

it... (Interruptions)... It is a statement regarding the public distribution system.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Madhya Pradesh): I am on a point of order. I have raised this point of order several times—that though the Ministers have the right to come to the House and make statements, the House has to be informed. It may not be in the List of Business...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is in the List of Business.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I am sorry.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Strengthening of Public Distribution System and consumer cooperatives in Mizoram

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI AJIT PANJA): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, after the recent visit of the Prime Minister to Mizoram, a Group of Ministers and a Team of senior officers visited Mizoram during the last week of July, 1986 to identify some measures which could accelerate the development of Mizoram. Supply of essential consumer items at reasonable prices to the people of Mizoram is of crucial importance. In this context, certain measures were considered in the Department of Civil Supplies to revitalise and strengthen the Public Distribution System and cooperative infrastructure. The Government have decided to take the following measures:

(i) The godown maintained by the State Trading Corporation at Silchar would be exclusively used for servicing Mizoram for supply of imported edible oils. For streamlining distribution as well as to keep the retail prices at reasonable level, full transport subsidy will also be given from Silchar to nine focal points viz. Aizawl, Lunglei, Lawngtalai, Kolasib, Aibawk, Champhai, Kawkulh, Saitual and Lokichera.

(ii) Financial assistance upto Rs. 10 lakhs on the basis of hundred per cent subsidy is being sanctioned during the current financial year to Government of Mizoram for supply of levy sugar and

iodized salt in small packs under the Public Distribution System.

(iii) A sum upto Rs. 10 lakhs will be given as share capital contribution to Mizoram Marketing and Consumers' Federation for expansion and diversification of their consumer activities.

(iv) Additional financial assistance of Rs. 2.50 lakhs will be given to Mizoram Marketing and Consumers' Federation to enable them to open retail outlets at Lunglei, Mamit, Kolasib, Champhai, Tlabung, Serchhip and Safha.

(v) For up grading managerial skills of the officers handling public distribution work in Mizoram, a training programme will be organised in the month of October, 1986.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, clarifications. Mr. Chaturanan Mishra... Not here.

SHRI N. E. BALRAM (Kerala): Sir, I will ask a question. Is it only for the distribution of edible oils that you have taken this step? What about other essential commodities? Nothing is mentioned in the statement about them. If you are going to strengthen the public distribution system, then all the items that you are already supplying in other areas should be given to them also. It is only mentioned in the statement that steps are being taken for servicing Mizoram for the supply of imported edible oils. What about other items?

SHRI JAGESH DESAI (Maharashtra): Sir, I am very happy that after passing the Constitution Amendment Bill the Government has shown sincerity that we want to help the people of Mizoram and that is why the Government has come out with a scheme to strengthen the public distribution system. I would like to know from the honourable Minister whether there is any programme for mobile shops so that the items which the Government wants to give to the people can be distributed in the remote villages of Mizoram.

Secondly, I am happy that you are going to give transport subsidy. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether this type of transport subsidy will be given to other tribal areas in the country so that the

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tribal people can get this benefit of the low prices.

Thirdly, I would like to know whether controlled cloth you are going to give. Edible oil you are going to give, the imported edible oil. Salt you are going to give. Foodgrains you will give. I would like to know whether other items required by the tribals will be given through this public distribution system so that those who are below the poverty line in this area can get the benefit of the scheme.

I would like to know answers for these from the hon. Minister.

I would also like to know how many fair-price shops are there in Mizoram, whether they are sufficient or not, and if not more shops should be opened.

I would like to have clarifications on these from the Minister.

श्री सूरज प्रसाद (बिहार) : श्रीमन् मंत्री महोदय का जो स्टेटमेंट है उससे लगता यह है कि पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम के द्वारा जो लोगों को शूगर, तेल, एडोबुल प्रायल देना चाहते हैं वह सीमित रह जायेगा। यह जगह लगता है कि या तो टाउन होंगे या बड़े गांव, लेकिन दूसरे इलाकों में कोई पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम के बारे में इस स्टेटमेंट में कोई बात नहीं है। इसलिए मेरा कहना इसके बारे में यह है कि अभी सरकार का जो सिस्टम है, अभी जो प्रोग्राम है यह बिल्कुल टाउन ओरियेंटेड है यह देपूत ओरियेंटेड नहीं है। इसलिए मैं सरकार से कहना चाहूंगा कि मिजोरम के इलाके में दूरजराज गांवों में जो आदिवासी रहते हैं उनके लिए भी पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम के अंदर चीजों का आपूर्ति के बारे में व्यवस्था करना चाहिए। दूसरी बात अभी 3 ही चीजें इसमें देने के बारे में सरकार ने कहा है, एडोबुल प्रायल लेवी शूगर और साट। लेकिन उस इलाके में रहने वाले लोगों को राहत की भी आवश्यकता होगी, ये राइस ईटिंग इलाके हैं। सरकार ने राइस के बारे में कुछ नहीं कहा है जो कि एक मुख्य भोजन उस इलाके के लोगों के

लिए होगा। तो मैं सरकार से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सरकार उस इलाके के अंदर पब्लिक वितरण के बारे में भी कोई व्यवस्था करना चाहती है।

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: (West Bengal): Sir, Mr. Jagesh Desai also has raised this question. I will not make that cynical statement that judging by such statements one infers that arms pay. It will be more charitable than that. There is no doubt that all these are necessary steps to make the people of Mizoram feel one with us.

My question is—others were also asking—even if they are necessary, whether they are sufficient also both in terms of the number of commodities and their quantities. They have mentioned other commodities. But none has mentioned about their requirement of fuel or firewood. It is a hilly terrain, and it is a cold place. So, I want to know whether that also would be included as part of the essential commodities there.

Second, just because it is a hilly terrain, the number of shops per thousand or per hundred have to be calculated in a different manner altogether. Anybody moving across the hilly terrain knows that the hamlets are very small and even then widely dispersed. It is true that they can walk and we cannot. Even then, what I want to know is whether that has been taken into account in providing the amount of subsidy for transport and other things and for payment for opening the retail outlets. I want to be satisfied that they are sufficient in terms of the commodities which they require, in terms of the number of retail outlets that they require, because of there being hilly terrains.

Thirdly, we have the experience of public distribution system elsewhere also. One cannot say that no corruption exists despite the fact that it is a marketing federation. Is it being visualised that there would be some sort of popular supervision over the entire distribution chain as in other areas where panchayats etc. are there. Here I do not know which kind of organisation would be there. Will such a provision be suggested also?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: So far as the first point raised by the hon. Member is concerned, after the Prime Minister's visit it was followed up by a group of Ministers and Officers. These are the points which were focussed in those meetings and that is why it was necessary to give relief so far as these points are concerned. So far as Mizoram is concerned, 684 fair price shops are already existing there. But the difficulties which were raised there are about the supply of edible oil specifically. That is why to solve that problem we had thought of giving this at first opint and the Government decided to give this from Silchar as this is the nearest Depot of the STC. Therefore, it could be sent to those place mentioned by the Officers and Ministers of Mizoram. I have already named those places. It is not that other things are not being sent. Other things are being sent there as usual and as required by the people of Mizoram.

So far as the point raised about programme for mobile shops is concerned, I would like to say that about three days ago at the request of the Mizoram Government Rs. 19 lakhs have been sanctioned for purchasing nine mobile fair-price shops for the far-flung areas where opening of a retail fair-price shop does not become viable because the number of people residing there is very small. This scheme was asked for by the Mizoram Government. This amount has been sanctioned to enable them to produce vehicle according to the suitability of the hilly terrain. The body would also be constructed by them. We have thought of Rs. 2/- lakhs for each mobile thought of Rs. 2/-lakhs for each mobility.

While they are carrying the essential commodities to these far-flung areas, in order that it does not become a uni-purpose and it becomes a multi-purpose programme, we have suggested a scheme for enabling the people of the far-flung areas to have purchasing power. We have suggested if there is a local produce which they do not find market being in a far-flung area those would be exchanged on a barter or as a credit note so that the essential commodities are delivered to them and their produce is taken by a cooperative or

by a voluntary agency controlled by the Government or by a voluntary body of the Government itself so that it is taken to the market and a proper price is taken.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Then there is the maintenance and running cost of that. Would you not provide subsidy for that also?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: This has already been discussed with the Governments which asked for it. We have given them the entire cost of the project. Maintenance cost and the running cost has not been asked for. Of course, they say if there is a difficulty in maintenance what will happen? We have told them to go ahead with the scheme and if there is any difficulty experienced by the State Government or the Union Territory, that will be looked into.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: You can afford to be more generous and outright say that 'yes' we are providing. Why all these minor things? You should straightway say that we are going to finance it.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, these are the difficulties which have been mentioned when I have been to Bhopal also. Regarding maintenance no question was raised. If it is raised they will look after it. People should get it.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: You do not know how to ask for it.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Up till now where the mobile vehicle has started operating we found they are reaching. If any State or Union Territory says that these essential commodities are not reaching distant areas where tribal people are living, certainly this will be looked into. Because the whole programme should be given effect to.

So far as control cloth and other items are concerned, it depends on the States and the Union Territories. Some of the States through their own State distribution system have included various items. We have not asked them to include. It depends on the States and Union Territories who are controlling civil supplies. They can add as much as items they want. Some States

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have included match-box, tyres for bicycles, etc. But we have not put any bar. If the State feels that some more items could be included, there is no bar.

Regarding total number of fair price shops in Mizoram, I have already stated. It is not correct so say that our entire public distribution system is urban-oriented. In fact, it transpires from our records that 79 per cent of the fair price shops are in the rural areas. I think the number is 3,27,000 fair price shops in rural areas. But some of the States and Union Territories have not attained a norm that is, 2000 people—one fair price shop. We are writing reminders to them so that they can reach their norm as quickly as possible. Not only that the geographical distribution becomes nearer to their place for easy availability of the essential commodities.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: In Mizoram, what is the norm?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: The general norm is 2000. We told them if they find any far-flung area where there is a population of 500—1000 they can open a fair price shop if it is viable. If it is not viable than a rural vehicle could go round and take care of needs of the people.

Mr. Nirmal Chatterjee mentioned about fuel and firewood. As I said earlier, there is no bar in sending fuel and firewood. They have not pressed for these items in the meeting. What was really needed by them was edible oils and consumer co-operative shops so that those could be given some help upto 10 lakhs and start activating. If there is a requirement by the State itself, they can add it. There is no bar in doing it.

Mr. Nirmal Chatterjee also mentioned about population supervision. This is being worked out. Regarding consumer protection there are some voluntary agencies attached to some of the fair price shops. However, this being worked out and the policy has not yet been announced. I hope it will come up along with the Act which is being made ready.

I think these are the main points mentioned by them.

Sir, one point I need correction. I had mentioned that the mobile fair price shops in respect of Mizoram, they need is 9. But actually Manipur has asked for this 9 mobile fair price shops but not Mizoram. These have already been allotted to Manipur. We have already sanctioned Rs. 19 lakhs. As soon as we get a request from Mizoram then it will be looked into.

Sir, I want to clear one thing that it should not be thought of by any hon. Member and I am sure, they are not thinking that these are the only things being done alongwith giving statehood as placed by both the Houses of Parliament and the people of India but whatever need is emphasized by these particular States, according to priority, so far as North-Eastern region is concerned, although Silcher depot of State Trading Corporation is being exclusively used for Mizoram but there should be no apprehension in the mind of any part of Assam or any part of any other State that their supplies would be affected. We have made the infrastructure in such a manner that although Silcher becomes exclusive, we have also taken up the position of extending certain depots. Therefore, the entire north-eastern region for whom a special fund is given, part of which is required and given to Mizoram will go and like Manipur and other places. at this stage, I might mention some of the points which are necessary for me to mention to allay any apprehension in the minds of the hon. Members. Sir, there is a Central Sector Scheme for the entire north-eastern region. If there be any difficulty in a particular sector because of their geographical position and because of their being away from the plains or away from the mainstream of India because of their hill position, Arunachal Pradesh has been sanctioned Rs. 12.63 lakhs for the purpose of rehabilitation of cooperative supply and marketing federation; Nagaland has been given Rs. 18.45 lakhs for the purpose of rehabilitation of the consumer business activities, Manipur has been sanctioned Rs. 16.24 lakhs for Manipur State Consumers Federation, Assam recently got Rs. 5.20 lakhs for establishing a departmental store at Guahati as asked for by the State of Assam, the Government of Meghalaya asked for Rs. 2.60 lakhs for opening up a

large scale and large and small sized retail outlet which has been sanctioned. Then, Sir, for the distribution of essential commodities in rural areas, a special fund has been sanctioned for the primary society, Rs. 36.40 lakhs has already been sanctioned for this purpose which is meant mainly for deep insight rural areas. Then again, Sir, for Arunachal Pradesh, Rs. 16 lakhs has been sanctioned as 100 per cent subsidy for supply of levy sugar and iodised salt in small packs under the public distribution system. This concession has also been extended to other States and Union territories in the north-eastern region. For Manipur, Rs. 19 lakhs as I have already stated given for 9 mobile units. Besides this, the State Consumers Federation and the Federations of other States and Union territories of north-eastern region, have been asked to send suitable proposals for expansion of their business. Whenever they send these proposals, the requirement would immediately be sanctioned. Sir, We are also having a trial in Delhi. We have asked those regions to set up departmental large and small retail outlets so that people may get the necessities including sometime vegetables and other things which also fall under the definition of essential commodities at a cheaper price than the market. Sir, the training programme is not only for Mizoram but also for other north-eastern State like Assam. For Assam, two training programmes, one training programme costing Rs. 25,000 has already been sanctioned. For the purpose of training programme, for one course, whenever the North-Eastern Council recommends any particular training programme for any particular State or Union territory, for one course Rs. 25,000 would be sanctioned.

So far as Unit of STC, the Sub Depot is having a capacity of 150 metric tonnes and 600 to 700 metric tonnes can be serviced from Silcher and their will be no difficulty in extending it. Therefore the State of Tripura and not the State of Assam and Silcher need not have any apprehension whatsoever. I make it clear. Even though, exclusively, Silcher Depot is used at this stage for the purpose of now I can say for the State of Mizoram.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, statement by the Transport Minister. Shri Rajesh Pilot.

SHRI SURESH KALMADI (Maharashtra): He is not the Transport Minister. That is the problem. He is Minister for Surface Transport.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): She is making the statement in the Lok Sabha.

So I have been asked to make a statement here.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: (Madhya Pradesh): Begum Kidwai has been to the scene where the accident took place. Now she is in the other House...

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: She is joining us.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Because we would like to seek some clarifications from her... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: She is joining us. In the meantime I will ask the Minister to make the statement. Let us get the information which is available now.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I have a point of order. When Mr. Rajesh Pilot was ready to make a statement in the morning, the Chairman gave a ruling that the Cabinet Minister has gone to the spot and as soon as she comes back, she will be making a statement.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: She has come back.

SHRI M. KADHARSHA: But she has not come to the House. If you kindly go through the record, the Chairman's ruling is very clear. Sir, if Mr. Rajesh Pilot is to make a statement, then the power of the Railway Minister should have been delegated to him by the President by issuing a communique delegating the power of the Railway Minister to Shri Rajesh Pilot, who is only Minister of Surface Transport. So he has no *locus standi* to make a statement in the House.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: If it is a fact that the Chairman has ruled in the morning that the Minister will come, we will wait for the Minister. In the meantime, Mr. Poojari has to reply to the debate on the IDBI Bill.