Identification of BPL families

3287. PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the identification of BPL families is an issue between the Centre and the States;

(b) whether difficulties have arisen in this matter which have adversely affected the distribution of foodgrains; and

(c) what measures have been taken by Government to remedy the process?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS) : (a) to (c) Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of Central Government and State/Union Territory (UT) Governments. The Central Government is responsible for procurement, allocation and transportation of foodgrains upto the designated depots of Food Corporation of India. The operational responsibilities for lifting and distributing the allocated foodgrains within the States/UTs, identification of eligible Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, issuance of ration cards to them and supervision over distribution of allocated foodgrains to eligible card holders through Fair Price Shops are of the State/UT Governments.

For allocation of foodgrains (wheat and rice) to States and Union Territories (UTs) under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Department of Food and Public Distribution uses the number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families based on 1993-94 poverty estimates of Planning Commission and the population estimates of Registrar General of India as on 1st March 2000 or the number of such families actually identified and ration cards issued to them by State/UT Governments, whichever is less. As per these estimates, the number of BPL families is 6.52 crore, which includes 2.43 crore Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) families. Allocation of foodgrains to these accepted number of BPL families, including AAY families, are made @ 35 kg per family per month. Allocation of foodgrains are also made to Above Poverty Line (APL) families based on the availability of foodgrains in central pool and past offtake. Presently, the allocation of foodgrains to APL families range between 15 kg and 35 kg per family per month. Further, additional allocation of foodgrains are also being made by Government from time to time depending upon the availability of stocks and requirements/requests received from States/UTs.

As reported upto 31.03.2012, the State/UT Governments have issued 10.76 crore BPL ration cards, which includes 2.43 crore AAY cards. The higher number of ration cards issued by them is due to improper targeting of the poor households, and have inclusion as well as exclusion errors.

Government has taken steps to strengthen and streamline the functioning of TPDS. In consultation with the State/UT Governments, a Nine-Point Action Plan was evolved in 2006, which *inter-alia* includes continuous review of BPL/AAY lists and to eliminate bogus/ineligible ration cards alongwith strict action to be taken against the guilty to ensure leakage free distribution of foodgrains. State/UT Governments were requested to initiate penal action against the Government staff found responsible for issuing bogus/ineligible ration cards and the families/persons possessing such ration cards. Instructions were issued to all State/UT Governments to carry out an intensive campaign from October, 2009 to December, 2009 to review the existing lists of BPL/AAY families and eliminate ineligible/bogus ration cards. Instructions have also been issued to all State/UT Governments to issue warning to the bogus card holders, through advertisements in the newspapers, to surrender the bogus cards. As a result of these measures, States/UTs have reported deletion of 248.05 lakh bogus/ineligible cards up to 31.03.2012.

Further, Government has taken up the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in the country which will enable the Government to finalize the actual number of BPL families in the country.

Comprehensive amendments in the CPA

3288. SHRI AMBETH RAJAN : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government intends to bring comprehensive amendments in the Consumer Protection Act (CPA), in view of the changing circumstances and scenario; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2011 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16.12.2011, with provisions made for empowering the Consumer Fora for faster disposal of cases, simplifying selection procedure of Members/President and for strengthening of Penalty Provisions etc. Moreover, online filing of application is being introduced through this new amendment.

Updated data on BPL

3289. SHRI S. THANGAVELU : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that there is no updated data about the number of people Below Poverty Line (BPL) which makes uncertainty in targeting the number of beneficiaries under Public Distribution System (PDS);