

(d) if so, the role of NGOs played so far; and

(e) the future actions likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) Yes. To improve the quality and safety of the consumer products, the Department has started involving Voluntary Consumer Organisations, which had been undertaking testing of quality of consumer products. The Government has sanctioned funds to eligible VCOs for testing of products for their quality and safety, and for dissemination of information to the public.

(c) and (d) Yes. Voluntary Consumer Organisations doing comparative testing of products, publish their test reports enabling consumers to make an informed choice of product so that consumers can get full value of their money.

(e) The basic objective is to enlarge the scope of comparative product testing involving capable Voluntary Consumer Organisations.

Prevention from hunger and malnutrition

†2616. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of such persons in the country who are devoid of food;

(b) whether faulty public distribution system is responsible for the deaths due to hunger and malnutrition;

(c) whether Government are carrying out any amendments for inclusion of 'right of food' in the Constitution;

(d) the efforts being made by Government to prevent starvation deaths; and

(e) the schemes of investments in rural areas for preventing the same and the outcomes thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

SINGH): (a) to (e) The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) was introduced w.e.f. June, 1997 and covers 6.52 crores Below Poverty Line (BPL) families which includes 2.50 crore Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families and 11.52 crore Above Poverty Line (APL) families based on poverty estimates of the Planning Commission for year 1993-94 on the population projections of Registrar General Census as on March 2000. A National Sample Survey Exercise points towards the fact that about 5% of the total population in the country sleeps without two square meals a day. This section of the population can be called as "hungry". In order to make TPDS more focused and targeted towards this category of population, the "Antyodaya Anna Yojana" (AAY) was launched in December, 2000 covering one crore poorest of the poor families amongst the BPL families under TPDS and providing them foodgrains at a highly subsidized rate of Rs. 2/- per kg. for wheat and Rs. 3/- per kg. for rice. Subsequently the scheme AAY has been expanded thrice and it cover 2.50 crore families as on date. The Central Government is allocating foodgrains at the scale of 35 Kg. per family per month under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

No starvation death has been reported by any State Government. In some of the recent judgements delivered by Supreme Court indicates that 'right to life' also includes 'right to food'. Therefore, there appears to be no need to make any amendment in the Constitution.

PDS is supplemental in nature and cater to approximately 50% of the foodgrains requirements every month of an average BPL household. There are also several welfare schemes, adopting a life cycle approach, where in foodgrains are distributed to the intended beneficiaries.

Recently a revised Village Grain Bank Scheme has been introduced in food scarce areas like the drought prone areas, the hot and cold desert areas, tribal areas and the inaccessible hilly areas to cater to the food requirement during the period of natural calamity or during lean season.

Cost of handling of foodgrains

2617. SHRI MOTIUR RAHMAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cost of handling of foodgrains by public agencies is very