

RAJYA SABHA

*Monday, the 21st March, 1966/the 30th
Phalguna, 1887 (Saka)*

The House met at eleven of the clock,
MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

RISE IN FOODGRAIN PRICES IN NON- RATIONED AREAS

*634. SHRI D. THENGARI: Will the Minister of FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India are aware of the fact that in the non-rationed areas of the country the prices of foodgrains are continually rising; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to arrest the increase in prices?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE): (a) Figures are not available about the prices of foodgrains at all the non-rationed places in the country. During the period May to August 1965 the all India index number of wholesale prices of cereals showed a seasonal rise and moved up to 152. During the period August-December 1965 the index number for rice only showed an upward trend. Jowar prices remained more or less steady while those of wheat, bajra, maize and gram showed a declining trend. In the first month of the current year the indices of rice, wheat, maize and gram showed an upward trend while jowar and bajra came down. But again in February 1966 a declining trend has been noticed in all the foodgrains except rice and maize. The All India Index No. of wholesale prices of cereals was 155 up to February 1966.

(b) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

STATEMENT

The following steps have been taken to ensure that foodgrains prices are stabilised at reasonable levels:

1. Fixation of statutory maximum prices of paddy and rice in some States;
2. Stepping up of imports of foodgrains and larger distribution from Central stocks;
3. Introduction of statutory rationing in Calcutta, Madras, Coimbatore, Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Visakhapatnam, Kanpur, Asansol, Durgapur complex, Siliguri and Delhi and informal rationing in Kerala. Statutory rationing will be gradually introduced in all big cities with a population of one million and above and in industrial townships and further extended progressively till the urban areas with a population of one lakh and above are also covered;
4. Tightening up of restrictions on bank advances against foodgrains;
5. Strengthening of enforcement machineries by State Governments with assistance from the Central Government;
6. Promulgation of anti-hoarding measures as well as introduction of summary trials; and
7. Intensification of procurement operations.

SHRI D. THENGARI: Sir, in view of the gravity of the situation, will the Government consider the removal of all barriers on the inter-district movement of foodgrains within the same zone and inter-zonal movement of foodgrains in the country?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: The matter is under consideration. It has been referred to a Committee and as soon as its recommendations are available, we will take a decision.

SHRI D. THENGARI: In view of our past experience that the imported foodgrains could not be adequately supplied to non-rationed areas, what additional arrangements do the Government propose for the supply of imported foodgrains to non-rationed areas?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: Sir, we are trying to get additional quantities of imported foodgrains adequate enough to meet the situation.

SHRI D. THENGARI: It is a question of distribution. May I know whether these imported foodgrains will adequately and equitably be supplied to all the non-rationed areas? What arrangements are there to that effect?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: We have got fair price shops in all the scarcity areas where these will be supplied.

श्री विमलकुमार मन्नालालजी चौरड़िया :
क्या श्रीमान् यह बतलायेगे कि जिन क्षेत्रों में आपने वितरण की व्यवस्था नहीं की उन क्षेत्रों से कृषकों द्वारा जो उत्पादित माल है वह मोनोपोली प्रोक्योरमेंट के नाम पर खरीद लिया। किन्तु उपभोक्ता को उसकी आवश्यकता के अनुसार अनाज मिल नहीं पाता। तो ऐसी स्थिति में वहाँ जो ब्लैकमार्केटिंग चल रही है और उसकी वजह से कीमते बढ़ती जा रही हैं उनको रोकने के लिये आप क्या कर रहे हैं। उदाहरण के लिये मध्य प्रदेश के कई क्षेत्र हैं।

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: Wherever there is monopoly procurement, the idea is that we should provide ration to non-producers and also to uneconomic producers. That is how it is being worked.

SHRI BABUBHAI M. CHINAI: The hon. Minister just now stated that a Committee has been appointed to go into the question whether the Zones should be removed or not. May I know whether this Committee's Report will be available before the 31st of March because, if the wheat zones are to be removed, it should be done before the 31st of March?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: It is not necessary that they should be removed before the 31st of March. But we have requested them to make an interim recommendation if possible. I hope it will be available in time.

SHRI DEOKINANDAN NARAYAN: There are certain States where monopoly procurement is made and naturally all the surplus grains that are with the kisans are taken away by the States and your fair price shops are distributing at the most four to five kilos per month. What arrangements are being made to make up the deficit?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: It is only in West Bengal that this monopoly procurement has been attempted. In other areas there is no such thing as monopoly procurement. In West Bengal they have got a system of statutory rationing in the urban areas and modified rationing in the non-statutory areas. Even in the modified rationing areas they have got classifications as A, B, C and D, A being non-producers, B being uneconomic producers, etc. Therefore, with reference to that we issue cards and they are also supplied with foodgrains.

SHRI NAFISUL HASAN: May I know if the Government are aware of the great disparity in the open market prices of foodgrains in the various Zones of the country and what action they are taking to remove the disparity?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: That will be one of the factors which the Committee will take into consideration in making their recommendations.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN: Will the hon. Minister advise the expert Committee to either go to the deficit and surplus States or have their representation before they come to any conclusion?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: Sir, all the facts and materials are available. It is a question of making our judgment as to which of the alternatives should be adopted for the purpose of meeting this situation, and the alternatives are also known. Therefore I do not think an elaborate enquiry is called for.

*635 [The questioner (Shri Ram Singh)] was absent. For answer, vide cols. 3839-40 infra.)