

श्री राम चन्द्र बिकाल (उत्तर प्रदेश) : मैं
वर्मा जी के स्पेशल मेंशन से सहमति व्यक्त
करता हूँ ।

श्री कपिल वर्मा : मैडम, इस बारे में
आप भी गवर्नमेंट को डायरेक्ट कर दीजिए
कि जल्दी कर दें ।

उपसभापति : गवर्नमेंट तो जल्दी करेंगी ।
यहाँ मंत्रीजी बैठे हैं, लीडर आफ द हू'उस
बैठे हैं, वो सरकार तक आपकी बात
पहुँचाएंगे और कुछ-कुछ होगा ।

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE—

Rise in. prices of essential commodities and steps taken by Government in this regard

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry) : Madam, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Food and Civil supplies to the rise in prices of essential commodities and the steps taken by the Government in this regard. I think the whole House agrees.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN; Mr.
Minister.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL
SUPPLIES (SHRI D. L. BAITHA): Madam,
Government shares the concern of the Hon'ble
Members about the rise in the prices of
essential commodities. In the current
Financial Year so far the general price rise
has, however, been lower than in the previous
year (1987-88). The annual rate of inflation in
terms of wholesale Price Index (WPI) (as on
12-11-1988) was per cent as compared to
10.6 per cent in the last week of March, 1983
and 8.5 per cent in the same period last year.
In the first 33 weeks of the current Financial
Year the

WPI has moved up by 4.6 Per cent while
during the same period last year it had moved
up by 9.1 per cent. In fact,, this has been the
lowest increase in the last six years during
this period except for 1985-86.

Hon'ble Members will appreciate that the
country had witnessed one of the worst
droughts of the century last year. Usually the
impact of drought on prices and availability of
essential commodities is felt in the year of
drought and the year following, it. Besides,
normally the period from May to October is a
lean period and the prices of various essential
commodities including foodgrains, pulses,
vegetables and fruits etc. generally remain
under pressure. The main essential items
which have exhibited a rise in the year 1988-
89 (in the first 33 weeks) till 12-11-1988 in-
clude pulses (41.1 per cent), rice (6.6 per
cent), wheat (7.1 per cent), fruits and
vegetables (10.7 per cent) and sugar,
khandsari and gur (17.3 per cent). On the other
hand the prices of edible oils have exhibited a
marked decline (—5.6 per cent) as compared
to an increase of 24.6 per cent in the
corresponding period in the previous year. In
fact, the Government has recently taken
measures to prevent any undue fall in the
prices of groundnut oil and other edible oils to
protect the farmers.

With the prospects of good rabi crop in the
current year (1988-89) and the increased
market arrivals of kharif crop, the prices of
cereals and pulses have started declining.
During the fortnight ending 12-11-1988 the
WPI of rice fell by (—0.4 per cent), pulses by
(—1.2 per cent) and that of sugar, khandsari
and gur by (—4.7 per cent). The indications
are that the price of foodgrains and other
essential commodities would decline further
in the coming weeks. It may be thus observed
that the Government has been able to prevent
any abnormal rise in prices of essential items
resulting from a serious drought and its spill-
over effect, which to a great

extent may be attributed to various timely measures taken to manage the demand and supply of essential commodities. The main thrust of the Government Policy has been to increase the production and availability of essential commodities; import of some of the essential commodities such as rice, wheat, pulses and edible oils to augment their supply; strengthening and expanding of the Public Distribution System; strict enforcement of Essential Commodities Act and other similar legislations.

The Programme of opening of additional Fair Price shops has been continued. During the current Financial Year 2697 additional Fair Price Shops have been opened upto 30th September, 1988. The total number of Fair Price Shops in the country now stood at 3.50 lakhs. Besides, 416 mobile vans were operating to serve the far-flung areas and the weaker sections. It may be mentioned that although the allocations of rice and wheat for Public Distribution System during this year have been relatively less as compared to 1987, their off-takes have been higher by 3.3 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively.

Anti-hoarding operations have continued during the period 1-1-1988 to 31-10-1988 and 75769 raids were conducted and goods worth Rs. 1044.27 lakhs were confiscated.

The Government is keeping a continuous and close watch on the prices and availability of essential commodities in association with the State Governments and the U.T. Administrations. I would like to assure the House that the Government will not hesitate to take further necessary measures in case the situation so demands.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN; We have today time up to 1 o'clock. If the House agrees, we will sit till 1.30 P.M. to discuss this important matter and if it spills over, we will take it up

after the Private Members' Business. Still I would request the Members to ask pointed questions only so that many people can participate. Yes., Mr. Narayanasamy •

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam Deputy Chairman, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to seek clarifications on the statement made by the honourable Minister.

Madam, this is a burning problem, the problem of rise in prices of the essential commodities in the country. It cuts across party lines and everybody is concerned about it.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA (Bihar): Except the Government.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: No. That is your comment

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA; It is there in the statement.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The housewives are more concerned about this problem of rise in prices. In the olden days, just about ten years back, if a housewife went to the market with a pocketful of money, she could purchase a basketful of articles. But now things have changed. If she goes to the market today with a basketful of money, she can buy only pocketful of articles. It is because things have changed so much and the situation has changed.

Madam, if we go through the statement which gives the steps taken by the Government for the purpose of checking the rise in prices, We will see that it is very nice to see and read it. Put what happens in practice is the question. He has given the Wholesale Price Index and he has also given the Consumer Price Index, I am not going into the details of those things!, He has given certain figures and comparing them with that of last year, he says that he is satisfied. That is not the case. We should not be satisfied because it is less compared to last year. We have to see the reality. Ac-

[Shri V. Narayanasamy]

tually, the tendency of the trader, of the businessman, is not to reduce the price. Even if there is a bumper crop, even if the goods come to the market and even if they reach the public distribution system in the country, the trader has no tendency to reduce the price. Even when the goods are coming into the market and even if it is the season for getting more foodgrains, pulses and other things, the traders are not reducing the prices.

Madam, in this connection, I would like to know three Or four things. I would also like to remind the honourable Minister of what our honourable Prime Minister said in relation to this problem in the Governors' Conference. He had said that there was an enormous increase in the prices of the essential commodities. He has given them directions to maintain vigil by the Government of every State in order to control the price rise. I would like to make a pertinent point. When we go to the market, we see that prices vary from shop to shop, from the wholesale market to the retail market and from the Government market to the private market I would like to say that the Government has been provided with teeth under the Essential Commodities Act and under this Act, they have a machinery to control the rise in prices and to deal with the entire system of prices. But that Act is not being implemented properly. In the matter of controlling the mechanism of prices, this machinery has entirely failed. I would like to submit that the prices have gone up in spite of a bumper crop, in spite of the goods coming into the market regularly and in spite of the goods coming in large quantities. Yet, Madam, the prices have not come down. This time we had bumper crop and I would like to mention that the price of wheat which is prevailing in the market, depending on the variety varies from Rs. 3.30 to Rs. 6.00 and this is in the open market wheat is largely consumed by the people at this country.

especially in the northern part of this country. The price of wheat is from Rs. 3.30 to Rs. 3.60 per kg. according to variety. Similarly, the price of Basmati rice which is liked by most of the people has gone up to Rs. 15 per kg. This is the position of wheat and rice. We have seen only one downward trend, and that is in the case of edible oil. The price of edible oil has gone down a little bit because of imported oil being with us at present. Now, the wholesale price index and the consumer price index which the hon. Minister has given is only for the purpose of showing that there is a downward trend. But, Madam, there is no sign of the downward trend there in the market. Apart from this rise in prices of essential commodities, the other thing which we have to see is the adulteration. Madam, spurious items are being sold in the market. I have seen an article. Quality goods are not sold in the market, spurious automobile parts have been manufactured. There is adulteration in soap. Adulteration is there in oil. Adulteration is there in various other items, an item like salt, which is a cheaper item. The hon. Minister has stated that only about 75000 cases have been detected and the persons concerned have been prosecuted. Actually, Madam, I would like to point out that in the case of adulteration they catch only small milk vendors who carry tins. Have they caught any big businessman, wholesaler, including Government shops where also adulterated items are being sold, whether it is oil or medicine or other items? Private individuals who are big businessmen in consumer goods are selling it. But they catch only small milk vendors.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There was a mention yesterday and the whole House was serious, about the wheat, imported wheat.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Yes, they are selling that also. But they catch only small, milk vendors and give figures.

Madam, the State machinery is not very particular also. I do not want to blame the hon. Minister because he has various reasons

for the price rise. He is also trying to check that. But it is the State machinery which has to implement the Act, implement the system and control also the System of controlling adulterated items. I would like to remind the House, although so many Members will not agree with me, that during the emergency the system was functioning very well and the goods were sold at the correct prices and the people were getting quality goods. But after that it was relaxed. Now, spurious items are coming into the field and they are sold in the market. Government should make strenuous efforts to control the spurious items that are being sold by the businessmen in this country. The consumers pay the money and they are suffering very much.

Madam, one aspect about the consumers also. Consumers are not nowadays bothered about the price. I am telling very sincerely that in some parts of the country I found that consumers are not bothered about price because of the scarcity of materials, because the goods are not coming to the market. Therefore some people who purchase the goods go away and they do not quarrel about the price; because they are sober. I am very particular about the items which the hon. Minister mentioned. I am very particular about the adulteration. I am very particular about the prices of very important items like rice, edible oil, sugar and others. Madam, the Class III and Class IV employees are not in a position to live in big cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. His income is meagre. 75 per cent of his income is taken away by items which he purchases in the market. Then there is the house rent and the expenditure on the education of his children. Therefore, he suffers very much. The Government has to take steps to see that there is a proper monitoring system to check the price rise. It is the effort

not only of the Central Government. The State Governments have also to cooperate. I quite agree with the hon. Minister that there was drought prevailing in our country for the last three years. We had the worst drought last year. We were able to manage the situation and the credit for it goes to our Prime Minister and also to the entire Cabinet of the Central Government. There was not even a single starvation death. It is also the duty of the Ministry of Food and Civil Supplies to control the price rise. The Minister has given three or four measures for increasing production. There should be a coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Civil Supplies, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Industry. When all these four Ministries coordinate their efforts, then the price rise can be controlled.

I would like to say another thing. Pumping in of huge money and deficit-financing have led to price rise. The Government has announced the grant of Dearness Allowance to the Central Government employees about 3 or 4 months back. Therefore, a lot of money has come in. But the goods are not available in the market. Ultimately, the businessmen increase the prices in the market. By that the consumers suffer and they are not in a position to purchase the goods, especially the essential items. Therefore, there should be coordinated effort between all the four Ministries for the purpose of controlling price rise.

Now I would like to say something about the public distribution system. Lot of shops have been opened. We have ration shops and various other shops throughout the country. The States have been asking for allocation for the public distribution system. Several cases have been detected where the ration supplied to the ration shops for distribution is not being given to the people. They are very much concerned with that. I will give you just one example. Goods are supplied to a ration shop on the basis of the number

[Shri V. Narayanasamy]

of ration cards, 300 to 350, registered by it. Rice, wheat, edible oil and so many other items are supplied. But 150 people don't purchase anything. What does the shopkeeper do? He sells it in the black market. He does not return these goods to the Government. He sells it at a higher price. When these goods are sold in the open market, the price is doubled. Take the example of edible oil. It is sold at Rs. 15/- per kg. through the public distribution system. But in the open market, it is sold at Rs. 30/- per kg. What mechanism do you have to control this? The machinery is not functioning. Therefore, I would like to say that merely opening more shops will not do. You have also to see that the goods go to the shops and reach the people. There should be a machinery for this purpose also. Simply supplying the goods to the ration shops will not do. There should be a vigilance Officer in the Food and Civil Supplies Department. He should see that the goods reach the people. There should be a district committee. Now, we have only the State committees under the Food and Civil Supplies Department. But the district committees should also function so that the grievances of the people are heard.

Madam, the Minister has said that the upward trend in prices has been checked if you compare it with the prices prevailing three or four months back. The situation has improved to a certain extent. Madam, the Minister has said that this year they will import rice and wheat. Now we are envisaging a production of 166 million tonnes because we have good monsoons. This time we expect 166 million tonnes of wheat production and rice production also will be more this time in our country. But the Minister says that he will import some of the essential commodities such as rice, wheat, pulses and edible oils. Madam, the edible oil price has gone down. The local market is very well. Groundnut is coming to the market, oilseeds are coming to the market. And if the edible oil is

imported it will indirectly affect the farmer. The price will go down further and ultimately the farmer will be affected. And rice production also will be more this year. Therefore, what is the necessity for them to import items like rice, wheat and edible oil this year? This will be at the cost of losing our valuable foreign exchange. Madam, there is no doubt that they have to maintain the limit in stocks which they want to keep. But by importing items which have already been produced in this country, we will definitely be losing foreign exchange. Therefore I would like to ask; What is the quantity of rice, wheat, edible oils and pulses which they are going to import this year?

Madam, the hon. Minister mentioned about strengthening and expanding the Public Distribution System. He has also said that a number of shops have been opened and that anti-hoarding and raids have been conducted. I would like to know, as I said earlier, whether they are going to have a check that the goods supplied to the ration shops and even to the shops run by the State Governments actually reach the people, and whether they are going to advise the State Governments on this behalf.

Madam, the other important aspect is the allocation system. Madam, it is quite surprising that they supply wheat to a State which consumes more rice. They supply rice to a State which consumes wheat. Even if the State does not want wheat, they supply wheat. I am talking about the North-Eastern Region. There people normally consume rice. I had a practical experience there. Most of the people there eat rice. But they are supplying wheat there. People are not wanting wheat there. But they are being supplied wheat. They should strictly consider the areas which consume rice and wheat and accordingly supply rice and wheat to those areas.

Madam I wanted clarifications, on three points: What are the quantities of rice, wheat pulses and edible oils that they are going to import? Second-

ly, I would like to know whether they are going to have vigilance Officers at

monitoring the public distribution system. Thirdly, there is a slight downward trend now in the price situation in the case of essential commodities. Are they going to reduce it further?

With these observations, Madam, I conclude. Thank you.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (West Bengal) : Madam Deputy Chairman, I am very much disappointed because the Minister has made a statement on the situation of the price rise which is completely unconnected with the realities on the ground. Instead of making a long speech, I want to point out to the Minister, through you, Madam, a portion of the editorial which has been recently written one of the economic papers of our country. It states:

"Available data show that the food items have risen by nearly 10 per cent between end-March and end-October, 1988. Within the food items, foodgrains have gone up by 13.8 per cent; this comes on the top of almost 20 per cent increase in 1987-88..."

The price of pulses, the only source of protein to our countrymen has soared, gone up by 50 per cent between November 1987 and October 1988. This really depicts the real situation on the ground. But the statement does not reflect that reality. Rather the Government appears to be very self-complacent, very much complacent about the price situation in our country. Now the Minister in the course of his statement refers to the four-point strategy to meet the situation. One of the important items of strategy is the strengthening and expanding of the public distribution system. Madam, it has also been stated that the number of outlets, number of ration shops all over the country has been increased and it now stands at 3.5 lakhs all over the country, in addition to 416 mobile vans.

That is all right, there has been increase in numbers. But the very same paragraph states surprisingly that allocation of rice and wheat for public distribution system during this year have been relatively less as compared to 1937. This situation has been made very clear that the number of shops has been increased but the allocation, quantum of allocation has not increased, nor is it commensurate with the increased number of outlets. But it has declined from the level which was there in the earlier years, that is in 1987. This is an admission I thank the Minister for the admission of the truth that the allocation has been less than in the previous year.

In this connection, Madam, I want to draw your attention to the pitiable circumstances which have taken place or have arisen because of the failure of the Government to make proper allocation to the State Governments and naturally as I do come from West Bengal, I have been furnished certain information by the State Government. The first allegation of the State Government of West Bengal is that the monthly allocation has been reduced and drastically reduced. Earlier on an average it was 1.25 lakh tonnes of wheat and 1.25 lakh tonnes of rice monthly. But right from the beginning of this year it has been drastically reduced. It has been drastically reduced to 80,000 metric tonnes per month. The first thing is that it has been drastically reduced from 1.25 lakh tonnes to 80,000 tonnes both in terms of rice and in terms of wheat. Once they have reduced the allocation, Madam, the physical delivery is all the more disquieting. I will give you an example. I think the Minister should take note of it if he likes, of course. In May 1988, the physical supply, the physical delivery to the State Government was 74,500 metric tonnes, in June 1988, it was 60,000 odd tonnes, in July it was 62,000, in August it was 70,000 and in September it was 46,000 metric tonnes. On no occasion during the past few months was even the reduced allocation physically delivered to the State Government. My

[Shri Chitta Basu]

charges are on two counts. My first charge is that the allocation has been drastically reduced. And my second and more serious charge is that even the reduced allocation has not been supplied physically to the State Government. These allocations are paper allocations and they have no value at all. And as a result of that—let me point out to the Minister—the public distribution system has not been expanded effectively; rather it has been reduced. The impact of the public distribution system has been reduced, and reduced drastically.

The combined allotment for Calcutta and Howrah is 23,000 M. Tonnes against 70,000 tonnes which the State Government was to distribute during the month of October. So, allocations to the districts had to be reduced as a consequence of reduced allocation and reduced physical availability of the foodgrains. Therefore, my contention is that the statement says that the Government is very serious for expanding and strengthening the public distribution system, which is a fallacy and is untruth; it has got no meaning at all.

Now I come to the question of quality. I have got in my possession certain illustrations to show how sub-standard rice is supplied. The Government of West Bengal said that recently it 'was found that the rice that arrived in Calcutta contained 100 per cent substandard rice. It gives another instance. It says, in many cases the substandard quality rice, rejected during the joint inspection by the FCI and inspection team for quality control, of the State Government, was smuggled out to different points in a clandestine manner by the FCI for delivery through public distribution system. This is more serious. This is regarding quality of rice supplied. The State Government representative is there; FCI representative is there, and here the State Government of West Bengal makes

a very serious allegation that the substandard rice which was rejected by the joint inspection team was smuggled out to different outlets in a clandestine manner by the FCI.

SHRI DEBA PRASAD RAY (West Bengal): You supplied rapeseed oil to Behala people . . . *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: That oil was supplied by you. I have not contaminated it; it is the supply source which did something.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: It is the State Government which is responsible.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Hang them. . . . *(Interruptions)*

So, my point is, that substandard-quality of rice and wheat is being supplied and whenever these things are pointed out to the Government, no action is taken. The Government should take a note of it.

Again, the Minister mentioned about the drought, not about the floods in different parts of the country because floods have ravaged various parts of the country. But the Minister says, in spite of drought, in spite of floods, prices of essential commodities, particularly the foodgrains, have been kept under check, and admits the price has risen but I think the prices have risen more than what he has said. There has been some instance of providing relief, gratuitous relief, to those indigent, distressed, persons who were victims of drought and floods. But the quantity required by the State Government has not been supplied. On the one hand, the public distribution system is not working properly. On the other, additional quantity of foodgrains for relief is not being supplied and this adds to the distress of the people. According to the State Government, the requirement for the distribution of gratuitous relief in the flood-affected areas come to about

18,000 tonnes. They requested the Government of India to supply this quantity but there has been no response from the Government of India. Madam, you will be very much shocked to learn that due to the recent cyclonic storm, tempest, in the coastal areas of West Bengal, a large number of people have been rendered homeless. They want some kind of support from the Government and this support cannot be provided unless additional quantity of foodgrains is made available from the Centre in view of the fact that this allocation has already been reduced. (Interruptions) My last point. I am very much pained to make this comment. Food is being used as a weapon of politics. It is being used for narrow, partisan and selfish political ends. If there is an election in some area, the floodgates open for allocation of wheat and rice. Madam, this is a human problem. But I am sorry to say that the Government takes advantage of the distress of the people and makes food a political weapon. The Government should restrain from this thing.

Lastly, the question of importing. (Time-bell rings). The Government have already gone in for import of foodgrains. They have contracted for one million tonne of rice and some quantity of wheat also. May I know what is the expected quantum of further imports of wheat and rice from other countries because my information is otherwise? On the one hand, you are importing. At the same time, you also want to export wheat and rice. There is also a very very tragic circumstance here. We have contracted to some foreign countries supply of rice and wheat at prices then prevailing in the international market. Now, we are importing rice and wheat at a price which is higher than the price at which we agreed to supply them. There is also a danger from the economic point of view. Therefore, may I know from the Government what is the expected quantum of wheat and rice to be imported from foreign countries

and whether the Government propose to ban the export of rice and wheat? Lastly.....

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is your third last.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: This is the last one.

AN HON. MEMBER: One more last.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: This is the last last.

We And that the stock with the FCI which is meant for the public distribution system is being handed over to the private traders. FCI's consignment, FCI's stock, which is meant for the public distribution system, is given to the private traders at reduced prices in order to enable them to reap profits out of its sale.

I hope the hon. Minister will give specific answers to these questions.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ram Jethmalani. I would request hon. Members to confine themselves to specific questions. Otherwise, we will not be able to call everybody. We may have to sit till 9 in the night.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY (Andhra Pradesh): We can sit. This is an important subject.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI (Karnataka): Madam, I will stop with a twin-He in your eyes. I find the bell rather jarring. If you can avoid. . . (Interruptions') I will sit down much earlier than you have to ring the bell.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I do not mind sitting till 12 in the night. All of you can speak, provided everybody sits.

1.00 P.M

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Not at all. I won't take more than five minutes. Madam, I have a small

(Shri Ram Jethmalani

grievance to make that we are discussing a matter which the hon. Member, Mr. Narayanasamy, said is above party politics. I wholeheartedly agree with him that it is above party politics, it is a matter of life and death for commonman in this country but when we discuss a matter of life and death, it is inevitable that there will be some criticism and some analysis of the reasons why we are in the unfortunate condition. The trouble is that when we start any criticism, it suddenly turns into a political question and we have the assaults on our ears to which we are not used to, at least I am not, but we are still surviving and doing our best.

My first grievance against the hon. Minister's statement is that his statistics are totally untenable, they are erroneous, I do not want to say that they are deliberately false. These statistics, Madam, seem to have been compiled in some laboratory where the persons, who supply the information, are those who do not have to pay for their supplies, either they are subsidised or they get them free. The real criterion and the real data on which honest statistics can be compiled is the testimony of the housewife. Go and ask the housewife in the country. The Government may be complimenting itself by producing this kind of a...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The housewife is sitting next to you.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: I assure you, Madam, that I consulted her before I started my speech. And why do you think I have been sitting with her so long?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We were wondering.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: While the Gov-ernment is busy complimenting itself on its performance, the housewife is busy cursing her destiny

and also those who are responsible for the unfortunate destiny and necessarily that has to be the Government of the day. After all, you are in charge of the economy of the country and you have to take the blame if something goes wrong with the condition of the poor man. Only yesterday my distinguished colleague, Mr. Yadav, made a speech in this House and I have a summary of what he said. It has not been denied by anybody, but what he said is of terrible significance. The hon. Member said: "Due to the faulty, unsagacious policies of the Government and sinister alliance of the multinational companies and mill-owners, the prices of essential commodities are rising very swiftly in the country. But instead of checking the price rise, the Government has become a silent spectator and as a result monthly expenditure per family has increased by Rs. 100 to Rs. 500. The people of middle Income class and poor class are unable to get two square meals and cloth according to their requirements. The multinational companies and mill-owners have increased the prices of their products about 6 or 7 times during the year." Will the hon. Minister go into these kind of statements which are solemnly made on the floor of this House by a responsible Member and then compare the statistics which his officer supplies him to please him with the truth which is being uttered here?

Then Madam, my friend Mr. Chitta Basu who is more informed on these affairs than anybody else made a complaint that there is some kind of politics which is being played. All this again....

SHRI JAGESH DESAI (Maharashtra): He never said like this.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY. He said it.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: He said it. That is why I am saying so.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Maharashtra State also has been dealt with in a much worse, way than West Bengal (*In; eruptions*)

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: He said it. Go through the record.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: I agree with you. Maharashtra has been badly dealt with. I entirely agree with you, but now you have got Antulay with you in your party, things will improve.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: It is an unwarranted remark.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Another distinguished Member of this House | sa'd this yesterday. He was referring to Haryana and you can see whether it is not a blatant case of politics being played. He said, in Haryana, there is a stock of 1 crore quintals of sugar which has been lying unlifted with the Haryana Government for the last one year, forcing them to bear avoidable storage charges, whereas, on the other hand, sugar is being imported at a higher price. If this statement is true, and I have not seen anybody responsible denying it, then this is a case for some people being prosecuted, because this is a crime against the economy of the country that stocks of sugar are lying there and nobody lifts them, you pay storage charges and at the same time you are importing sugar and denuding the country of the very scarce foreign exchange reserves. Now is this not a crime? For much lesser crimes you detain people under the COFEPOSA because they are supposed to have acted in a manner prejudicial to the foreign exchange reserves of the country. I think there are some people responsible who should be found out and detained under the COFEPOSA if this is the state of affairs. So this is the statement from the distinguished Member from Haryana.

Then there is the third reason which is apparent. The scientists met

and the scientists proclaimed that every hectare of land can produce 50 quintals of wheat and the hon. Minister said today in the morning that the average production is 19.98 quintals per hectare. And when I said, Mr. Minister, please tell us why is it that the knowledge and technology which are available are not being utilised, he said that it is being utilised in 45 districts. Madam, 400 scientists met under the auspices of the Hissar University in Haryana in August and not one Director of Agriculture from any of the Wheat-producing States attended the conference. Now this is a callous neglect which goes on. These officers are there only to make money. But they do not attend conferences of a serious nature where technology is discussed. If you produce 50 quintals instead of 20 which you are producing now, the prices of essential commodities will fall and at least the housewife will stop cursing you.

SHRI D. L. BATTHA: Madam, this question was raised during the Question Hour and the concerned Minister had replied to it.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Yes. I agree, but he says, he does not know. The hon. Minister said that he did not know. And the hon. Minister said: "I agree that the Directors should have attended if they had been invited". If they had not been invited, they should have gone there uninvited to listen to what was being said in the conference.

There seems to be something wrong with our priorities. I have no grievance against the hon. Minister who is now in charge of food processing and so on and for introduction of Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola. But Madam, Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola reflect the highest kind of modern technology in production and in the distribution system. If you apply that sophisticated technology which is available in our country—because our scientists are good but there is nobody to encourage the scientists, there is no body to make use of that technology—if you apply that

[Shri Ram Jethmalani]

technology to our farm land and provide the farmers with that knowledge, then you will find that prices of essential commodities will come down with a thud and you will not have this kind of criticism and curse from the housewife of the country. (*Time bell rings*) I am sorry, Madam, I said you just nod at me and I will stop. Now that you have rung the bell which I was not expecting, may I have 50 seconds more and stop?

Now again you will say that this is politics. This is not politics. Now I am talking of economics and you do not have to be Harvard-trained economist to know one simple fact—that the volume of corruption will be reflected in the prices of essential commodities. This is an economic truth. And unless you solve the problem of corruption in this country, with which it is infested—this is again a non-political question, a nonparty question—you cannot control prices. The Government as government is responsible for this. The Opposition cannot be responsible for the kind of corruption which prevails in the country. If we were in power, we will be responsible. But today you happen to be in power and you have been in power. And the price of corruption has got to be added to the prices of essential commodities. You do need to be a great economist to know this great truth and you will never bring down the prices in the country so long as corruption continues to rage at the current levels at which it is raging in the country. It is true that these statistics, produced in newspapers and in this august House, tend to put us to sleep, tend to mislead us. But in the process of trying to mislead others, you ultimately end up only by misleading yourself because if you believe these statistics to be true, then you are not aware of the real condition of the country, and if you are not aware of the real condition of the country, without proper diagnosis there can

be no prescription and that is the trouble with the doctors who are in charge of the country's destiny.

Thank you, Madam.

SARDAR JAGJIT SINGH AURORA (Punjab): Madam Deputy Chairperson, they say, "Lies, bigger lies and then these are statistics!" and I certainly cannot dispute them. The fact, however, remains that the common men, especially the lower middle class and weaker sections, are finding it extremely difficult to get two square meals a day. I am sure you are well aware that a large number of daily wage workers do not get the minimum wage and with the costs of normal commodities of food, high as they are in the fair price shops and which are not always available, people have to go to the market outside and pay more prices for them than at the fair price shops.

Madam, it is commonly known that *dal roti* is the common man's food but talking to some of the people myself I found that most of them cannot afford to have even dal twice a day. They have got to do with either pickles or pickles, and that is a fact of life.

We do realize that we have got to pay the farmer sufficiently well so that he does grow the food for us, and if he is not paid properly you will not have food. But the gap between the cost at which you procure the food from the farmer and the cost at which you sell in the fair price shops is very large. I do not know whether enough research has been done or thought given as to how we can reduce this gap.

The second thing which causes a lot of loss are the methods of storage. The third thing is, you find that large public sector Corporations like the Food Corporation of India go out and make large purchases at very high cost—as it came out yesterday—that all adds up and, eventually, though

आज जो मूल्य वृद्धि हो रही है उसके लिए हमारे गरीब मंत्री जी का सिविल सप्लाय डिपार्टमेंट काफी नहीं है। सरकार की नीति, टोटल नीति गलत है। मैं उसका उदाहरण आपको देना हूँ। डेफिसिट फाइनेंसिंग अगर विकास के लिए करें तो कोई ज्यादा हर्ज की बात नहीं है। लेकिन अगर डेफिसिट फाइनेंसिंग नान-डेवलपमेंटल खर्च के लिए करें तो मूल्य बढ़ेंगे ही। इसमें आपका आपूर्ति विभाग सिर धुनने के अलावा कुछ नहीं कर सकता। इसके लिए सरकार की नीति को बदलना पड़ेगा। हमारे यहां फटिलाइजर पर उत्पादन खर्च अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार से बहुत ज्यादा है और आप कहते हैं कि किसानों को हम सबसिडी देते हैं। आप तो अपने करप्शन और इनएफिशियेंसी को सबसिडी देते हैं। जब तक सरकार की यह नीति रहेगी उसमें मूल्य वृद्धि होती रहेगी। वह रुक नहीं सकती। हम आप को बताना चाहें कि इसके चलते भा. १ संकट उत्पन्न हो रहा है देश

[श्री चतुरानन मिश्र]

में कोई इंस्टालमेंट केन्द्रीय सरकार ने महंगाई भत्ते की देदी है। आप कहते हैं कि चीजों के दाम बढ़ नहीं रहे हैं तो फिर महंगाई भत्ता क्यों बढ़ाते हैं। आप क्यों देते हैं ?

फिर राज्य सरकारें क्यों बाध्य हो रही हैं इस को देने के लिए। इस संकट को समझने की कोशिश कीजिए। गहरे अध्ययन से ही इसका निदान हो सकता है। मैं अपने मित्र राम जेयमलानी जी से सहमत नहीं हूँ कि उत्पादन बढ़ जायेगा तो दाम घट जायेगा। अगर इस देश में ऐसा होता तो मैं उनको धन्यवाद देता। किसानों में ऐसा बात हमने पढ़ी थी कि अगर उत्पादन बढ़ेगा तो दाम घट जायेंगे। लेकिन होता यह है ...

श्री जगेश बेसाई : सै.ए.पी. हूँ।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : लेकिन आपकी सरकार ए.पी. नहीं करती है यही तो आपके साथ दिक्कत है। चीनी, कोल, मीमेंट आदि सभी चीजों का उत्पादन बढ़ गया है और इसमें कोल को छोड़कर बाकी सभी चीज प्राइवेट सेक्टर के हाथ में हैं और उत्पादन बढ़ा है लेकिन फिर भी दाम नहीं घटा है। इसी तरह से दवा, टयरेस्ट, साबुन, तेल सभी चीजों की कीमतों में बहुत ज्यादा वृद्धि हुई है जबकि इनका उत्पादन भी बढ़ा है।

श्री कैलाश पति मिश्र (बिहार) : कोल के बारे में नहीं बताया।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र : कोल का मैंने पहले ही कहा। मैंने कोल को छोड़ कर बाकी चीजें प्राइवेट सेक्टर के पास हैं। मुझ पता है आप बिहार से कोल वाले क्षेत्र से भी आते हैं। पता नहीं प्राइवेट सेक्टर से क्यों दर्द हो जाता है।

डिमांड एंड सप्लाय का जो नियम है वह मूल को स्थिर रखता है लेकिन इस देश में यह चीज लागू नहीं है। चीनी का उत्पादन भी ज्यादा है। और हमारा

मंत्री महोदय बड़े हुए हैं वह यह कहते हैं कि सप्लाय भी उचित ढंग से हो रही है फिर भी चीनी के दाम क्यों बढ़ जाते हैं। अभी आपने सुना हरियाणा में चीनी बरबाद हो रहा है फिर भी चीनी के दाम बढ़ जाते हैं। क्या यह आपकी सरकार के लिए लज्जाजनक बात नहीं है? अगर कोई भी आर्थिक नियम लागू नहीं हो पाये और सरकार उसमें साझेदार हो तो फिर दूसरा उपाय क्या है? जो भी कान्सेशन आपने दिये हैं, टेक्स में कान्सेशन दिये हैं पिछले बजट में तो क्या वह कंज्यूमर को पास-आन किये जाते हैं? अगर मंत्री महोदय ईमानदारी के साथ अपने विभाग को कहें कि वह वर्क आउट करके फिगर्स दे कि जो कान्सेशन हमने इंडस्ट्रीज को दिये हैं वह कंज्यूमर्स को पास-आन कर दिये हैं और मिनिस्टर साहब कह दें कि हां, किये हैं तो मैं मान लूंगा लेकिन ऐसा हो नहीं रहा है। सलिए मेरा कहना है कि आपको कोई ऐसा इंतजाम करना चाहिए। अगर इनडायरेक्ट टैक्सेशन ज्यादा बढ़ता जायेगा तो प्राइस बढ़ जायेंगे। डायरेक्ट टैक्सेशन आप घटा रहे हैं और इनडायरेक्ट बढ़ा रहे हैं, प्राइस बढ़ेंगे नहीं तो क्या होगा। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में अगर दाम घट जाये, जैसे डीजल के दाम घट गये, पेट्रोल के घट गये लेकिन भारत में घटने नहीं दे रहे हैं। हम क्या करें? लाठी लेकर खड़े होने के दूसरा रास्ता सूझता नहीं है। इसलिए हम आपसे कहना चाहते हैं कि इन बातों पर समझने की कोशिश कीजिए।

दूसरी बात मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि दाम घटाने के लिए क्या किया जाए। आपने घोषणा की थी कि आदिवासी क्षेत्र में मोबाइल शाप्स भेजेंगे, सस्ती दुकानें भेजेंगे। आप बता दीजिए कितनी दुकानें उन क्षेत्रों में भेजी हैं? आप बिहार से आते हैं जहां आदिवासी क्षेत्र बहुत हैं आपके यहां कितनी शाप्स रन कर रही हैं? दूसरी बात यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि जैसा माननीय सदस्यों ने कहा कि बी. हाई कास्ट इकोनोमी हो गयी है अगर आपने इसके ऊपर विचार नहीं किया और

जिसको कहने के लिए मेरे पास भी समय नहीं है, आप प्राइस राइस को नहीं रोक सकते। फूड को ही ले लीजिए। फूड का जो स्टॉक करते हैं, उसमें जो उसकी हैंडलिंग होती है उसकी कास्ट बहुत ज्यादा होती है। कभी-कभी 30 परसेंट हो जाती है। 26 परसेंट से कम तो कभी हुई ही नहीं। आपके पहले जो मंत्री थे उन्होंने जवाब दिया था कि 18 लाख टन तीन साल के अंदर गल्ला सड़ गया तो आप बताइये हम सस्ता कहाँ से देंगे। यह सरकार का जवाब है। उनका लिखा हुआ जवाब मेरे पास है कि 18 लाख टन तीन साल के अंदर बरबाद हो गया। जो हम स्टॉक करने हैं उसकी हैंडलिंग कास्ट ज्यादा होती है। उसको घटाने का अगर कोई रास्ता निकालेंगे तो ही आप सस्ती चीजें लोगों को दे सकते हैं।

दूसरा काम यह करना पड़ेगा कि सपोर्ट प्राइस और मार्केट प्राइस में बहुत बड़ा अन्तर है। मैं एक उदाहरण दे रहा हूँ। चने का सपोर्ट प्राइस 400 रुपये के आसपास है और मार्केट प्राइस कुछ दिन पहले 800 रुपये एक क्विंटल तक था। और सत्तू का दाम 16 रु. किलो हो जाता है। इस प्रकार से अगर सपोर्ट प्राइस और मार्केट प्राइस में यह अन्तर रहेगा तो मूल्य वृद्धि नहीं रहेगी। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या आपके पास कोई मेकेनिज्म है जिससे आप इसको कंट्रोल कर सकें गेहूँ का दाम सपोर्ट प्राइस के साथ 175 रु० था तो मार्केट में उस वक्त 250 रु० था और अब तो 275 और 300 के आस-पास चला गया है। अगर आप मिडिल मैन का प्रोफिट कट डाउन करके उसको घटाने का रास्ता निकाल सकें तो किसानों को भी ज्यादा दाम दिया जा सकता है और कंज्यूमर को भी कम दाम पर दिया जा सकता है। हम तो कहते रहते हैं कि किसानों की चीजों की कीमत बढ़ाई जानी चाहिए। इसलिए आपको अपनी मूल्य पालिसी ऐसी बनानी चाहिए जिससे उत्पादन बढ़े, जिसमें विकास हो। ऐसा नहीं होना चाहिए कि सारा पैसा मिडिल मैन खा जाय। मैंने गेहूँ और चने का उदाहरण

दिया। मैं और चीजों के भी उदाहरण दे सकता हूँ। इसलिए मैं कहना चाहता कि मिडिलमैन का प्रोफिट कट डाउन करके थोड़ा हिस्सा किसानों को दीजिए, बाकी कंज्यूमर को दीजिए। सरकारी भत्ते की दुकानों पर कोई गैरतम बूट, जैसस फाईस्ट और महात्मा गांधी नहीं बँटा हुआ है। आप भी इस बात को समझते हैं कि वे लोग काफी फक राशन काँट रहे हुए हैं। आप यह सब जानते हैं। मैं नहीं समझता कि इन बातों को आप नहीं समझते हैं। लेकिन जो समझ कर भी न करे वह ज्ञान पापी है, उसका इलाज नहीं है। इसलिए मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि हमारी सरकार ज्ञान पापी है और जिसको अंग्रेजी में कांशस डेविल कहते हैं जो प्राइसेज बढ़ते जा रहे हैं, यह अत्यन्त चिन्ता का विषय है। सरकार को अपनी निद्रा का त्याग करके और झूठ भ्रम को छोड़कर सच्चाई पर आना चाहिए। इसकी तरफ आपको ही दल के कई माननीय सदस्यों ने ध्यान आकषित किया है। आपको उसके मुताबिक काम करना चाहिए।

*SHRI L. NARSINGH NAIK (Andhra Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chair person, we are discussing a very important subject which concerns everyone in this country. Not only here, inside the Parliament, but also it is being discussed by everyone outside. Hon'ble Members who have preceded me have already made % significant contribution to the debate and suggested various ways and means to control the ever-increasing prices of essential commodities. Since the time available at my disposal is very short. I will deal with only- certain important points.

Madam, the functioning of public distribution system is far from satisfactory. It has become ineffective. It has failed to serve the people. It is ridden with corruption. The public distribution system has failed to deliver the goods.

♦English translation of the original speech delivered'

[Shri L. Narsingh Naik]

This system has failed in supplying essential commodities in our rural areas. The situation is so worse today that even the Government is not able to monitor whether essential items which are supposed to be supplied to the rural people are reaching them or not. The inaction of the Government coupled with the ineffective functioning of the system has let the rural people especially rural poor down. One has to admit that the very system is on the brink of collapse. I am very sorry to say so.

What the people need today is the essential commodities at a reasonable price. The struggle for existence among the poor is becoming more and more intense. The Government should first try to apply its mind to the miserable conditions of agricultural labourers and other poorer sections. What is the condition of a labourer when he goes to his work ? With an empty stomach he goes to his working place.

The prices of essential commodities are shooting up everyday. The Government has failed in its duty in identifying the reasons for escalation of the prices and in taking appropriate steps to keep the prices under control. The Hon'ble friends sitting On that side should not think otherwise when I say so and take it in a true spirit and in turn force the Government to act. We should all see that the poor in the country get atleast two square meal a day. Leave alone getting a full meals, the poorer Sections do not get enough Jowar for making a porridge or roti. Rice is beyond their means. Even Jowar which is considered to be cheaper and the staple food of the poor has gone beyond their reach. Under these circumstances, one shudders to think of conditions of the poor. Vegetables well, the poor can not dream of them. Even a mirch and onion with which poorman swallows his

roti' are also not within his reach. Now mirch costs Rs. 70/- a kg. Many people may not be aware how it is grown or where from it comes. But everyone in every part of this country consumes mirch. The producers are not getting any benefit but once it reaches the market it becomes too costly and too dear for a common man. I wonder how the common man in the country is able to purchase this commodity. Madam, it is high time now, to take some concrete steps to streamline and strengthen the public distribution system. It is our knowledge that it is the wholesale dealers who are getting all the benefit of this system. They purchase in bulk the commodities from the market at a throw away price and dispose them off when the prices are high. This kind of practice which is going on now should be put to an end. They hoard the commodities and allow the prices to shoot up creating an artificial scarcity and then sell the goods at a very high price. The Government must take steps to punish the hoarders and black marketers.

The Hon'ble Minister, in the statement made earlier, said that the prices of essential commodities have come down sharply. I cannot agree with the statement. Prices have not declined. Madam, it is the knowledge of everyone that the prices will come down at the time of harvest. The prices will be at their peak during March. Hence comparing the prices in March with the prices which are prevailing now is not proper. Prices of cereals and other commodities are bound to fall during harvesting season. Hence to take credit for this and to claim that the prices have fallen down because of the measures of the Government is ridiculous. Once the harvest season is over the prices start going up. The producer is getting less for his produce and the consumer is paying through his nose . for purchasing it. It is only the middleman who is thriving and prospering. Madam, It is a vast

subject and time allotted is too short. It is difficult to do justice to the subject within this short span. I request you to give me a few minutes more.

Madam, let me say a word about inflation. Increasing population and inflation have affected our economy very badly. I will quote some figures which show the inflation rate in certain important major cities where the concentration of population is more. In Nagpur the inflation is 18 per cent, in Jaipur it is 19.9 per cent, in Kanpur 10 per cent, in Bangalore 12.4 per cent, in Hyderabad 11.6 per cent, in Ahmedabad 13 per cent, in Bihar 19.5 per cent, in Karnataka 18 per cent, in Haryana 17.2 per cent. This is the inflation rate in various parts of the country. Yet, the Government is trying to blow its own trumpet by saying that the inflation has been admirably controlled. If the inflation is so high in real terms, how the Government is going to control prices? Is there any proper Government machinery to monitor the situation. The Government should think about the situation very seriously and take steps to remedy the situation.

Madam, our distribution system is very faulty. In Andhra Pradesh, rice is being supplied to the poor at Rs. 2 kg. This has helped the poor a lot. But unfortunately the Union Government has cut down the quota allotted to Andhra Pradesh. Is it a wise step? The State Government had been supplying the rice to the poorest of the poor through public distribution at a price of Rs 2 a kg. The poorest of the poor were getting at least one meal a day because of the 2 Rs. a kg. scheme. But due to the short-sightedness of the Central Government which reduced the rice quota allotted to Andhra Pradesh, it has deprived the poor even from that single square meal for the day. Instead of increasing the quota, appreciating the services of the State Government in providing rice to every-one in remote tribal areas, at the

cheapest possible price, the Government at the Centre has decided to reduce the quota. One fails to understand the logic of the Central Government. Madam, I wish to bring One more important thing to the notice of this august House. Central Government is supplying rice to Girijan areas at Rs. 1.95 a kg. The rice supplied under this scheme is not worthy of consumption. The quality is so poor that nobody comes forward to eat that rice, I feel ashamed even to mention this point in the House. Instead of supplying rice which is consumable, the Government is supplying the rice which is worth throwing in the gutters. While I was the Chairman of a Girijan Corporation, I brought this to the notice of the Government several times. But no action has been taken to supply quality rice under the scheme to Girijan areas. There were many instances where people refused to purchase this rice from fair price shops and the stocks of rice was returned. This is yet another point to prove how poor the public distribution system in the country is. Madam, it is needless to say that the quality of the commodities supplied through public distribution system be strictly maintained. It is indeed strange to know that the Government at the Centre could not control the quality of commodities supplied through its own outlets. Madam, before I conclude, I would like to make a few suggestions v-

(1) Government should take steps to check marketing.

(2) The Government should step up anti hoarding operations and see that hoarding is completely wiped out.

(3) The Government should take the responsibility of public distribution system on its own.

(4) Public distribution system should be reorganised taking every district headquarters as the Centre of nodal point.

[Shri L. Narsingh Naik]

(5) Strict watch should be kept on the functioning of fair price shops. Now the corruption is rampant in fair price shops. Unless corruption is rooted, out, much cannot be expected from the system itself. Now it appears that the Government itself is encouraging corruption in the system. Hence, unless Government controls the prevailing corruption, it is very difficult to make public distribution system effective.

(6) Government should take steps to prevent adulteration.

Madam, the Government should also take the steps to encourage Consumer Protection Movement in the country. Consumer Protection Cells should be established everywhere. Promoting the Consumers' Protection Movement will go a long way in the effective functioning of public distribution system. Many Consumer Protection Cells have already been functioning throughout Andhra Pradesh. They proved to be a boon to the public distribution system. Andhra Pradesh stands first and foremost in the matter of keeping strict vigil and effective functioning of the public distribution system. It should serve as the model for the entire country.

Madam, I hope the Hon'ble Minister would consider the suggestions I made and take effective steps to strengthen the public System in the country.

I conclude my speech by thanking you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House is adjourned for lunch till 2.30 p.m

the House then adjourned for lunch at thirty-seven minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at thirty-two' minutes past two of the clock. The Vice-Chairman' (Sto* B. satyanarayan Reddy) in the- Chair.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (GENERAL) 1988-89

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): Sir, on behalf of Shri B. K. Gadhi I beg to lay on the Table a statement (in English and Hindi,) showing the Supplementary Demands for Grants (General) for the year 1988-88 (December 1988).

ANNOUNCEMENT RE. GOVERNMENT BUSINESS FOR THE WEEK COMMENCING MONDAY, THE 5TH DECEMBER 1988

THE MINISTER; OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): Sir, with your permission I rise to announce that Government Business in this House for the week commencing Monday, the 5th December 1988 will consist of:—

(1) Further discussion on the 35th 36th and 37th Reports of the UPSC.

(2) Consideration and passing of the following Bills, as passed by Lok Sabha:

(a) The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 1988;

(b) The Constitution (Sixtieth Amendment) Bill, 1988;

(c) The Banking Public Financial Institutions and Negotiable Instruments Laws (Amendment) Bill, 1988;

(d) The National Highway