

Distress sale of paddy in Uttar Pradesh

***462. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:**

SHRI J. P. GOYAL:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the 'Indian Express' of the 7th December, 1985 under the caption 'Distress sale of paddy' in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) what are the reasons for low lifting of rice from mills by the Food Corporation of India;

(c) whether Uttar Pradesh Government has complained to the Central Government in this regard;

(d) if so, what action the Central Government have taken in the matter; and

(e) what measures the Central Government have taken in the interest of paddy growing farmers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO):

(a) There is no reference to distress sale of paddy in Uttar Pradesh in the news item appearing in "Indian Express" (Delhi Edition) of 7th December, 1985.

(b) to (d) Reports have been received from the State Government that lifting of rice by the Food Corporation of India has been low. However, as on 13-12-85, 72.3 per cent of levy rice offered by the State Government had been lifted by the Food Corporation of India, as against only 70 per cent upto the same date last year. There is generally a time lag of a few days between the offer and the acceptance of levy rice, on account of the procedure involved.

(e) The Food Corporation of India alongwith the State Governments and their agencies undertake purchase of paddy at the support price, declared by the Government.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Gurudas Das Gupta.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, at the outset let me say that the Minister is taking refuge where there is a technical mistake. The news appeared on the 8th and the dateline was 7th. I expect the hon. Minister to be a little more generous while questions are put.

Anyway, my supplementary is, I would like the Minister to tell us straight whether distress sale of paddy is taking place in UP and elsewhere in the country because Government has been constantly saying here in this House and elsewhere that no distress sale is taking place, I have the facts with me to remind him so that he can frame his reply properly. My point is, there was a debate in UP on a letter of the Opposition group complaining that paddy was being sold at Rs. 100 per quintal. There was a letter from the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India, Shri Rajeshwara Rao to the Minister dated 17th where he also complained the same thing. Then we have the statement of the Minister of Punjab saying that Government should have a proper procurement policy and price policy. He also complained the same thing. Then, while the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh had gone on a visit to Chhattisgarh, the peasants complained that they are being forced to sell paddy at Rs. 120 per quintal while the Government support price is Rs. 142. Again, no other person than the Speaker Shri Balram Jakhar recently lashed out at the Governmental agencies in Madhya Pradesh for their failure to procure rice at the Government support price. These are the facts placed by me before the Minister and I expect him to be a little more generous and objective and tell us straight whether the support policy as regards paddy, is being executed or whether distress sale is taking place in UP and elsewhere.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: First and foremost, I would like to categorically state here, as I have stated in both the Houses during the discussions held earlier in response to calling attention motions — two in the Rajya Sabha and two in the Lok Sabha — that there is no distress sale of paddy anywhere including UP, of the specifications declared by Government, that is, it should not have more than 18 per cent moisture, and the amount of for-

eign material there should be of a particular quantity, these should not be broken, they should not be weeviled and should not be of bad quality. If there is any sale of rice which is not of this specification, it cannot be termed distress sale because the support price of paddy is related to that specification. Therefore any sale of paddy which is not of the specification is not distress sale. The farmer is entitled to sell anything to anyone at any price. Secondly, Sir, he has mentioned, the hon. Member has mentioned, about my being generous. My answer was exactly to the question, which referred to an article dated 7th December. I cannot anticipate what he was having in his mind, 8th, 9th or 10th December. I am not God Almighty. He has referred to many statements which appeared in the newspapers. They are not facts at all and there is no distress sale...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Including the statement of Mr. Balram Jakhar?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: The hon. Member was referring to the statement of the former Prime Minister, in Calcutta, while he was passing through, in Dum Dum, some former Minister; all these have been answered on the floor of this House and in the Lok Sabha. There is no distress sale of paddy or anything which conformed to the specifications as approved by the Government. If you want me to give the specifications, at the particular price or the minimum statutory price, at which it is required to be sold, then, I shall give it to you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Second supplementary.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Sir, while characterising the reply of the Minister as anti-peasant and subjective, I would like to remind him—let me remind the hon. Minister—that the harvesting started in November. Eighteen per cent moisture is not the position now. It might have been in November. But it is now the middle of December. Therefore, it is not the same position now. He has been supplied this by the bureaucrats who are leading the FCI, who are colluding with the Ministers...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Colluding with whom?

(Interruptions)

SHRI BUTA SINGH: This is not fair.

SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN MISHRA: He should not cast aspersions on Ministers.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am asking him. I am taking it up. It was I who asked him immediately, what did he mean by this. Why do you think that you are going to protect the Ministers better? (Interruptions) Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta, was it a slip of the tongue? (Interruptions)

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I stand corrected. I said, they are in collusion with the millers. Whether the Minister is aware or, not, it is for him to say.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have not said like that earlier.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I said, FCI and the millers are in collusion. I would like to know whether he is going to take any action. If I had hurt somebody, I am sorry. Anyway, my second supplementary is, FCI is not purchasing in adequate quantities anywhere in the country. This is the complaint not only by opposition members, but even by ruling party members. The same thing we had seen in the case of the JCI, the Jute Corporation of India. There also, the same thing happened. The game of the collaborators is to see that the market prices are depressed and when the market prices are depressed, then, the millers shall purchase. The Food Corporation of India is only acting as an agent of the millers. The Government is sitting silent. That is why, I say, the policy of the Government is anti-peasant. I would like the Minister to tell us whether he has received complaints that the Food Corporation of India is colluding with the millers and the inaction of the Food Corporation of India is resulting in the decline of the agricultural prices, particularly paddy. What action Government proposes to take to ensure that the support price policy is executed and the peasant's rights are protected.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Ministers are not millers, but milled.

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: Sir, the system is different in different States. In UP, the rice is got from the millers. The State Government allots to the millers and the State Government gets it from the millers and then only the Food Corporation of India takes it up. Whereas, in Punjab and Haryana, paddy or wheat is taken directly from the farmers by the Food Corporation of India at the support price, at the specifications, fixed. Therefore, to give an omnibus answer will not be correct. The Food Corporation of India has procured far more as compared to last year, during this particular date, this particular period, and the reason for the criticism was that, during that time, when the market arrivals started, the moisture content was very high. So, FCI kept a very strict quality control on that because more than 18 per cent moisture on paddy leads to deterioration, leads to toxication and I am sure the House is conversant with what has happened in Bhopal or in Delhi regarding the toxic substances which have affected so many lives. So, the Government of India cannot be a party to procuring and supplying toxic substances to rest of India. Therefore, the specifications fixed have been very strictly enforced this year and in spite of that we have procured more than 2 lakh tonnes as compared to last year's procurement. So, there is no distress sale of the specification which has been fixed or the price which has been fixed.

Regarding the role of FCI, I think there is a little bit of misunderstanding. I won't be using the strong language that the Member has used, although he has been quoting Congress Members and other Ministers, but he should, in all fairness, ask the Punjab Minister who has applauded the role of FCI in Punjab for their procuring more as well as helping the farmers out.

Now the fact remains that the FCI is allotted certain mandis or purchasing points in consultation with the States, whether it is Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana or Punjab. Accordingly, the FCI moves in directly, or its agen-

cies and sometimes the State Governments also procure on behalf of the FCI. So, it is not a question that FCI has not gone into the markets. FCI has gone into the markets by itself as well as by its agencies and sometimes also by the State Governments on behalf of it. They procure, they store and all the money is also given by the FCI. So, that is the position. The FCI role is only supplementary and it is not a substitute for the entire procurement because it only procures about 15 per cent of the entire food production in the country. The fact is that the FCI is for the market support, it is supplementary in nature.

श्री बीरेन्द्र वर्मा : सभापति सौभाग्य से कृपि मंत्री जी भी उपस्थित हैं । इस वर्ष भी और प्रायः प्रतिवर्ष कृषि उत्पादों का मूल्य विलम्ब से घोषित किया जाता है और खाद्यान्न जब मारकेट में आना प्रारम्भ हो जाते हैं और किसान को मजबूर होकर डिस्ट्रेस सेल पर अपना अनाज देना पड़ता है फिर रिवेन्स करने के बाद ही बहुत विलम्ब में परचेसिंग की व्यवस्था की जाती है । क्या यह सही नहीं है कि इस वर्ष बहुत विलम्ब से पैडी की कीमतें सरकार ने घोषित कीं, बहुत विलम्ब से परचेसिंग सेंटर्स की स्थापना हुई और जो माइस्चर का प्रश्न माननीय मंत्री जी ने उठाया क्योंकि जितने भी परचेसिंग सेंटर्स की स्थापना हुई है वह बहुत विलम्ब से हुई है अतः उसमें तब तक माइस्चर भी नहीं रहता । फिर विलम्ब से उन्होंने खोले, उनमें भी नाम मात्र की परचेसिंग की गयी । क्या माननीय मंत्री जी को याद है कि इस प्रकार की शिकायत खुद मैंने और माननीय धनश्याम सिंह जी ने हाउस में की थी और मंत्री जी ने यह आश्वासन दिया था कि खुद चलकर उन सेंटर्स को देखूंगा । क्या यह भी सही है । उनकी जानकारी में है और मैंने लिखा भी है उनको भेजा है, एफ०सी०आई० के जो मैनेजिंग डाइरेक्टर हैं उनको भी मैंने बताया है कि जहाँ उनके सेंटर्स खुले हैं वहाँ पर किसानों को पैडी या कोई अनाज परचेज नहीं किया जा रहा है । किसान लुट रहा है । न एफ सी० आई०

खरीद रहा है, न पी० सी० एफ० खरीद रहा है, कोई नहीं खरीद रहा है और राइस मिलों के यहां किसानों की झुली लूट हो रही है। यह माननीय मंत्री जी से मैंने प्रार्थना की थी।

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: What the hon. Member has said is true. He has drawn my attention along with Mr. Ghan Shyam Singh, Member of Parliament, last week. An assurance has been given by me. Not only the managing director of the FCI but even my Additional Secretary, my Joint Secretary and the Chief Commercial Manager of FCI have visited Uttar Pradesh. They have met the Chief Minister, they have met the Agriculture Minister. They have visited the purchasing centres in Faizabad Division, they have been to the Tarai region and to the areas to which the hon. Member had drawn my attention. They have already consulted the UP Government and they have opened 20 new purchasing centres in various parts of UP. Therefore the assurance given to him that FCI will step in wherever it is necessary in consultation with the UP Government has been fulfilled within three days of my giving an assurance to him.

One thing I would like to make clear as far as this distress sale which is being referred to by hon. Members is concerned. First and foremost, the Food Department or the FCI gets the information from the Directorate of Economic Statistics. Then it refers to the State Government. It is the primary duty of the State Government to prevent distress sale. Wherever it is necessary for FCI to move in, we move in immediately. This is exactly what we have done.

श्री वीरेन्द्र वर्मा : अध्यक्ष जी, माननीय मंत्री महोदय ने मेरे पहले प्रश्न का उत्तर नहीं दिया है।

क्या यह सही नहीं है कि पश्चिम की व्यवस्था यानी प्राइस देर में घोषित की—पश्चिम की व्यवस्था देर से प्रारम्भ की—इसे बता दें कि देर ने की या नहीं की ?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: Sir, the purchasing centres are again fixed in consul-

tation with the State Governments. In this case, because of the untimely rain in October the paddy which came had far more than 24 per cent moisture and the paddy arrival also in the mandis was low and it was not as much as last year. Therefore the question of procuring sub-standard paddy either by the State agencies or by the State Government or by the FCI does not arise; hence the delay.

SHRI VITHALBHAI MOTIRAM PATEL: Sir, whether the Minister accepts it or not but distress sale of paddy has taken place in Punjab. I know in Punjab when the crop was ready, the support price was not announced. I requested hon. Buta Singh that the support price should be announced at the earliest because the crop was ready. He said that within a week it would be announced. Even within a month it was not announced and the farmer had to sell the paddy at lesser than the support price. Hon'ble Minister, there is something wrong in the Department or with the bureaucrats, in not announcing the support price earlier. What are the reasons for delaying the announcement of support prices?

श्री वीरेन्द्र वर्मा : क्या भविष्य में समय से पूर्व कर देंगे ?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: There is nothing wrong with either the Department or with the bureaucrats. There is time for every thing and the season is from 1st of October and the support prices were announced during that time.

SHRI P. BABUL REDDY: The hon. Minister has stated that there were no distress sales in any part of the country. But the fact remains that in many parts of the country the peasants are not able to sell their produce at the support price, though paddy is in great demand a few miles away. For example, the Nellore rice is in great demand in Madras and Nellore border is only 40 miles away from Madras. But here at Nellore border they are not able to sell it. It is the common experience there. This is due to the restrictions on the movement of paddy. The present Central Government, I am happy, is committed to the policy of removing controls. In 1978 when there were

110 million tonnes of foodgrains, they had stated that Government would remove all controls. Today it is 152 million tonnes, much more than what we anticipated. What prevents the Central Government from removing the restrictions in accordance with their own policy and go to the aid of the peasants? Are they trying to do it quickly? That certainly will ensure a more remunerative price for the peasants. Are they now going to move quickly to remove all these restrictions?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: Sir, it is a suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, he is asking whether there is any proposal to remove restrictions on movement. Is there any such proposal?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: I shall have to examine before I give an assurance in Parliament. I would not like to give a wrong assurance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 462-A.

आवश्यक उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं के खुदरा बाजार मूल्य

@* 462-क. श्री लाल कृष्ण आडवाणी :
श्री कैलाश पति मिश्र :

क्या खाद्य और नागरिक पूर्ति मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि 31 मार्च 1985 से अब तक आवश्यक उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं के खुदरा बाजार मूल्य प्रति-मास क्या-क्या रहे हैं तथागत वर्ष इन्हीं महिनों में वे मूल्य क्या-क्या थे ?

खाद्य और नागरिक पूर्ति विभाग में राज्य मंत्री (श्री के. पी. सिंह देव) :
मार्च-नवम्बर, 1985 तथा मार्च-नवम्बर 1984 की अवधि में चुनी आवश्यक वस्तुओं के मास-अंत के खुदरा मूल्य, क्रमशः अनुबंध I व II पर दिए

@पूर्वतः तारांकित प्रश्न संख्या 403, 17 दिसम्बर, 1985 से स्थानांतरित ।

† सभा में प्रश्न श्री कैलाश पति मिश्र द्वारा पूछा गया ।

गए हैं, सदन के पटल पर रखे जाते हैं ।
[देखिय परिशिष्ट 736, अनुच्छेद 60 और 61]

श्री कैलाशपति मिश्र : क्या अध्यक्ष महोदय, एक साल के अन्तराल में केवल एक चीनी के मूल्य का ही उल्लेख करना चाहता है. 84 नवम्बर में 5 रुपये 40 पैसे किलोग्राम थी और 85 में 7 रुपये हो गयी । तो एक साल के अन्तराल में हर महीने में एक रुपए कीमत का अन्तर केवल चीनी में एक साल के अन्दर आ गया । नवम्बर महीने में नयी शर्गर पालिसी की घोषणा सरकार ने इस साल की अखबारों में यह समाचार छपा है कि 225 करोड़ रुपये का लाभ चीनी मिल-मालिकों को हो गया है । मैं सरकार में जानना चाहता हूँ इतना बड़ा मुनाफा जो चीनी मिल-मालिकों को हो गया है, जिसका बोझ ग्राम आदमी को सहन करना पड़ रहा है, इससे गन्ना-उत्पादक किसानों को कितना लाभ हुआ है ?

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO: Sir, the Government has taken a bold and conscious decision to raise the statutory minimum price of sugarcane from Rs. 14 to Rs. 16.50 per quintal this year and to Rs. 17 a quintal next year for a recovery of 8.5 per cent. The reason is that as a result of unremunerative prices, there was diversion in sugarcane as well as the production of sugar. Therefore from a peak level of 85 lakh tonnes, it came down to 59 lakh tonnes last year. Therefore, we had to have heavy imports of sugar. Therefore to give a remunerative price to farmers, the statutory minimum price of sugarcane has been raised. This has therefore resulted in a 40 paise rise in price of sugar from Rs. 4.40 to Rs. 4.80 per kilogram and to improve the liquidity as well as the position of the millers so that they can be able to pay expeditiously to the sugarcane cultivators, the levy has been brought down from 65 to 55 per cent. All this I had replied in depth during the discussion on Calling Attention which had been raised in this House. This will result in prompter payment to the sugarcane cultivators as well as better remunerative prices to the cultivators so that they will