

Mandatory testing of purity of gold

2646. SHRI A. VIJAYAKUMAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that sale of non-Hallmarked gold/ornaments is banned in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, whether Government would make testing machine for checking the purity of gold, mandatory in jewellery shops;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there are any measures to fix the gold rate as one nation, one rate in the country; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) to (f) Presently sale of both hallmarked as well as non-hallmarked gold and silver ornament is permitted in the country. However, the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016 has enabling provisions for making hallmarking of precious metal articles mandatory by the Central Government.

Gold is widely traded in local markets across the country. At present, there are no specific measures or mechanism to fix a single daily gold price in the country. The price generally depends on import price, basic customs duty, tax and logistics cost, purity etc. and vary with location.

Implementation of Food Security Act in Kerala

2647. SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the progress made in the implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA) across the country, including the State of Kerala; and

(b) the details of budget allocated, sanctioned and spent for various schemes under NFSA in the State of Kerala?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) National

Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) is now being implemented in all the 36 States/ Union Territories (UTs) including Kerala. Out of the total intended coverage of 81.34 crore, presently, 79.41 crore persons are covered under the Act for receiving highly subsidized foodgrains.

(b) Foodgrains at subsidized prices is made available by Food Corporation of India (FCI) to the States/UTs under the NFSA, as well as erstwhile Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), for which food subsidy is released to FCI. Only in the case of States participating in the Decentralized Procurement, under which State Government take responsibility of procurement of foodgrains and its distribution to the eligible households, that food subsidy is released directly to State Governments. Under this scheme, ₹ 449.70 crore has been released to State Government of Kerala in 2018-19, so far. The Central Government undertakes to meet the expenditure incurred by the State Governments on the procurement operation as per approved costing norms. State-wise budgeting is not undertaken.

Central Government also provides Central assistance to States/UTs under NFSA for meeting expenditure on intra-State movement and handling of foodgrains and fair price shop dealers' margin as per approved norms. No fund has been released to State Government of Kerala under this scheme so far.

A Scheme on 'End-to-End Computerization of TPDS Operations' is also under implementation on a cost sharing basis with the State Governments. The scheme provides for digitization of ration cards/beneficiary and other databases, online allocation, computerization of supply-chain management, setting up of transparency portal and grievance redressal mechanism. Central financial assistance of ₹ 10.95 crore has been released to Government of Kerala for implementation of the scheme so far.

Pilferage of PDS ration

2648. SHRI RIPUN BORA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any complaints on pilferage of PDS ration items through fraudulent PoS transactions;

(b) if so, whether it is a fact that Uttar Pradesh has registered over two lakh cases of such fraudulent transactions;

(c) if so, the details of cases registered therein; and

(d) the action taken by Government in this regard?