

RAJYA SABHA

Wednesday, the 27th February, 1974/the
8th Phalguna, 1895 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock.
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

*150. [The Questioners (Shri N. R. Choudhury, Shri Vithal Gadgil, Shri Sardar Amjad Ali, Shri Harsh Deo Malaviya and Shri Ibrahim Kalaniya were absent, for answer vide col., 31-32 infra].

Rice Procurement Target

*151. SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA:†

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR:

SHRI SURAJ PRASAD:

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA:

SHRI SARDAR AMJAD ALI:

SHRI O. P. TYAGI:

SHRI S. G. SARDESAI:

SHRI S. KUMARAN:

SHRI KALYAN ROY:

SHRI IBRAHIM KALANIYA:

SHRI M. K. MOHTA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) what was the rice procurement target fixed for the year 1973-74, Statewise;

(b) what percentage of the target has since been realised; and

(c) what are the reasons for the lag in the procurement target?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE): (a) to (c) Two statements (I and II) are laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement I

Rice Procurement (1973-74)

Figures in '000 Tonnes

State	Targets for 1973-74	Quantity procured		
		As on	Rice (Incl. paddy in terms of rice)	Percent: age of targets realised
Andhra Pradesh	600	22-2-74	414.1	69.0
Assam	150	22-2-74	108.1	72.1
Bihar	100	23-2-74	37.2	37.2
Gujarat	50	21-2-74	17.1	34.2
Haryana	350	23-2-74	370.4	105.8
Jammu & Kashmir	50	23-2-74	38.4	76.8
Karnataka	275	23-2-74	83.5	30.4
Kerala	125	16-2-74	17.5	14.0
Madhya Pradesh	600	22-2-74	157.6	26.3
Maharashtra	200	23-2-74	136.2	68.1
Orissa	400	20-2-74	130.1	32.5
Punjab	950	23-2-74	822.0	86.5
Rajasthan
Tamil Nadu	350	21-2-74	115.8	33.1
Uttar Pradesh	300	23-2-74	301.6	100.5
West Bengal	500	18-2-74	104.8	21.0
Others	..	21-2-74	7.0	..
TOTAL	5,000		2,861.4	57.2

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Yogendra Sharma.

Statement II

So far, the overall procurement of rice this year (28.61 lakh tonnes) is an all time record for the period, and has already exceeded the total procurement for the entire season last year (27.06 lakh tonnes). However, in some of the States, the pace of procurement of rice is slow. Some of the reasons for the slow rate of procurement in these States are as follows:

1. Damage to paddy crop due to late or untimely rain, adverse weather conditions at the harvesting stage, infestation etc., in some States (Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh etc.).

2. High ruling prices of paddy in the open market.

3. A general price rise of all consumer articles, affecting the pace of procurement.

4. A tendency on the part of producers and others to hold back the grain in the expectation of better prices later in the year.

5. A general climate and psychology of scarcity.

SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA: It appears from the statement—it is strange—that from the States which are rice-producing States the procurement is comparatively very low and from those States which are not supposed to be rice-producing States the procurement is comparatively better. What is the reason that those states which are mainly rice-producing States have mostly failed in procurement? The reasons given apply to all the States but why those rice-producing States have failed?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: Sir, of course, in a brief statement it will be very difficult to explain all the reasons. But as I look at the problem—for instance take the case of Punjab, Haryana, West UP and Andhra where the procurement is fairly satisfactory—the reasons are that the new high-yielding varieties programme is coming up very well and there massive production of the high-yielding varieties is

coming up. Except Andhra, the others are not rice eating areas. So whatever is procured, that is handed over to the Central pool. Then in some of the States I could say that even political factors have been there. Unfortunately, in this country, as between the political parties, we could not evolve a general consensus in favour of procurement. There are forces which are in favour of procurement and there are certain other forces propagating against procurement. There has been all-round confusion. And then, in some of the States to which the hon. Member referred, where procurement is low, one of the reasons may be the very high difference between the market level of prices and the procurement prices. They also affect some part of the procurement programme.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Shinde, since you are suffering from fever, if you feel it inconvenient to answer standing, I would permit you to answer sitting.

SHRI ANNASHHEB P. SHINDE: To the extent possible I will try to answer standing. Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA: The procurement yield from Bihar is only 37.2 thousand tonnes. Just now the hon. Minister has spoken of political factors. I do not know what factor has operated in Bihar which has led to only 37.2 thousand tonnes of procurement. Sir, may I draw the attention of the Minister that in Bihar one of the reasons is the large-scale smuggling of rice from Bihar to Nepal and *via* Nepal to China. And recently a patriotic and dutiful officer tried to raid and seize a big stock of such rice which was to be smuggled, about 14,000 quintals. Sir, strangely enough, instead of this officer being rewarded for being dutiful and patriotic, he was instantly, on a telephone call from Patna, was removed and turned away, because he was patriotic and bold enough to seize this and prevent smuggling, because of their political interference, because of the political factor of which the hon. Minister has spoken, and this political factor is the State Government. Influential Ministers of the State intervene...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put your question.

SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA: Is it a fact that the political factor spoken of by the hon. Minister is the State Government, the Chief Minister of the State who interfered to prevent this officer, doing justice to smuggling and thereby opening the borders of Bihar leading to large-scale smuggling of rice from Bihar to Nepal and through Nepal to China?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: The hon. Member is knowledgeable and he know about Bihar much more than I can possibly know. He knows the political state of affairs in Bihar. And about the particular case, I have no information at the moment. But unfortunately Bihar happens to be one of the States in the country with the largest acreage of rice, and despite that there is no tradition of procurement, not only this year, but all along; if you examine the record, there has not been any procurement worth the name. And about political factors there, perhaps the hon. Member can know much better than I do, as I said earlier.

SHRI S. G. SARDESAI: In most of these cases where the procurement has been low, the most important factor is that the ruling open market prices or the black market prices are far, far higher than the prices at which the Government wants to purchase. It is undoubtedly the most important reason why the procurement is not taking place at all. Sir, I know a number of cases where the popular organisations have made direct offers to the Government that in such and such areas, in such and such villages, we are prepared to cooperate with the official machinery in locating which peasants have got this paddy or grain; they are prepared to cooperate with the official machinery to see that the procurement becomes effective. But in places after places such offers are not accepted. Not only that. In certain place, where there is information, where the people have attempted to say that in such houses or in such granaries the grain is there, they have been arrested but their cooperation has not been taken. This is something about which the Government should be able to give us a reply why that is not being done.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: As far as the Government of India is concerned, they have always been taking the position that non-official workers should be associated with procurement etc. The hon. Member's party may be doing some useful work; I cannot say anything about that. But the general experience in the past indicates that there has not been much non-official cooperation, including from those from my own party—I can say—in this respect. In some of the States—I must put it in a proper perspective—the general trend of procurement this year—rice procurement—is contrary to what is being said; it is a million tonnes more than the normal procurement about this time last year.

SHRI S. G. SARDESAI: Production is also fairly high.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: It is true. In 1970-71, for instance, the volume of production was practically at the same level. Now, the general procurement trend is very encouraging, and normally our experience is that between February and October, a million tonnes of procurement takes place. If we have reached about 29 lakh tonnes, I anticipate that about 35 to 45 lakhs of procurement may be reached, and that will be almost 75 per cent of the target. But when we go into details, we find that there are some States where the procurement is not very well, for instance, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and some parts of Tamil Nadu. Specific reasons will have to be identified for the poor procurement.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: A statement has been laid on the Table of the House, and the Minister has just now stated that the procurement is not satisfactory in West Bengal and Bihar. It is a masterly understatement. The procurement in West Bengal has nearly collapsed. It is disastrous. Is he not aware that out of 5 lakh tonnes of rice which was to be procured, the rice mill-owners were to give 3,40,000 tonnes? May I know what percentage has been procured from the rice mill-owners who were to deposit 3,40,000 tonnes? Is he not aware that this is not being done and the procurement has failed miserably because of the collusion, as pointed out by even papers like "Amrit Bazar Patrika" and "Anand

Bazar Patrika" of the rich Jotedars, rich millowners and MLAs and Ministers of the ruling party? In Midnapure, according to "Anand Bazar Patrika", 8,000 husking mills are operating without any licence because the local Congress MLA is behind it. In Burdwan, which is a rich surplus area, led by the Congress MLA and other leaders of the party, they attacked the FCI agents and forced them to leave that area. If this is the attitude of the MLAs who have not given the required quantity of rice, if the rice mill-owners have failed to give the required quantity, what have you done? How many mill-owners have you arrested under MISA? What drastic steps have you taken against your party members who have violated the levy law? There is no use of merely saying that the procurement is not happy in West Bengal. It is unhappy; it is disastrous. This is because of the policy of the ruling party which is in favour of the rice mill-owners.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED: Sir, I would like to point out that so far as West Bengal is concerned, it is certainly a fact that the procurement has not been very satisfactory. But I am hoping that before the year is out, they will be able to improve their performance and they will be able to reach, if not 5 lakh tonnes, at least something over 3 lakh tonnes for the whole year. One of the reasons given by the West Bengal Government is that the crop has not been as good as was expected, and they are making strenuous efforts to see that the procurement improves. I do not accept the allegation made that the Congress MLAs or the Government are helping the people in interfering with the procurement.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Sir, I seek your protection. I asked a specific question. The rice mill-owners, according to the Government, were to give 3,40,000 tonnes of rice. What is the percentage of rice procured from rice mill-owners?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED: The facts are not available with me, but I understand that some rice has been procured from the mill-owners. And they have recently modified the policy. I hope more rice will be available.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: Sir, in view of the fact that procurement is much below the target, will the Government take a second look at the procurement machinery and create popular committees and panchayats, as suggested by President Giri in one of his recent speeches? Will the Government accept that suggestion of President Giri to get procurement done through popular committees so that it may be ensured that the rich peasants and certain officials of the same rich peasant class in the local revenue machinery and other machinery . . .

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Congress MLAs.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: Unless there is positive proof, it cannot be accepted. So, the popular machinery may be so set up as to prevent the procurement work from being harmed by the rich peasants, the Arathiyas of Mandis and local officers who are colluding with them, which is the general practice.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: It is a good suggestion for action.

श्री ओम प्रकाश त्यागी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने जो आंकड़े दिए हैं उनके अनुसार जो चावल उत्पादन करने वाले प्रान्त हैं, बिहार है, केरल है, उड़ीसा है, तमिल नाडु है, पश्चिम बंगाल है, उन प्रान्तों में आपका प्रोक्योरमेंट 37 परसेंट, 32 परसेंट, 21 परसेंट और 33 परसेंट है, वहीं पर प्रोक्योरमेंट नहीं हुआ है। तो मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या आपने अनुमान से ये आंकड़े बताए हैं या आपने वहाँ की सरकारों से जानकारी प्राप्त की है कि वहाँ प्रोक्योरमेंट क्यों नहीं हो रहा जबकि इस बार चावल की उपज बहुत ज्यादा हुई है? वहाँ आपका प्रोक्योरमेंट क्यों नहीं हो रहा? क्या आपने चावल की कीमत कम रखी है इस कारण नहीं हुआ या कोई अन्य कारण है?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: The Minister of Agriculture himself has taken up these problems Statewise with the Chief Ministers and respective Food Ministers. He has addressed communications to them after reviewing the position and brought

to their notice some of the deficiencies in procurement and he has asked them to do everything to see that the procurement campaign is strengthened.

श्री ओझम प्रकाश त्यागी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैंने यह पूछा कि क्या आपने उन प्रान्तों की सरकारों से यह जानकारी प्राप्त की है कि इसका कारण क्या है, प्रोक्योरमेंट क्यों नहीं हुआ ?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: This was mentioned earlier when I was replying to Mr. Yogendra Sharma. I mentioned a number of factors; I do not know whether Tyagiji was there. I do not remember now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: His question is whether you enquired from the State Governments as to what the causes are.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: Those factors which I mentioned in the earlier part of my reply were actually worked out in consultation with the State Governments. We assessed the position and we came to the conclusion. For instance I referred to the difference between the procurement price and the market price; then there were some political difficulties as there was no unanimity among political parties in favour of procurement and in some areas there was low production.

श्री ओझम प्रकाश त्यागी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, क्षमा कीजिएगा, यह मेरे प्रश्न को ईवेड करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं ।

श्री सभापति : जबाब आ गया ।

श्री ओझम प्रकाश त्यागी : नहीं यह उनका अनुमान है । यह बात तो हरियाणा और पंजाब पर भी लागू है ।

श्री सभापति : उन्होंने कहा कि हमने स्टेट गवर्नमेंट से कन्सल्ट करके ये रीजन दिए हैं ।

SHRI NABIN CHANDRA BURAGO-HAIN: In view of the fact that the State of Assam has given a lead in taking over the wholesale trade in rice and in view of the fact that their procurement position is also good, may I know from the hon. Minister what steps he has taken on their

request for supply of more quantities of cement and iron goods for the purpose of making procurement a great success?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: There are overall strains but we are trying to help the State Governments by providing them inputs etc. including cement.

SHRI N. G. GORAY: Sir, we have been experimenting with this procurement and building of buffer stocks for years now and I suppose the reasons for the shortfall are fairly well known. As was pointed out by the Minister himself one reason was that there was a marked difference between the procurement price and the open market price. That is No. 1. No. 2 is there is resistance from the producers, whether they belong to your party or my party, I am not going to enter into that debate but the fact remains that there is stiff resistance not only so far as rice is concerned but all the agricultural commodities are concerned. Whenever the open market price is higher than the procurement price they do not come to you, they go to the open market. Having identified these two factors I would like to know what you are going to do about them in the next Plan—I am not saying next year but throughout the next Plan—so that you will be in a position to build adequate buffer stocks and to have a satisfactory procurement policy. Are you going to resort to levy? What are you going to do?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: The mode of procurement is usually left to State Governments, depending upon the local situation, but we are very much in favour of levy. If the State Governments want to introduce levy we can extend them all necessary co-operation. Even today in some of the States producers' levy is there. In some States millers' levy is there. I may inform the hon. Member that in some of the States even millers' levy is being very well enforced. Procurement in Punjab, Haryana and U.P. is mostly through millers' levy and it is going on well. In some States, as the hon. Member says, there is resistance. We will have to learn from experience, review the position from time to time and take necessary steps in future.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Is the hon. Minister aware that on behalf of our party, some of us, including myself, had repeatedly represented to the Government that procurement in West Bengal was doomed to failure, in view of the fact they had avoided the takeover of wholesale trade in rice and also the imposition of a graded levy on the producers, Jotdars and others, and they had placed reliance on the millers? I should like to know why steps were not taken in time. Is he aware that even now one of the Ministers of West Bengal Government, Dr. Zainul Abedin, is trying to blame us and others for the failure of procurement, whereas some people within his party, the better elements, are trying to pin the Government down to take over the trade? In view of this, I should like to know whether the Central Government has considered the advisability of ordering an investigation into how the procurement has been sabotaged in some of the major rice-producing States, notably West Bengal.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: The first point made by the hon. Member is perhaps if there had been takeover, procurement would have been a little better. We are not opposed to takeover, as is known to the hon. Member, but the point is experience does not indicate that simply because takeover is there procurement is more. For instance, in the case of wheat we had taken a decision to takeover the wholesale trade, but procurement did not come up to the percentage of rice procurement. I do not think the issues should be unnecessarily confused, but the point is for procurement in West Bengal there are certain specific difficulties. As was mentioned by my senior colleague just now, they anticipated a lower procurement as the market prices were much higher as compared to the procurement price.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I asked him a different type of question . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him finish it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I have no objection but you will see that I have asked a specific question and he has not answered it. I am not saying that what he is saying is irrelevant, but my question was whether

any representation was made to the Government last year by our party. That question he has avoided. Then secondly I asked him whether he is aware that graded levy was deliberately avoided by the West Bengal Government and there was reliance on the millers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He will answer it.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: I do not think we should unnecessarily blame the State Government. My own feeling is that they have been sincerely trying, but there are certain difficulties. For instance. . .

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Now, they have difficulties. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is too much, Mr. Kalyan Roy, it is not your question.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: The hon. Member referred to Dr. Abedin. I do not think that he has said that some of the political parties seem to have come in the way of procurement. . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Again and again my question has not been answered.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him first finish the answer. If the question remains unanswered, I will call him again.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: You have noted the question.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: As was mentioned by my senior colleague, the State Government has been doing everything possible. In some areas there is a shortfall in production as compared to requirements. Naturally some State Governments are having some difficulties, but we will draw the attention of the State Governments to this. Even in the past my senior colleague has taken it up with the State Governments and we are continuously in dialogue with the State Governments in regard to procurement operations.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: On a point of privilege, I shall like to know from the Chair as a Member of a party here in this House you will ask me immediately and very legitimately that I should tell the Government. We did tell the Government

that procurement was going to fail. I told Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Mr. Shinde himself. Now, at that time they ignored our suggestions, proposals and warnings. Now, when I have asked the question at least he should say whether it is true that we made such a representation and gave a timely warning before the harvesting started. There should be some explanation as to why our request was not heeded.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: The hon. Member's party has been representing and pressing their viewpoint from time to time. I did not say that it has not been done by his party.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has admitted it.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: He says that the wholesale takeover is not the remedy. Now, wholesale trade takeover without compulsory procurement of the entire surplus is bound to be a failure. It is bound to be a failure. He has justified it. It is a peculiar way of things. In my State, my party has written a letter to the Chief Minister whether it is a fact or not that the levies have been discriminately put on different types of landlords and that the entire Congress MLAs and the Congress machinery have a hand in it. For those who should give 20 quintals as levy, it was put at one quintal and for those who should give two quintals, the levy was put at 10 quintals and so on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shorten your question.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: May I know whether it is also a fact that certain landlords made purchases at the distress sales from the poor peasantry at throw-away prices and tried to pass them off as the levy and that during the period of distress sale in the peasant areas, hundreds and hundreds of policemen had looted and seized the stocks of the poor peasants who wanted to sell them in the market.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now you sit down.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: This is how they have deliberately sabotaged procurement. . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him answer the question. Please sit down.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: . . . and the Centre is a party to it.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: I am not prepared to accept his statement that the State Government has discriminated between producer and producer; it is the propaganda of the hon. Member's party. In exceptional circumstances, there may be some human error which may have occurred. But there are certain principles on the basis of which the levy notices are issued on the producers. As far as distress sales are concerned, I cannot say that there may not be exceptional circumstances of distress sale, but by and large this year the prevailing level of prices have been so high that I do not think the farmers would have sold at a lower price to the bigger producers.

श्री ना० कृ० शेजवलकर : अध्यक्ष महोदय, उन्होंने बताया है कि शार्टफाल 43 पर सेंट लेवी में, प्रोक्योरमेंट में है और जो पांच कारण बताये हैं वे एक दूसरे पर अवलंबित कारण हैं । आपने बताया कि . . .

श्री सभापति : आप प्रश्न पूछिए ।

श्री ना० कृ० शेजवलकर : मैं इसके कारणों में जा रहा हूँ ।

श्री सभापति : आप सवाल पूछिये ।

श्री ना० कृ० शेजवलकर : मैं सवाल ही पूछ रहा हूँ । जैसा कि आपने बताया है कि डेमेज हुआ है फसल को, तो मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या टोटल प्रोडक्शन जो भारत में होना चाहिये उसमें कमी हुई है । अगर ऐसा नहीं है तो फिर यह जो आपने कारण नम्बर पांच बताया है "ए जनरल क्लाइमेट ऐंड साइकोलोजी आफ स्केयर-सिटी" यह क्यों है । क्या इसका कारण यह नहीं है कि आप यह जो लेवी लगा कर प्रोक्योरमेंट कम्पलीट कर रहे हैं, उसम नाकामियाब हो रहे हैं । और जो वसूल करने की आपकी मशीनरी है वह योग्य मशीनरी नहीं है, वह अष्ट

मशीनरी है। जैसे आपने बताया कि कीमते बढ़ी हुई हैं, तो आर्टिफीशियल प्राइस राइज है, कहीं ज्यादा बढ़ी हुई हैं, कहीं ज्यादा नहीं बढ़ी है। जहां पर विशेष चावल की खपत नहीं होती है, जैसे आपका उत्तर प्रदेश, पंजाब और हरियाणा है, वहां पर प्रोक्वोरमेंट करने में आप सफल रहे हैं। बाकी जगह जो आपकी मशीनरी है उसके करप्शन के कारण...

श्री सभापति : अब आप फिर मशीनरी को रिपीट कर रहे हैं।

श्री ना० कृ० शेजवलकर : अध्यक्ष महोदय, जो कारण बताया है...

श्री सभापति : बहुत अच्छा आपने सवाल किया। अब आप बैठिये।

श्री ना० कृ० शेजवलकर : मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या यह बात सही नहीं है और इसके लिए आप क्या प्रयत्न कर रहे हैं। क्या इसको आप द्वारा फिर रिवाइज करेंगे या जो इस पर रोक है, रेस्ट्रिक्शन है, उसको कम करने का आपका विचार है।

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: There can be scope for improving the machinery I do not deny this. There is scope for strengthening the State administration and the functioning of the Food Corporation and the various procurement agencies.

As far as production is concerned of course, the Kharif production, by and large, has been satisfactory. I cannot say about the Rabi crop because Rabi is still to come. State-wise, in some areas, due to the late rains and some other factors, the local production was affected. At the local level, Kharif production is expected to be close to the level of the 1970-71 figure.

Then the hon. Member asked whether the Government contemplated removing the restrictions. The Central Government has taken a decision, as far as the coarse grains are concerned, to allow the State-sponsored agencies to procure, in the surplus States, foodgrains like bajra, jawar

and maize and give them to States like Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat and like that.

Short supply of wheat to West Bengal

*152. SHRI SANAT KUMAR RAHA.

SHRI MONORANJAN ROY:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government supplied to the West Bengal Government 90,000 tonnes of wheat in December, 1973 and in January 1974 only instead of the committed supply of 1,10,825 tonnes for modified area and 40,000 tonnes for the statutory area of rationing; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

Allotments from the Central Pool are made every month to each State keeping in view the availability of foodgrains in the Central Pool, the needs of deficit States and other relevant factors. The Government of West Bengal was allotted 90,000 tonnes of wheat for each of the months of December, 1973 and January, 1974 against the demand of 1,35,000 tonnes and 1,20,000 tonnes respectively, made by the State Government for these months. The State Governments are responsible for distribution within the States.

SHRI SANAT KUMAR RAHA. As regards the food problem, West Bengal is in a very critical situation. Nearly one crore of people of West Bengal are under statutory rationing and all the mofussil towns are under the modified rationing scheme, and the rural areas are left to their own fate. So, I would ask the Minister whether the Government, in view of these circumstances, committed itself to the West Bengal Government that the Centre would supply 1,10,000 tonnes of wheat per month. The statement says nothing about that commitment; it only says that the West Bengal Government demanded 1,35,000

The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri. . .