

Import of sugar and pulses

3086. SHRI T.T.V. DHINAKARAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to import sugar and pulses to meet the domestic needs in view of increasing cost of such commodities; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government with a view to augment domestic availability of sugar has permitted import of raw sugar by sugar mills under Advance Authorization Scheme (AAS) at zero duty upto 30.09.2009, and under Open General License (OGL) upto 01.08.2009 and import of white/refined sugar by STC/MMTC/PEC and NAFED upto 1 million tons at zero customs duty under Open General License (OGL). Import of pulses at zero duty is permitted from June, 2006.

Increase in prices of essential items

†3087. SHRI SUBHASH PRASAD YADAV: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether prices of essential items and foodgrains have increased drastically;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is unreasonable difference between the rate of consumer price index and actual rate in the market;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) the plans and proposals with Government to remove the unreasonable gap between Government data and actual data; and

(f) by when these will be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir; Prices of some essential commodities have arisen.

(b) The All India average wholesale prices of foodgrains and edible oils are either stable or have declined over the last one year. Prices of sugar increased by 49.56%, pulses such as tur dal by 54.40% and potato by 73.41 % over the past one year.

(c) No, Sir. Consumer Price Index (CPI) is weighted average price increase of large number of commodities in the basket in large number of markets in the country and is based on the market data on retail prices of these commodities. So the price hike of one or few commodities in the specific markets are sometimes not visible in the overall all commodities CPI Numbers, though they are utilized in the compilation of CPI Numbers.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) to (f) In view of (c) above, Do not arise.

Cash incentives to BPL families through PDS

3088. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any move to pay cash incentives to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families instead of food items through the Public Distribution System (PDS);

(b) if so, whether such a scheme would be workable at all when prices of essential commodities are touching the sky; and

(c) what is the guarantee about availability of food items in remote areas and against the exploitation of poor by greedy traders selling them at a much higher price?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) State Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi submitted proposals for approval to direct disbursement of food subsidy in cash to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in lieu of foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) on a pilot basis in five districts *i.e.* Lakhimpur Kheri and Hardoi in Uttar Pradesh, Panchkula and Jhajjar in Haryana and Central District in Delhi. Based on those proposals, a draft scheme has been prepared to test feasibility of this alternative mode of transfer of food subsidy to BPL/AAY beneficiaries under TPDS. The draft scheme is under examination. In response to the concept note circulated on the proposed National Food Security Act, Government of Bihar has also now suggested for introduction of cash subsidy under TPDS. The State Government has been requested to submit a proposal in this regard.

As envisaged under the scheme, with the food subsidy given to BPL families in cash, they would be at liberty to purchase wheat/rice/sugar of their own choice and quantity from open market. However, the pilot scheme has been formulated based on requests of State governments and its implementation would precisely test its feasibility.

Restoring the allocation of rice to Kerala

3089. SHRI P.R. RAJAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Centre would consider restoring the allocation of rice to Kerala; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) allocations of food grains for Below Poverty Line (BPL) including Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families have been maintained @ 35 kg. per family per month as per entitlement for all States and UTs, including Kerala. However, allocations of APL rice and