

growing in our land and there is, absolutely, no justification of pricing the product linked with the international price of altogether a different product, the crude oil. This is being done by the empowered group of Ministers, raising the price to US \$ 4.32 per MMSCMD. I demand this is not rational and that must be reviewed downwards and revised if this national asset, as rightly said, is to be properly harnessed for national goal.

Sir my second point relates to distribution. Sir, my State West Bengal and the entire Eastern region is gas starved. They are being made to use costlier LPG for their public transport instead of CNG. So, I demand to have a proper distribution. The Southern Region is also suffering from that. So, Sir, in the face of the surreptitious and unauthorised bid of appropriating country's sovereign natural resources as family property – these are all coinage from the Government statement – by some private players, the need of the hour – and I demand – is a Government takeover, rather, nationalisation of the distribution and marketing of natural gas, including that of KG-D6 basin by the Government. We welcome the announcement of the Government to have a National Gas Grid. So, that National Gas Grid has to be put in place. The distribution and marketing of natural gas at the wellhead must be taken over by the Government and operated through that National Grid, as is being done in the case of electricity by the Power Grid Corporation of India. Then only, this vital national asset can be properly harnessed. Thank you, Sir.

Flood situation in Kerala

SHRI P. RAJEEVE (Kerala): Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to the serious flood situation in Kerala. During the past 24 hours, eight persons have died in monsoon-related disaster. With that, the total number of people killed during the monsoon in the State has risen to 96. In a primary assessment, the loss would run into more than Rs. 300 crores, around 650 houses have collapsed totally and 1500 houses have collapsed partially. The heavy rain has caused damage to agriculture crops of more than 2000 hectares; 10,000 people have been shifted to relief camps in various parts of the State. The State Government has initiated relief programme in an urgent manner.

So, I request the Central Government, to sanction immediate debt relief to the State of Kerala. It was a normal practice that a Central Team is sent only after sometime, after the disaster occurs. So, I urge the Central Government to send a special team to the State of Kerala urgently to assess the damage caused by heavy rain and flood, etc. Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Kurien, associate. ...*(Interruptions)*...

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Kerala): Sir, I always associate with whatever would be said, but this being such a serious subject, Sir, nearly 100 people died due to flood that is there for the last two-three days in Kerala. Then, loss to the cultivation is more than 10,000 hectares and Rs. 300 crores is the estimated loss. What I want is, the Government of India should immediately intervene and release assistance to the State of Kerala. That's all.

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I associate myself with the Zero Hour Mention made by the hon. Member.

SHRI SITARAM YECHURY (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with it.

SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT (West Bengal): Sir, I would also like to associate myself with it.

SHRI TAPAN KUMAR SEN (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with it.

श्री भगवती सिंह (उत्तर प्रदेश) : महोदय, मैं अपने को इससे सम्बद्ध करता हूँ।

SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All associate.

Reported scam in rice import

SHRI D. RAJA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I am raising an issue which is very important. The Outlook journal and some other journals have reported a newsitem regarding the export of rice to the African countries which appears to be a very big scam. The Government of India banned the export of non-basmati rice in 2007. Subsequently, we witnessed a steep rise in the rice prices in the international market. More than 20 African nations have been exempted from the ban. On their requests, some of these countries named some private traders such as a Delhi-based company, Amira Foods (India) Limited and another Delhi-based rice-exporting company Shivrath Rai Harnarain (India) Ltd. They were allowed to procure foodgrains at lower prices and to sell at higher prices, thereby making huge profits. Government did not procure it through the Food Corporation of India, and it did not transport it through the Shipping Corporation of India. These private traders were responsible for hoarding in the country, even hiking prices of food grains in the domestic market and weakening the public distribution system in the country. I think, both the Ministry of Food and Public Distribution and the Ministry of Commerce must be held responsible for such a situation. Now, there is an enquiry in Ghana, one of the African nations. The deal with another African nation, Sierra Leone, is shocking. Instead of the Letter of Credit coming from its Government, it came from a Switzerland based company called Novel Commodities. Going by the reports, it appears that the scam would run to the tune of Rs. 2500 crores. That is what the journals are reporting. Therefore, I would urge upon the Government to order a thorough enquiry and this loot must be exposed. Those who are responsible for such a scam and loot must be prosecuted and punished because at the time when our Government, the Congress-led UPA Government, has been talking about food security and bringing a legislation on food security, you cannot allow these private traders to loot not only India, but also other countries. It is a shame on India. Such scams should not happen. I appeal to the entire House to demand from the Government, in one voice, to order an enquiry.

SHRI SITARAM YECHURY (West Bengal): Sir, I associate myself with what the hon. Member has said.

DR. CHANDAN MITRA (Nominated): Sir, I associate myself with what the hon. Member has said.