

## 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 re-  
cently 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 rea-  
sons 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 Govern-  
ment 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 con-  
cerned, 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, whe-  
ther the Government has taken any  
steps to make available as large quotas  
of rice as are consumed in West Ben-  
gal, 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 any-  
thing but rice. In the second place,  
they will have only boiled rice and  
not raw rice. It is very difficult al-  
ways 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 Ad-  
ministration that of all the rice that  
we supply, we shall make an endea-  
vour to see that at least half the quan-  
tity 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 boil-  
ed rice coming from Burma exclu-  
sively for use in West Bengal.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: May I  
know whether it is a fact that recen-  
tly 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 shops 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 tons in March and I am quite sure, more 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 *atap* 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. PATIL: 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. Malaviya, 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.]