कोने में बाढ़ आ रही है, कहीं पर अतिवृष्टि हो रही है, कहीं पर ओलावृष्टि हो रही है। उसका असर फसलों पर पड़ा है, फसल का नुकसान भी हुआ और फसल की गुणवत्ता भी बदल गई है, फसल का आकार तक बदला है, फसल की क्वालिटी तक बदली है। नासिक प्याज का सबसे बड़ा प्रोडक्शन सेन्टर है। इस साल वहां पर न सिर्फ प्याज का उत्पादन कम हुआ है बल्कि प्याज का जो साइज होता है, जो आकार होता है, जो उसकी क्वालिटी होती है वह भी बदल गई है। वहां के फरमर्स ने बताया वहां के जो ट्रेडर्स हैं उन्होंने बताया कि पहले जितनी बड़ी-बड़ी प्याज हुआ करती थी अब उससे आधा आकार की प्याज वहां पर हो रही है। जिस आकार की प्याज को कभी मार्केट में एक्सेप्ट नहीं किया जाता था, अब उसी आकार की प्याज पर वहां के लोग गुजारा कर रहे हैं। पिछले साल तकरीबन 40 लाख टन प्याज का उत्पादन नासिक में हुआ था और इस साल 20-22 लाख टन के आसपास उत्पादन रह गया है नासिक में प्याज का। इसकी कमी के कारण ही इसके दाम बढ़े हैं।

अब सरकार को क्या करना चाहिए या इसके बारे में, यह मैं अपनी समझ के हिसाब से बताना चाहता हूँ। जब संकट हुआ और उस संकट के वक़्त भी हमने पाया कि लगातार प्याज का निर्यात किया जा रहा है। यह बहुत खतरनाक बात थी। उस संकट को यदि समय रहते पहचान लिया जाता और प्याज का निर्यात रोककर प्याज के आयात पर अगर जोर दिया जाता तो शायद प्याज के दाम इतने नहीं बढ़ते। मुझे लगता है कि जब तक सरकार चेतनी... (व्यवधान)...

श्री खान गुफ़्फ़ान जाहिदी (उत्तर प्रदेश): मान्यवर, यह जो आंकड़े दे रहे हैं कि उसका उत्पादन 22 लाख टन हुआ, यह कहाँ से दे रहे हैं? इसके बारे में भी तो इनको बताना चाहिए। यह तो मिसलीडिंग है न। सात परसेंट लोस हुआ है। गर्बमेंट का 23 परसेंट लोस हुआ है। ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री संजय निरुपम: मैं बताता हूँ कि मैं आंकड़े कहाँ से दे रहा हूँ। ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: इसका जवाब जब सरकार को देना होगा, वह देगी।

श्री खान गुफ्रान जाहिदी: चेयरमैन साहब, जब कोई स्टेटमेंट दे रहा है तो उसे यह तो बताना चाहिए कि यह आंकड़े फर्ग जगह से हैं, यह पैदावार हुई। अरे कुछ तो बताइये, जबानी उड़ा रहे हैं।... (व्यवधान)...

श्री संजय निरूपम: चेयरमैन साहब, निश्चित तौर पर मैं जो आंकड़े दे रहा हूँ वह कांग्रेस के कार्यालय से नहीं आए हैं।

श्री सभापति: देखिए, आप भड़काने की बात मत कीजिए। उन्होंने सवाल किया है आपके पास सबूत है तो वह दीजिए।

श्री संजय निरूपम: मैं बताना चाहता हूँ।... (व्यवधान)... मैं निश्चित तौर पर बताना चाहता हूँ, मुझे मौका तो दीजिए।

श्री सभापति: ठीक है। लेकिन इसमें यह कांग्रेस का कार्यालय कहाँ से आ गया?

श्री संजय निरूपम: जिस तरह से महंगाई का राजनीतिकरण किया जा रहा है उस पर मुझे कमेंट्स करने की इच्छा हो रही थी... (व्यवधान)...

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दिल्ली): क्या हमने कोई आब्जेक्शन किया?... (व्यवधान)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN (Tamilnadu): Sir, I am on a point of order. ... (Interruptions)...

SHRI NILOPTAL BASU (West Bengal): He is talking about inflation. ... (Interruptions)... On 27 July the Finance Minister of this country informed the entire House that the inflation had already come down ... (Interruptions)... He said that inflation would further come down with the arrival of kharif crop. ... (Interruptions)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I cannot hear anything. ... (Interruptions)...

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, I am on a point of order.

श्री संजय निरूपम: चेयरमैन साहब, मैं पूरी गम्भीरता से अपनी बात रखना चाहता हूँ। मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि मैं कहाँ से आंकड़े लेकर आया हूँ।... (व्यवधान)...

श्री खान गुफ्रान जाहिदी: यह पालिटिकल बात कह रहे हैं। हाउस को मिसलीड कर रहे हैं।... (व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: देखिए, इतने सदस्य एक साथ बोल रहे हैं कि मुझे कुछ समझ नहीं आ रहा है। आपने अपना पाइंट

कहना हो, उसे बाद में कह दीजिएगा। आप इस में पालिटिकल बात मत लाइये।

श्री संजय निरूपम: मैं नहीं ला रहा हूँ।..

श्री सभापति: यह देश का, जनता का मामला है। देखिए आप अब जल्दी खत्म करिए।

श्री संजय निरूपम: सर, मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि महाराष्ट्र में ए.पी.एम.सी. एक संस्था है जो हर जिले में तालुका स्तर पर काम करती है। एग्रीकल्चर प्रोड्यूस मार्केटिंग सेन्टर जो नासिक की है यह उसके आंकड़े हैं। नासिक जिले में पिछले साल इस तरह का प्रोक्शन हुआ और इस साल इस तरह का प्रोक्शन हुआ है।

श्री सभापति: आप अपनी बात को खत्म कीजिए।

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, मेरा यह कहना था कि प्याज का उत्पादन कम हुआ और उस कम उत्पादन होने की वजह से अभाव हुआ और अभाव के कारण दाम बढ़े और इसकी जानकारी जब तक सरकार के पास पहुँची तब तक देर हो गई थी जिसकी वजह से सचमुच हा-हाकार मच गया था। दूसरा कारण जो मैं देखता हूँ वह निश्चित तौर पर जमाखोरों का दोष है। उसमें नवी मुम्बई में, (मुम्बई के बगल में एक सा शहर है) सैकड़ों टन प्याज गोदामों में पड़े-पड़े सड़ गया।... (व्यवधान)... सरकार को जब जानकारी मिली तो बाकायदा उन जमाखोरों के खिलाफ कार्यवाही की। मैं आपको बता रहा हूँ... (व्यवधान)

श्री बालकवि बैरागी (मध्य प्रदेश): अध्यक्ष महोदय ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: इनको पूरा कर लेने दीजिए।... (व्यवधान)... आप अपनी बात खत्म कीजिए।... (व्यवधान)... आप अपनी बात कहिए।

श्री संजय निरूपम: पिछले हफ्ते जब मुम्बई के गोदामों में छापे पड़े तो उनमें बहुत सारी जीवनावश्यक वस्तुओं का भंडार पड़ा हुआ था। उन जमाखोरों के खिलाफ कार्यवाही की जानी है। लेकिन सबसे बड़ा संकट यह है कि जो हमारे पास एसेसिएल क्मोडिटी एक्ट है, उसमें इतने छिद्र हैं, इतना कमजोर है कि उसके आधार पर कोई भी राज्य सरकार जमाखोरों के खिलाफ बहुत अच्छे ढंग से, बहुत सख्ती से कार्यवाही नहीं कर पाती।... (व्यवधान)...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: That is the point. That is the point. (interruptions)... But, whose fault is this?... (Interruptions)...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल (राजस्थान): पचास सालों से तो आप लोग सत्ता में हैं। ... (व्यवधान) ... वह कानून आप लोगों ने बनाया है। ... (व्यवधान) ... उस कानून में संशोधन क्यों नहीं किया गया? ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, उस कानून में संशोधन होना चाहिए। ... (व्यवधान) ... मैं बताना चाहता हूँ ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री सभापति: हाँ, बताइये।

श्री संजय निरूपम: मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि उस कानून में संशोधन होना चाहिए। आज प्रधान मंत्री जी ने भी हम सभी सांसदों की जो बैठक बुलाई थी उसमें उन्होंने बताया कि वह कानून इसी सत्र में सदन के समक्ष पेश हो रहा है। ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री नीलेश्वर बसु: पेश हो चुका है। ... (व्यवधान) ...

So kind of the Government ... (Interruptions) ... No. ... (Interruptions) ... Sir, I want to seek one clarification. The proposal for amending the law is lying with the Standing Committee ... (Interruptions) ...

श्री संजय निरूपम: उस कानून के ऊपर सलेक्ट कमेटी बैठ गई है। उस कानून को सदन में लाया जाए और उसमें संशोधन किया जाए। ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री नीलेश्वर बसु: सर ... (व्यवधान) ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him complete... (interruptions) ... Let him complete ... (interruptions) ... He is speaking... (interruptions) ... Let him complete... (interruptions) ... No, No. ... (interruptions) ... You please complete ... (interruptions) ...

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, मैं हील्ड नहीं कर रहा हूँ। ... (व्यवधान) ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is speaking... (interruptions) ...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: महोदय (व्यवधान) ...

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, मेरा कहना सिर्फ इतना है कि वह कानून इस समय सलेक्ट कमेटी के पास है। वह कानून सदन में फिर से लाया जाए, उस पर बहस की जाए और उसमें संशोधन किया जाए और राज्य सरकारों की पूरी ताकत दी जाए ताकि वे जमाखोरों के खिलाफ अच्छे ढंग से स्पष्ट कार्यवाही कर सकें। महोदय, मेरा एक आखिरी मुद्दा है ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री सभापति: बस, हो गया। श्री रामचन्द्रा रेड्डी।

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, मेरा एक बहुत महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दा है। ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री सभापति: अब आपकी बारी नहीं है। श्री रामचन्द्रा रेड्डी।

श्री संजय निरूपम: एक छोट सा मुद्दा है मेरा। रामचन्द्रा रेड्डी जी सिर्फ एक मिनट। ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री रामदास अग्रवाल: महोदय, ... (व्यवधान) ...

श्री सभापति: अग्रवाल जी आप बैठिए।

Mr. Reddy, are you yielding?

SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): No, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. He is not yielding ... (interruptions) ...

SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Sir, thank you, very much...

श्री संजय निरूपम: महोदय, अभी मेरी बात समाप्त नहीं हुई है। एक आखिरी मुद्दा यह है कि जब प्याज के भाव बहुत बढ़ गए थे। ... (व्यवधान) ... आखिर में मैं, कहना चाहता हूँ। ... (व्यवधान) ...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is not yielding... (interruptions) ... No. Now, Mr. Ramachandra Reddy ... (Interruptions) ...

श्री संजय निरूपम: राशन की दुकानों से प्याज का वितरण शुरू हुआ है ... (व्यवधान) ... एक मिनट ... (व्यवधान) ... महोदय, मैं जिन मुद्दों की बात कहना चाहता हूँ, आखिरी छोट सा मुद्दा सिर्फ इतना है। ...

SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you, very much. At the outset, on behalf of the Telugu Desam Party, I express my serious concern on the recent abnormal and unimaginable increase in prices of items of mass consumption such as pulses, edible oil, vegetables and specially, onions and salt. I need not mention here the active and predominant role played by onion prices in Indian democracy. My party feels/ that one of the reasons for this price rise is, no doubt, the shortfall in production. At the same time, I may submit to this House that it is also because of lack of vision on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture. Another thing is lack of coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce. Sir, on the one side the scarcity is increasing in respect of onions, etc., and on the other the

Ministry of Commerce is trying to make money in the form of dollars from foreign countries. That is a very bad thing. Co-ordination was essential, but it was not there. I am glad that a Chief Ministers' Conference took place and they have taken some wonderful decisions to control the prices in future. But the cat is out of the bag. The bag is being tightened now. I am sorry. I would like to make some suggestions. I do not want to create any more controversies. The Agriculture Ministry should have vision and vigilance, which they are lacking.

Secondly, when the Agriculture Ministry comes to know that due to some reasons some crops are not going to come, it should take the initiative and encourage farmers by giving some incentives to them, so that they may produce that particular product. Or, they should import and see to it that the prices are maintained. Then, the PDS should be strengthened. The PDS is very good in the South, but I am very sorry that in the North, it is an utter failure. Failure of the PDS is also one of the reasons for the price rise. Therefore, I request the Government, through you, that the public distribution system should be strengthened in the North and in the other States also. I request that the Government, the Ministry of Agriculture, should enter into the market through the NAFED or any other agency and when the prices are very low, when the farmers are selling their products at a very low prices, they should purchase those items and preserve them, store them. And whenever they sense that the prices are going to increase, they can control the prices by releasing such stocks. This should be done by the Government.

Not only that, we are hearing since many months that the Essential Commodities Act will be diluted. We are also hearing that it will be scrapped. It is very necessary to strengthen the Essential Commodities Act. It is the only weapon to control the prices, to control hoarders, etc. Then, other items which are consumed everyday by the masses should be included in the Essential Commodities Act. Our Chief Minister, Shri Chandrababu Naidu, has requested that onions, turmeric, etc. should also be included in the Essential Commodities Act. It should be strengthened. But the States have no power for it. Whatever powers they have got are for name-sake only. Therefore, Sir, I

request the Government of India through you not only to strengthen the Essential Commodities Act, but also to give wider powers to the State Governments to put the prices under control. With these words, I conclude.

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: सभापति महोदय, कीमतों के बारे में जैसे कि आपने कहा कि स्ट्रक्चरल डिबेट होती, अगर विस्तृत बहस होती तो बहुत अच्छा होता क्योंकि इसके साथ और भी बहुत से मुद्दे जुड़े हुए हैं मैं इस समय केवल दो तीन बातों का उल्लेख करना चाहता हूँ। यह कहा गया कि इंसेशियल क्मोडिटीज एक्ट को भारतीय जनता पार्टी ने नहीं बनाया। यह एक्ट इससे पहले का बनाया हुआ था और यह कांग्रेस के जमाने का बनाया हुआ एक्ट था। इस के बाद जब यह एक्ट यहाँ पर विचार के लिए लाया गया तब यह कहा गया इस हाऊस में कि इसको ज्वाइंट सेलेक्ट कमेटी में भेजा जाए। ज्वाइंट सेलेक्ट कमेटी में भेजे बिना पास नहीं करना चाहते थे। अभी तक ज्वाइंट सेलेक्ट कमेटी ने रिपोर्ट नहीं दी है। रिपोर्ट न आने की वजह से इसके बारे में जो करना चाहिये था वह नहीं किया जा सका। हम मानते हैं कि बहुत जल्दी फैसला होना चाहिये। यहाँ पर यह कहा गया कि इसमें ऐक्शन नहीं लिया गया, मुनाफ़ाखोरी को पकड़ा नहीं गया, जमाखोरी को नहीं पकड़ा गया। यह काम तो स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स को करना था। मैं यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि वेस्ट बंगाल में कितने लोगों को पकड़ा गया? क्या मध्य प्रदेश में किसी होर्डर को पकड़ा गया? (व्यवधान)

श्री राजूभाई ए. परमार (गुजरात): इन लोगों ने छोड़ दिया (व्यवधान)

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: मध्य प्रदेश या किसी भी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट ने किसी होर्डर को पकड़ा हो... (व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please let him finish.

प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: जो चीज थी प्याज में तो कोई होर्डिंग करने लायक चीज थी नहीं। (व्यवधान) वेस्ट बंगाल में प्याज सब से ज्यादा कीमत पर बिका। मध्य प्रदेश में 100 रुपये किलो तक प्याज बिका (व्यवधान) दिल्ली में 10 रुपये किलो बिका (व्यवधान) सभापति महोदय, दूसरी बात होर्डस एण्ड प्रोफिटीयर्स सारी स्टेट्स के अंदर... (व्यवधान)... सभापति महोदय, इंसेशियल क्मोडिटीज के अंदर क्या शामिल नहीं है। इंसेशियल क्मोडिटीज में इन्होंने दालें रखीं नहीं, प्याज नहीं, आलू नहीं। ये चीजें इसमें नहीं हैं। दूसरी बात पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम की है। इसको इनकरेज करना चाहिए।

इसको स्ट्रेंथेन करना चाहिए। पर यह भी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के हाथ में है। पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम कांग्रेस के जमाने से, पिछले 30-40 साल से चल रहा है। उसको स्ट्रेंथेन नहीं किया गया। उसको स्ट्रेंथेन करने की जरूरत है। उसके अंदर कई चीजें और डालनी चाहिए। परंतु पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम भी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स ने करना है। उसके बारे में कार्यवाही क्यों नहीं की गयी। तीसरी बात इसमें कहना चाहता हूँ सभापति महोदय यहां पर। इसमें कोई शक नहीं है कि इसमें स्थानीय कारण भी है। दिवाली तक बारिश चलती रही। कभी हिंदुस्तान में दिवाली तक बारिश नहीं हुई ...।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, it is one o'clock. I think there are five or six more persons. Once they finish speaking, we will adjourn. Are you all agreeable to this?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Yes, we are agreeable.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : इसमें कोई संदेह नहीं कि चुनाव में हमें काफी इसका नुकसान भुगतना पड़ा है। हम पूरी तरह से लोगों को बता नहीं पाए। परन्तु सभाति महोदय, क्या यह सही नहीं है कि जो एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइसेज हैं जो सरकार की तरफ से कीमते बनायी जाती हैं, उसमें गेहूँ की कीमत नहीं बढ़ी, चावल की कीमत नहीं बढ़ी, चीनी की कीमत नहीं बढ़ी ... (व्यवधान)

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: When people have rejected all these arguments, how can we accept?

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : राशन की दुकानों से मिलने वाली किसी चीज में एक पैसे की बढ़ोतरी नहीं की गयी और मनमोहन सिंह जी इसकी गवाही देंगे कि इनके टाइम पर तीन-तीन, चार-चार बार एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइसेज बढ़ायी गयी। इस हमारी सरकार ने कोई एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइस नहीं बढ़ायी ... (व्यवधान)

श्री खान गुफ्रान जाहिदी : श्रीमन्, ये प्राइस राइज पर नहीं बोल रहे हैं, ये पोलिटिक्स पर बोल रहे हैं और इन्होंने तो इलेक्शन से पहले यही बात कही थी। लेकिन उसका जवाब जनता से मिल गया ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति : हो गया। बैठिए। ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : कांग्रेस के और पहले राज्यों में बार-बार एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइसेज बढ़ायी गयी। हमारे सरकार के आने के बाद गेहूँ में, चावल में, किसी में भी एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइसेज नहीं बढ़ायी गयी। सभापति, महोदय, जहां एक्सपोर्ट का सवाल है, पिछले तीन सालों में

1995-96 में 3,50,989 मीट्रिक टन प्याज का एक्सपोर्ट किया गया। फिर इन्होंने 4 लाख टन का किया, पिछले साल 3 लाख टन का किया। ये जब कुछ एक्सपोर्ट करते हैं तो यह कहा जाता है कि साहब आप एक्सपोर्ट करते रहे ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री खान गुफ्रान जाहिदी : मेरा प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर है। मैं यह पूछ रहा हूँ कि 50 साल...

श्री सभापति : देयर इज नो प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर। आप उनसे पूछ नहीं सकते हैं ... (व्यवधान) ... नहीं पूछ सकते हैं आप इनसे ...

श्री खान गुफ्रान जाहिदी : मैं आपके माध्यम से कर रहा हूँ ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति : नहीं पूछ सकते हैं। कोई इनसे सवाल नहीं कर सकता है। इट केन नाट द प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर।

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : यहां डाइमेट्रिकली आपोजिट होने की वजह से गवर्नमेंट पर चार्ज किया गया है यहां यह कहा गया कि एक्सपोर्ट बंद करना चाहिए। मेरे एक दोस्त ने कहा कि आप इम्पोर्ट कर रहे हैं। यह गलत बात कर रहे हैं। कोई चीज इम्पोर्ट नहीं करनी चाहिए थी। अगर आप इम्पोर्ट करेंगे तो देश के किसान को नुकसान होता है। किसी जगह किसान के नुकसान की बात की जाती है और किसी जगह एक्सपोर्ट करते रहे इसलिए प्राइज बढ़ गयी इसका सवाल उठाया जाता है। सभापति महोदय, तीन साल तक कांग्रेस के राज्य में 3,50,000; 4,27,000 और 3.32,000 टन ... (व्यवधान)

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, what is this?

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : आपने इस्तीफा देने की बात की ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति : आप अपने प्वाइंट को खत्म कीजिए। ... (व्यवधान) ... आप अपनी बात को खत्म कीजिए। आम अरग्यूमेंट दीजिए।

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : महंगाई के तीन बड़े कारण हैं और इस महंगाई पर मुख्य मंत्रियों का जो सम्मेलन हुआ।

इस मुख्य मंत्रियों के सम्मेलन में सब लोगों ने मिल करके ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति : चलिए-चलिए, अब खत्म करिए। ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : महंगाई के तीन कारण हुए। ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: आप खत्म कीजिए।

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: हां, मैं खत्म करता हूं। एक तो मौसम की खराबी के कारण महंगाई हुई। दूसरी कांग्रेस की 40-50 साल की नीतियों के कारण महंगाई हो रही है। और तीसरा, इन्होंने जो अपमाह फैलायीं उनकी वजह से हुई। जैसे नमक की कीमत के बारे में अफवाह फैलायी कि चालीस रुपये, पचास रुपये बिक गया, जबकि नमक हिन्दुस्तान में 20 साल के लिए काफी है। इन्होंने ऐसी अफवाह फैलायी कि बिहार में पचास रुपये बिक गया, दिल्ली में तीस रुपये बिक गया और नमक कीमतें सारी अफवाहों की वजह से उसके अंदर बढ़ा दी। ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: आप खत्म कीजिए।

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: मैं एक मिनट में खत्म कर रहा हूं। आई एम जस्ट फिनिशिंग। ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: इनकी बात मत सुनिए, आप उनकी बात सुनिए। ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: महोदय, मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं कि यह महंगाई का सवाल सारे देश का सवाल है। हम सब को मिल करके इसके बारे में चिंता करनी चाहिए। ... (व्यवधान) ... हाउ कैम आई स्पीक?

श्री सभापति: आप इनको खत्म करने दीजिए। ... (व्यवधान) ... खत्म कीजिए। ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: आई डॉट लाइक दिस... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: इनकी बात सुनिए ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: पिछले दिनों इन्होंने महंगाई का जो नाजायज़ फायदा उठवाया ... (व्यवधान)

श्री सभापति: इनकी बात तो सुनिए, आप इनकी बात तो सुनिए। ... (व्यवधान)

प्रो विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: महंगाई का जो फायदा उठाना चाहते थे वह चुनाव में ही उठ सकें। अब तो कम से कम इनको एक साथ बैठ करके जैसे सभी मुख्य मंत्री बैठे हैं उसी प्रकार बाकी नेता भी बैठ करके कि आगे कैसे इसको रोक़ा जाए, उस पर विचार करें। अब एक बार महंगाई का आपने फायदा उठ लिया, लेकिन अब फिर इस पर क्यों लगे हुए हैं?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all right. Now, Shri Alagh.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, you asked for the sense of the House whether we

should continue with the speech. Because of interruptions, we could not hear him properly. I suggest after the speech of Prof. Malhotra, the House should be adjourned for lunch and afterwards the next item on the Agenda be taken up.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A number of Members wanted to associate with what Dr. Manmohan Singh has said. I am allowing one person from each party for two minutes to associate. That is all.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: We can adjourn now and take it up after lunch.

MR. CHAIRMAN: At 2.30, the Minister of Railways will make a statement. That is why we have decided that let three or four Members speak on this. Mr. Alagh.

SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Sir, one of the unfortunate things that have happened is the utterly extraordinary five to six times increase in the prices of fruits and vegetables and other essential items. This price increase took place during the last few months. Sir, you have given us computers. The data which is available on the NICNET shows that this much increase never happened in India's history. Still, the Government, instead of recognising the fact, is speaking in different voices. One day, the Delhi Administration tells the Court that the traders are not to be blamed. A very distinguished leader says that she would give onions at Rs. 2/- a kilogram. Another days we hear other stories. What we are really looking forward in this debate is a serious issue. We want some kind of a coherent and straight-forward strategy as to how the prices are to be controlled. There is a discussion on ESMA. Mr. Chairman, let me say, neither the Central Government, nor the State Governments, have the capability to deliver vegetables and fruits in an efficient manner to the consumers through the public distribution system, which is very correctly restricted to essential items like grains, edible oil and to a certain extent sugar to poor consumers. Therefore, since the price rise is of very important items in the consumer budgets, including fruits and vegetables, all the industrial workers and the agricultural labourers want a coherent strategy for this. Nobody is giving us details about this. Let me put it the other way round. What have the

Government done during the last six months to operate the market in an efficient manner? There is an Agricultural Marketing Act. There the Central Government has certain responsibility. The data that I have seen during the last week from the Market Intelligence Wing of the Ministry of Agriculture shows that even in Delhi more than two-thirds of vegetables and fruits are sold outside the regulated markets.

Now, who is responsible for this? What you can enforce in terms of fair price is not being enforced at all. At the same time, statements are being made that the trade is not responsible for prices. Whatever legal responsibilities you have, those are not being fulfilled. Instead we are being given a lot of red-herrings that they would use the police force. The use of police force is not going to give vegetables and fruits to the housewives.

The second thing that is available with us is a very detailed report on the development of agriculture markets in India by the Shankar Lal Guru Committee. This was made available to us last year. It says that in the areas where vegetables, fruits and horticulture products are grown, the markets are very weak. It gives specific responsibilities to the Central Government to take action to improve those markets. Now, I would like to know from the Government as to what has been done to enforce marketing efficiency in those markets where vegetables and fruits are sold. What has been done to develop markets in the last three months or six months? It is absolutely correct that our demand is rising. Today the demand is for onions; tomorrow it would be for potatoes and the day after tomorrow, it would be for eggs. It is true that since 1975, 1976 and particularly 1980 and 1981, the per capita consumption of these commodities is going up.

In a newspaper article, I had given a rough estimate that the demand for vegetables is growing by 5 per cent. I find from the statement of the Prime Minister made at the Chief Ministers' Conference that he has quoted my number. I am planning to revise that number. So, the demand is really going up fast. Unless we have a marketing strategy, the prices of essential commodities will shoot up. I think we are being given all these rosy pictures without

any substantive evidence. To suggest that the Government is serious on this issue is not correct.

The third point is I don't think it is the case of any responsible Member in this House that at the present stage of the economy, the Government expenditure on infrastructure should be cut down. In fact, I would like to tell the hon. Minister of Industry that he should get the reasons for that from the Finance Ministry. According to a newspaper report some three weeks ago, the Department of Expenditure has advised all the Departments to cut down expenditure by 10 per cent. Therefore, there is a question that what has been provided for infrastructure in the Budget would not be spent. The Government are giving instructions that it should not be spent. According to the figures that he himself gave, the production of white goods is going up. But the production of capital goods is coming down. Mr. Minister, your figures are available on the computer. I make a statement. If you can contradict me, please do. Otherwise, I would expect you to give us the full picture. It is absolutely clear to me as to what will come, if you subtract the white goods from the capital goods. The Minister of Steel said in this House this morning that the demand for steel is not picking up. The rest of the capital goods sector is going down. This year its growth is less than last year. Similar is the case with the basic intermediates. *(Interruptions)*. Well, if you accept it, then, there will be serious consequences. Ministers are not just meant to accept statements and tell us that there is a business cycle. I can also give lectures on the business cycle. You have to tell us as to we can reverse the business cycle. If you are accepting it and your Government has also said that it is cutting Government expenditure on infrastructure, then, you owe an explanation to the House as to how seriously the economy is going to get out of the serious state in which it is in. Let me make it clear, I don't think it can be said that the Defence expenditure in India should be cut. I will not say that. I will also not say that expenditure on infrastructure should be cut. At the same, expenditure on consumption has to be cut. The results of the last six months shows that the Government expenditure is rising, money supply is

increasing by leaps and bounds, beyond your projections. Actually those things are behind this crisis. The complete inefficient macro-management is also behind this crisis. I agree with your strategy. I am not one of those people who say that the deficit should be cut down all the time. If the economy needs more expenditure on capital, if it needs more expenditure on Defence, it should be spent. Otherwise, there will be no question of industrial revival. There you are cutting down on your Budget projections. At the same time, you are increasing your consumption expenditure by giving all kinds of subsidies, all kinds of irresponsible increases. And that, together with your complete inability to handle the markets, is behind this crisis. Mr. Chairman, through you, very briefly, I demand that the Government must give us a coherent strategy. They must tell us what their method, strategy is. Where are they going to cut on Government consumption? I am not asking for expenditure on defence to be cut. I know that those needs are more. Where are they cutting down on Government consumption, expenditure? Why are they cutting down infrastructure when the country's steel industry, cement industry and its capital goods industry are in a crisis? In addition to that, they must tell us how they are going to use the markets and not give us all these funny things, that through the public distribution system, they will be given vegetables and fruits to the population of this country. You cannot deliver onions. Even if you do it, your real cost will be five times that of the market. But the real question is of making the markets work. Why, in State after State, do your own data—the Market Intelligence Data of the Ministry of Agriculture—show that a very large proportion of trade is taking place outside the regulated markets? What are you doing about that? I think it is very important that the Government gives us a serious answer to this question. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this price rise is not the concern of any one party, the ruling party or the Opposition. It is a question of national interest. Everybody should contribute concrete suggestions and criticisms for keeping prices under control. Several factors contribute to price rise. As a matter of fact, even

immediately after the Independence, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said that black-marketeers, speculators and hoarders should be hanged from the lamp-post. It is permeating from 1952 onwards that black-marketeers are responsible for price rise. And what is the effective action taken against those people? This price rise has been existent from the beginning. There was a time in Tamil Nadu when the onion disturbed the rules. It is not as if it has disturbed the BJP now. Even the Congress was disturbed.

The onion is not the only reason. There are problems among the agriculturists. What are the reasons for the results of these elections? Only two reasons, onion and potato. Apart from them, in relation to price rise, nothing has been spoken about the essential commodities like grains and other things. So far as agriculture is concerned, it is not respected very much. As a matter of fact, not even one-fourth of the market price goes to the producer. Agriculturists get only one-fourth whereas intermediaries and black-marketeers and hoarders are getting three-fourths of it. So, effective steps should be taken to see that the Essential Commodities Act is properly amended, that the anti-hoarders statute is properly amended. Stringent action has to be taken against hoarders. Unless these steps are taken, I respectfully submit, this cannot be contained. This is our view. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Smt. Kamla Sinha. Two minutes.

श्रीमती कमल सिन्हा (बिहार): सभापति महोदय, इस पर लम्बी वार्ता हो चुकी है, मैं डा० मनमोहन सिंह जी ने जो प्रस्ताव रखा है जिन बातों

श्री सभापति: उन्होंने प्रस्ताव नहीं रखा है, स्पेशल मेशन किया है।

श्रीमती कमल सिन्हा: जो स्पेशल मेशन उन्होंने किया है, मैं उसका समर्थन करती हूँ।

सभापति महोदय, यह सत्य है कि इस देश में इस तरह की महंगाई जब कभी बढ़ी है तो जनता ने शासक वर्ग को सज़ा दी है। जब लोग भाषण दे रहे थे तो मुझे याद आ रहा था कि एक दफा जब इंदिरा गांधी जी प्रधान मंत्री थीं तो सरसों के तेल और चीनी का दाम बहुत बढ़ गया था, तो लोगों ने उस समय नारा लगाया था—“बाहरे देखो इंदिरा का खेल, खा गई चीनी पी गई तेल” और सचमुच उके बाद चुनाव में उनकी बहुत बड़ी हार हुई थी।

प्याज़ पर, प्याज़ के मामले पर हमारी सरकार, मोरारजी भाई की सरकार चली गई थी प्याज़ की कीमत बढ़ने के कारण। उस समय कीमत बढ़ी थी ढाई-तीन रुपए और अब तो प्याज़ 60 रुपए हो गया था। तो इस वर्तमान सरकार का कीमतों पर और बाज़ार पर कोई नियंत्रण नहीं है। इसके क्या कारण हैं, वे हमारे साथियों ने बताए हैं, मैं उनका दोहराना नहीं चाहती हूँ। सत्य बात तो यह है कि व्यापारी वर्ग इनके दल की रीढ़ है और व्यापारी वर्ग इनके दल की रीढ़ होने के कारण, वे जो चाहते हैं इनसे वही करवाते हैं जिसका नतीजा आम जनता को भुगतना पड़ा है और इसकी सजा भी इनको मिली है। आगे आने वाले दिनों में इनको चेत जाना चाहिए और साधारण जनता खासकर जिनको घरेलू सामान इस्तेमाल करना पड़ता है—गृहिणी, आम औरतें, गरीब लोग, जो रोटी पर नमक और प्याज़ रखकर खाते हैं, उनको सबसे ज्यादा तकलीफ उठानी पड़ी है। मैं क्या कहूँ, आपको मालूम है हरी मिर्च की कीमत हो गई 125 रुपए किलो। मैं जब घर गई तो मेरे नौकर ने कहा कि हरी मिर्च 125 रुपए किलो हो गई है तो मैंने कहा कि मत खरीदो, हरी मिर्च खरीदने की कोई ज़रूरत नहीं है। मुझे यह जानकर खुशी हुई कि राष्ट्रपति भवन में भी प्याज़ का इस्तेमाल बंद हो गया। रोटी पर थोड़ा सा नमक, एक मिर्च और एक प्याज़ रखकर गरीब लोग खाते हैं, वह भी उनसे छिन गया। बड़े इलाके में, उड़ीसा में जाइए, बंगाल में जाइए, वहां बासी भात खाने की आदत है लोगों की और उसमें नमक, मिर्च और प्याज़ के साथ वे उसे खाते हैं, वह भी बंद हो गया। ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री संचप्रिय गौतम (उत्तर प्रदेश): मुर्गा गीट वाले प्याज़ खाते हैं, सलाद वाले प्याज़ खाते हैं, गरीब नहीं खाते हैं।

श्रीमती कमला सिन्हा : आपको मालूम नहीं है दिल्ली में मुर्गों की कीमत भी कम हो गई थी, लेंगे ने कहा कि प्याज़ नहीं है तो मुर्गा कैसे बनेगा। मुर्गों की कीमत कम हो गई, आपको मालूम है यह बात? ज्यादा बोलिए मत। इसी सदन में आपकी दिल्ली की पूर्व मुख्य मंत्री ने बहुत लम्बा भाषण दिया था प्राइस राइस पर। प्राइस राइस क्या करती है, उसकी क्या कीमत होती है, क्या कीमत चुकानी पड़ती है, वह उनको पता चल गया।

महोदय, मैं कहना चाहती हूँ कि ऐंसेशियल कमांडिटी एक्ट को स्ट्रिक्टली लागू करना चाहिए और बाज़ार पर अंकुश रखना चाहिए आम लोगों को उपभोक्ता सामग्री

सस्ती दरों पर मिलनी चाहिए, आज ही के एक प्रश्न संख्या 7 के उत्तर में हमने जिन आवश्यक वस्तुओं का निर्यात किया उनकी सूची भी है और आयात भी हम कहां-कहां से करते हैं, उसकी भी एक सूची है। मैं यह कहना चाहूंगी कि अगर हम अपनी घरेलू ज़रूरत को पूरा नहीं कर सकते हैं तो हमें निर्यात नहीं करना चाहिए। हमें घरेलू आवश्यकताओं को पूरा करने के बाद ही निर्यात की बात सोचनी चाहिए। मैं हेगड़े साहब से दरखास्त करना चाहूंगी, वे कामर्स मिनिस्टर हैं, कि वे इस बारे में सोचें और देखें नहीं तो फिर आने वाला भविष्य अंधकारमय है। धन्यवाद।

श्री नरेश यादव (बिहार): सभापति महोदय, डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह जी ने देश की ज्वलंत समस्या, महंगाई, पर जो सदन का ध्यान आकर्षित किया है, इसके लिए मैं अपने दल की ओर से उनका आभारी हूँ कि इतने महत्वपूर्ण सवाल को उन्होंने आज सदन में उठाया और इस पर सदन का ध्यान आकृष्ट कराया।

महोदय, पक्ष और विपक्ष की सारी बहस को सुनने के बाद जो बातें रह गई हैं, मैं केवल उनकी ओर सदन का ध्यान आकृष्ट करना चाहूंगा। प्याज़, आलू, नमक, तेल, सीमेंट, दाल इत्यादि चीजों की कीमतें आसमान छूने लगीं और इससे देश का आम उपभोक्ता परेशान हुआ। आम उपभोक्ता के अलावा इस देश का एक और वर्ग भी है इस देश का आम किसान, वह भी परेशान हुआ क्योंकि उपभोक्ता वह भी है क्योंकि उसके घर से यह उत्पादित वस्तुएं निकल गईं और चीजों की कीमत महंगी हो गई और अब यह महंगाई खत्म होगी क्योंकि किसान के खेत से ये चीजें गोदाम में जाने का समय आ गया है। यह खेल किसान कभी नहीं करता, यह खेल इस देश का जमाखोर, मुनाफ़खोर करता है। जब किसान के घर में उत्पादित वस्तुएं, चाहे प्याज़ हो, आलू हो या दाल हो, रहती हैं तो यह चीजें सस्ती हो जाती हैं और किसानों के घर से निकलकर जब ये चीजें धना सेठों के घर में चली जाती हैं तो ये महंगी हो जाती हैं। इसलिए मैं यह चाहूंगा कि देश के जमाखोरों और मुनाफ़खोरों पर हर हाल में नियंत्रण होना चाहिए। जो व्यक्ति, जो साथी इस चीज का राजनीतिकरण करते हैं, जैसा कि अभी हमारे कुछ साथियों ने कहा कि इसका राजनीतिकरण किया जा रहा है और हमारे कुछ माननीय सदस्यों ने कहा कि प्याज़ के ढेर पर राजनीति हो रही है, यह गलत है। आम उपभोक्ता के साथ जो दल, जो जमात राजनीति करेगी, उसका जो हज़र हिन्दुस्तान की जनता ने किया है, वह सबको मालूम है। इसलिए मैं आपके माध्यम से आग्रह करूंगा कि इस दर्द

को, इस पीड़ा को समझिए और आंकड़ों के खेल में मत उलझिए। आंकड़ों से हिसाब साफ हो सकता है लेकिन आंकड़ों से देश की समस्या का समाधान नहीं हो सकता है। देश की समस्या का समाधान करने के लिए आपको देश की नब्ज को पहचानना पड़ेगा। आम उपभोक्ता, आम आदमी के दर्द को आपको समझना पड़ेगा और यह दर्द वही समझ सकता है जो झोला लेकर बाजार जाता है और जिसे अपनी जेब से पैसा खर्च करके प्याज खरीदना पड़ता है। दूसरा कोई व्यक्ति इस दर्द को नहीं समझ सकता क्योंकि कहावत है कि जाके पांव न पट्टी बिवाई, सो क्या जाने पीर पराई। वह कभी नहीं समझ सकता।

महोदय, मैं खुलासा करना चाहता हूँ कि वर्तमान हुकूमत के हाथ में कुछ नहीं है और यह कुप्रबंध का शिकार है और इस पर नियंत्रण जमाखोरों और मुनाफखोरों का है। इस देश के जमाखोरों और मुनाफखोरों ने वर्तमान सरकार को समझा दिया है कि हमारे ही वोट पर और हमारे ही नोट पर यह सरकार चली है और इसके चलते आज हालत यहां तक पहुंचे हैं। इसलिए मैं आपके माध्यम से कहना चाहूंगा कि अब जनता ने निर्णय दे दिया है और जैसा कि कई साधियों ने कहा, हम इसे यहां कभी नहीं कहने वाले हैं, लेकिन अब भी अगर आप नहीं मांगेंगे तो हिन्दुस्तान की जनता ने अभी तो 2 ही राज्यों से इन्हें निकाला है, आने वाले समय में वह सभी राज्यों से जहां आपकी सरकार है, वहां से आपको निकाल देंगे, वहां आपका सफाया हाने वाला है। इसलिए अब समय आ गया है, चेतिए, नहीं चेतेंगे तो जनता आपको चेताने को तैयार है। बहुत-बहुत धन्यवाद।

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम: सावधान हो जाओ, उनसे खतरा है आपको। आपके भी वोट जा रहे हैं उधर...(व्यवधान)

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Sir, I am aware of the time constraint the House is under. I just want to take one minute of your time or of the time of the House. I would like to fully endorse the views expressed by Dr. Manmohan Singh when he spoke on the Special Mention about the problem of price rise and its consequences.

Sir, I just want to add one or two more points and bring them to the notice of the House. Sir, it was for the first time in the history of Indian democracy.— I think so—that during this Diwali the housewives were not able to buy onions or salt because the prices had gone beyond their purse. In fact, in big shops onions were being offered along with the purchase of

certain goods. If you bought two shirts or if you bought three shirts, one kilo onions were being offered as an incentive. That is the state to which the present ruling party has brought this country!

Secondly, Sir, two weeks ago when I was in Abu Dhabi, some housewives who were there, some ladies belonging to the Indian Ladies' Association, approached me and they said, 'We would like to make a collection and donate onions and salt to the Indian people!' And the Housewives in Abu Dhabi and in the Emirates spared money from their own income because they felt sympathy for the Indian housewives, and they sent one ton of onions to the Indian housewives! This is the state to which we have reduced this country!

Sir, much has been said about macro-economics, about control of markets, about Government's consumption, about infrastructure. But I would like to draw the attention of the House to the plight of the housewives. Today, after the people have given their reply, onions are still selling at an impossible price. My friend has just now said that the poor people don't eat onions. Poor people eat salt. And Mr. Malhoutra said, Sir, that so far, the price of sugar has not gone up. Maybe, that is why the Government is still continuing so that they can increase the price of sugar also and completely add to the woes of the ordinary people!

My point is that till today in most parts of the country the price of vegetables, the price of salt, the price of essential commodities is well beyond the purse of most of the households. Today people are finding it impossible to eke out a livelihood, to include the price rise in their budget. What is the Government doing? We would have been happy, if the Government had got up and said, "There has been some problem". We all know that the people have replied and their Governments lost power in two major States. They have lost the elections in all the States. We don't want to go into a political speech. Still the senior Members of the ruling party are getting up and saying that in Madhya Pradesh the prices have gone up and somewhere else the prices have gone down.

What is the Government doing? They are the people who are sitting in the Government. What are we getting in reply? The Prime Minister takes recourse to poetry. Yesterday at the World Economic Forum he said that he was happy to be there and not anywhere else. May be, he will go to Switzerland. The Prime Minister says *sultani*, *aasmani* and all sorts of poetry. Mr. Sahib Singh Verma, the former Chief Minister of Delhi, says that the poor people do not eat onions. They want to blame the coalition partners, Mamta Banerjee and Jayalalita, for everything. They are not to be blamed at all. Mr. Badal on television says that during emergency, when Indira Gandhi was there, the price of onions went up to Rs. 12 and the price of onions is still going up like that. This is the answer. I would like to ask: Is this the answer of a responsible Government? Today, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, my respected colleague, gets up and says, "It is because of you that the Essential Commodities Act has been referred to a Joint Committee." After having run out of the whole gamut of people to blame, they now turn round and blame the Parliament of India. I would like to remind Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra why it has been referred to the Joint Committee. The Government tried to dilute the Essential Commodities Act and that is why it went to the Joint Committee. But that is not my point. The housewives in India want to know the reason. When there is only 7 per cent shortfall in production you cannot blame the monsoon or the weather God. When the agriculturists are not receiving the increase in the price, why has the price gone up by five or six times? Why has it gone up beyond my budget? Who is the middleman? Against how many people has the Government taken action? How many people have you punished? Who are the people that you are shielding? Let this Government get up and say. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI SANGH PRIYA GAUTAM: Sir, this is misleading. (*Interruptions*)... This is a function of the State Government.

SHRIMATI JAYANTI NATARAJAN: Therefore, my question is very simple, Sir, when there is only 7 per cent shortfall, when the farmer is not getting even a small part of the increase in the price, why is it that the housewives in the country have to pay such an astronomical price for onions, potatoes, salt

and almost all the important essential commodities? This Government has to answer it. There is no use in blaming the States. There is no use in blaming the Chief Ministers. Their own Chief Ministers are blaming this Government. This Government has to get up, take notice and accept the responsibility for all that has taken place. If they do not, I have only one suggestion to make to this Government in this regard. I think it is time that they resigned accepting responsibility and went home so that the best combination who can run the Government will run the Government. Thank you.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA (Nominated): I know there are many experts on the economic front who are giving reasons why the price rise took place. If one visits various parts of India and asks the housewives, the answer is not quite the same as in those places where the elections took place. So, I have a reason to jump to the conclusion that much of the price rise that took place in these areas was due to the election. (*Interruptions*)...

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Why? (*Interruptions*)...

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: I will not say anything more. (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, a scientist is giving an unscientific answer. (*Interruptions*)...

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, let me speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please. Let him speak.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: The point is that in parts of south India no big rise in price took place. The prices have always been rising. If you go to the right place, you will find that a big rise in price has actually not taken place there.

If you go to luxury places where the mafia is operating, then, of course, you can see the difference. But I would like to give a different opinion. I may be wrong also. To depend so much on economics when elections are due and when there is so much tension, it leads to a wrong conclusion, in my view. However, (*Interruptions*). He can go and buy it. (*Interruptions*). I would like to say that if the Government, not necessarily the present Government..... (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him speak (*Interruptions*).

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, how can we discuss anything when so many people are speaking?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please speak.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, I am saying that it is impossible for any Government to implement its policies within five or six months. The problems really go back to a very long period of time. An hon. Member just now said that this price rise was due to the nuclear explosions. I don't see any connection between the two. The prices had gone up long before the present Government came to power. If the prices have increased after the explosions, then I would say that this is entirely due to the fact that you are paying some price for the morale that the Army got for making the country self-sufficient. It is something that we should feel proud. (*Interruptions*). Some people here may not agree with me, but I will continue to say.... (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please, don't interfere. Let him complete. (*Interruptions*). That is alright. Let him speak.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: Sir, they are not listening to the other side. That is why they are not getting any benefit from the discussion. I will just conclude — I am a short speaker, I am not a long speaker — by saying that many years ago, the Atomic Energy Commission suggested as to how onions could be preserved for several months by a very simple process. But that process is being used abroad. It is not being used in India. Why? It is because of the slowness in introducing modern technology. I will say that all this price control and everything is wonderful politics, but bad modern technology. With these words, I sit down.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is obviously not meant to be a reply because no debate has taken place.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Then what was it?

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: It was a Special Mention.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All of you associated yourselves with Dr. Manmohan Singh.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: I thought it necessary to clarify a couple of points because certain statistics were quoted. I think they were not correct. I will talk only about onions because most of the hon. Members here happen to be very fond of onions. We are not only self-sufficient, but we are surplus in onions. Our annual production is a little over 40 lakh tonnes, sometimes, 41 lakh tonnes and sometimes, 42 lakh tonnes. According to the forecast made by agricultural scientists, this year i.e. 1997-98, there was expected to be a bumper crop. The estimated production was 45 lakh tonnes. Sir, it is the policy not only of this Government but also of the previous Government to give a boost to export of agricultural products when we need to do it. So far, it is only 23 to 24 per cent of our foreign trade that the agriculture sector contributes. In the month of July I happened to be in Pune in connection with the Annual Convention of the Federation of Grape Growers' Society. After I completed my speech, a gentleman from the audience came with a bag full of onions. He came right upto the dais with the bag there were obviously no grapes — and he said "अरे साहब, मुझे बताइए कि ये इसका क्या कहें? किसान मर रहा है". The thing that he was saying is, please allow us to export. Let me also make it clear that the export of onion is not on OGL. It is realised through an organised institution called NAFED. And the signs were very clear. I do not know, but I felt it. I wrote a letter to the NAFED saying, "please stop exports". That was in the month of August or to be exact, it was on 12th August. But maybe because they had certain commitments made already and which they had to fulfil, they continued the exports. I really do not know; many people did not take it. One of the greatest scientists that we have in this country, Dr. Raja Ramanna, said that there was some connection between election and price rise. I would like to support his argument. Just for a minute you think if there was no election in Delhi, there would not have been this strange phenomenon. Of course, nature has also contributed to this. Every Member knows it. And I do not want to apportion the blame on anybody I agree that on the part of the Government as well there might have been some laxity. Maybe if we had stopped

exports or if we had imported large quantity of onions one-and-a-half or two months before, it would have had some effect. You know that it is primarily the onion price; but there was some sympathetic rise in the price of every practical commodity and this is a psychological factor. Therefore ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE (Maharashtra): Do you put the blame on election?

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEDGE: No, no, my dear Salve, I would like to tell you that such a phenomenon had taken place two times, one in 1980 and other one in this year. The 1980 elections were held after two-and-a-half years of the Janata Party rule and that was the resurrection of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. What was the issue? Onion ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: It is too much to accept all these things. Saying it was because of elections, giving this kind of excuses, ...*(Interruptions)* People have rejected these arguments ...*(Interruptions)*

श्री संघ प्रिय गौतम: आप खड़े हो जाते हो, सुनते तो हैं नहीं ...*(व्यवधान)*... आप हर बात पर खड़े हो जाते हो ...*(व्यवधान)*...

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: There should be a limit to all these things ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down ...*(Interruptions)* Please sit down when I am standing ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: We are walking out of the House ...*(Interruptions)*

श्री नरेश यादव: हम इसका विरोध करते हैं*(व्यवधान)*...

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: What is this? What is the provocation for this Walk-Out? ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: We are interested to hear him but not this excellent story telling ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI: We are unable to get proper response from the Government. Therefore, we walk out.

(At this stage some hon. Members left the Chamber.)

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE: If they had wanted some excuse, they could have invented some other excuse.

Finally I would like to say that the Congress men are very lucky with onions. In 1980, they won the elections on the basis of onions and now also they have won. My suggestion is the Congress Party should choose onions as its symbol.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now it is quarter to two. Would you like me to adjourn till 2.30 or till quarter to three?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We would like the House to be adjourned till quarter to three.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Nitish Kumar will make a Statement on the Railway accident which occurred at Khanna. Then he will have to make it at 2.45 p.m. So, the House is adjourned till 2.45 p.m.

The House then adjourned for lunch at 1.46 P.M.

The House reassembled after lunch at forty-seven minutes past two of the clock.

The Vice-Chairman (Shri Sanatan Bisi) in the Chair.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): We will like up the statement to be made by the Minister.

STATEMENT REGARDING ORDINANCE

Prasar Bharti (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Amendment Ordinance, 1998

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI MUKHTAR NAQVI): Sir, I lay on the Table, a statement (in English and Hindi) explaining the circumstances which had necessitated immediate legislation by the Prasar Bharti (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Amendment Ordinance, 1998.

[Placed in Library See No. LT2398/98]

...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Just a minute, please. *(Interruption)* Please sit down *(Interruptions)*