

## RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 6th May, 1963/the 16th  
Vaisakha 1885 (Saka)

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

### SHORT NOTICE QUESTION AND ANSWER

#### SUPPLY OF RICE TO WEST BENGAL

4. SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Will the  
Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be  
pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently  
supplied any rice to West Bengal in view of  
the shortage in local supply and the rise in  
prices of rice in that State;

(b) if so, what is the quantity and the  
quality of rice supplied over the past 2  
months; and

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in  
the negative, what are the reasons for which  
the required quantity of rice was not supplied  
to the State?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE (SHRI S. K. PATIL): (a)  
Yes, Sir.

(b) 30,400 tonnes of rice has been  
allotted to the West Bengal Government from  
the Central Reserve during the last two  
months. Of this about 15,700 tonnes was  
boiled rice and 14,700 tonnes raw rice.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Is the  
Government aware that the internal deficit in  
West Bengal is of the order of nearly twelve  
lakh tons for the current year and that it would  
not be possible for the Government of West  
Bengal to meet the needs of the State unless a  
much larger quantity of rice is supplied at  
once?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: We know it, Sir,  
because West Bengal has got deficit  
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not for the first time; it is deficit every year.  
But so far as this year is concerned, the hon.  
Member is quite right, because during 1960-  
61 they had a crop of 53.68 lakh tons and  
during 1961-62 it was 47.28 lakh tons. That  
makes a difference of nearly six lakh tons; it  
is less. Therefore, Sir, although every year  
there is difficulty, this year the difficulty is  
greater and we are trying to meet it by giving  
them more and more supplies from  
everywhere within the limits of our capacity  
to do so.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I know  
whether the Government is aware that due to  
the food habits in West Bengal the people's  
offtake of parboiled rice is comparatively  
less and that, as a result, many people are  
really put to hardship and, if so, whether the  
Government has taken any steps to make  
available as large quotas of rice as are  
consumed in West Bengal, from other parts of  
India? Can we have some idea about this,  
Sir?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: Sir, there are two or  
three specialities with regard to the food  
habits in West Bengal. In the first place, they  
will not have anything but rice. In the second  
place, they will have only boiled rice and not  
raw rice. It is very difficult always to find rice  
in the first instance and then too boiled rice.  
However, we have made some kind of  
compromise with the help of the West Bengal  
Administration that of all the rice that we  
supply, we shall make an endeavour to see  
that at least half the quantity is boiled rice. I  
have already read out the figures. Sir, that  
while 15 to 16 thousand tons was the boiled  
rice, 14 to 15 thousand tons was the raw rice.  
In order to be more helpful just now—  
because this month and next month will be a  
little difficult until the new crop comes in—I  
am diverting at least three ships of boiled rice  
coming from Burma exclusively for use in  
West Bengal.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I  
know whether it is a fact that lately the prices  
of rice have risen rather

very high, by about Rs. 9 to Rs. 10 in some places? What steps are the Government taking in the matter in order to bring down the prices, apart from making supplies available to the West Bengal Government? Has the Government made any suggestion with regard to the opening of fair price shops in different parts of the country so that the Government itself can undertake the supply of such rice to the consumer at a price which he can afford?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: Yes, Sir. That is constantly being done. But so far as the prices are concerned, the Government can regulate them only in the fair price shops. What happens in the market—a particular gentleman in the other districts. If more shops wants to have a particular type of rice and he is prepared to pay any price for that, of course that I can never regulate anywhere in India but, so far as the fair price shops are concerned, if I mistake not, the number is the largest in Calcutta and the industrial area alone. It is 3,196 and there are as many as 7,907 shops are necessary, we have asked the West Bengal Administration to do so. So far as offtake from the shops is concerned, that was not very great, because in the shop they have to buy a little amount of wheat also along with rice. But that offtake is now increasing; I find from the figures here that it is steadily increasing. It was only 6'6 thousand tons in January, 6-8 thousand tons in February and 7.5 thousand in March and I am quite sure and more in May and June. It is increasing. If more shops are necessary they will be opened.

SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR BASU: May I know whether, in view of the very helpful attitude of the West Bengal Government in issuing appeals to the people for the purpose of popularising the use of arbor rice and wheat, this Government will make the same assurance this year as it used to make formerly, that all the deficit in

West Bengal will be met by the Central Government?

SHRI S. K. PAXIL: Sir, the position has accentuated not because there is less rice in West Bengal but because of a very unlikely event which really occurs once in five or ten years—Orissa being bad. The fact is that the normal flow from Orissa to West Bengal really comes to our help. The House will be interested to know that as against something like at least 300 thousand tons or something more that should have normally gone from Orissa, as it went in 1961-62, this year only 84 thousand tons was available. Therefore, those channels which should have been very free, they are not free, because Orissa has not got that, but we are supplying rice to Orissa in a big way from our Central godown, so that they should open the normal channels as far as possible. So far as the needs of West Bengal are concerned, the House should rest assured that I shall do everything in my power to tide over the difficulty.

PANDIT S. S. N. TANKHA: What steps are taken by the Government to ensure that the rice purchased from the fair price shops is not resold in the market at a higher rate?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: These things, of course, largely depend upon the national character of the people. This can happen anywhere and there is no machinery in this wide world, which I can devise, by which these things can stop.

SHRI S. C. DEB: May I know whether the Central Government is thinking of diverting some quantity of rice to Assam, because in some districts of Assam the scarcity conditions continue?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: Assam, Sir, is not in this Question. But I can quite understand the anxiety of my hon. friend. In spite of the fact that we had given everything that Assam wanted, they still wanted more. I have diverted, I think, ten thousand

tons immediately from the Central godown.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: The hon. Minister has just said that he is going to supply Burma rice to Orissa from the Central Government godown and then the normal channel will be revived. Am I to understand that Orissa will be supplied boiled rice from Burma, and Orissa will then be asked to export its own rice to Bengal for their consumption? Is that so?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: Only this year Orissa has not got rice, their crops have failed and really speaking we wanted that we should give as much rice as Orissa wanted, so that the normal channels should not get dried up at all, but they have got a levy and that levy, as everybody knows, means the less price for the farmers. Therefore, Sir, the stock goes underground and is sold in some way. Of course, these are things into which we need not go. But so far as Orissa is concerned, we shall be supplying them and they have enough stocks; there is no difficulty.

SHRI PANNALAL SARAOGI: Are the Government of India aware that only about two million people [have been taking advantage of receiving their requirements of rice from the fair price shops in West Bengal, whereas the Government of West Bengal is in a position to supply at least to six million people their requirements of rice from the fair price shops and it is due to the fact that a certain quantity of wheat has also got to be lifted along with rice from the fair price shops and the people are averse to lifting wheat along with rice from the fair price shops?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: I have this very valuable information from the hon. Member and I may tell him that it is to minimise that aversion that that is being done.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: May I know whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to a report in the "Jugantar" of West Bengal some two days ago that the conditions of livelihood have been brought to the starvation level due to the rise in prices? Just now the Minister said that he would do all in his power. May I know whether the Minister can give an assurance that so much supplies will be routed to that State so that the prices come down to such a level that it does not remain at the starvation level? A definite assurance, not a vague assurance, should be given.

SHRI S. K. PATIL: I can give no assurance of any kind, but what I have diagnosed from what the hon. Member has said is that the people have come to the starvation level because the prices are high. We generally assume and it is a fact everywhere that the farmers, who produce it, are not buyers in the market. Therefore, it is about the towns that we are talking of when we say that the prices have gone up, and we would do what we can within the realm of possibility, so far as we are concerned.

#### PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

##### THE COAL MINES (CONSERVATION AND SAFETY) (SECOND AMENDMENT) RULES, 1963

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RATANLAL KISHORILAL MALVIYA): Sir, on behalf of Shri K. D. Malviya, I beg to lay on the Table, under sub-section (4) of section 17 of the Coal Mines (Conservation and Safety) Act, 1952, a copy of the Ministry of Mines and Fuel Notification G.S.R. No. 709, dated the 15th April, 1963, publishing the Coal Mines (Conservation and Safety) (Second Amendment) Rules, 1963. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1292/63.]