

Shri L. J. Singh: May I know whether the Maharaja is drawing his allowance from the Government of India's exchequer or from the State exchequer?

Dr. Katju: The Privy Purse is paid in the first instance by the Government of India.

Short Notice Question and Answer

FOOD SCARCITY IN WEST BENGAL

Shri B. K. Das: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the distress in several districts of West Bengal due to scarcity of food;

(b) what are the areas affected and what is the condition prevailing there;

(c) what is the price of rice in these areas; and

(d) what steps have been taken to alleviate the distress?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): (a) and (b). Yes. Distress is prevailing in the Sunderban area and in the Basirhat sub-division of the 24-Parganas. During the last two years the crops have failed owing to drought or floods and the purchasing power of the people has been reduced.

(c) The wholesale open market price of rice in these areas is reported to be Rs. 43 per maund.

(d) A statement giving the required information is placed on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

The details of measures sanctioned by the West Bengal Government for the alleviation of distress in scarcity areas are:—

Nature of relief	Amount sanctioned
(1) Agricultural Loans	2,50,000
(2) Land Improvement Loans	68,550
(3) Crop Loans	5,07,900
(4) Gratuitous Relief	1,20,000
(5) Loans to Artisans	700
(6) Test Works	60,554

The Government of West Bengal are distributing 7,160 lbs. of milk powder and 531 lbs. of multipurpose food to needy persons. They are also distributing 10,000 pieces of cloth, blankets and children's garments.

Arrangements have been made for distribution of gratuitous relief among old and infirm women and children. Test Works have been started at convenient centres to provide employment to the able-bodied. Broken rice has been sent to the distressed areas to be sold by special shops at As. -/3/9 per seer through a chain of local dealers near the sites of Test Works. Relief to able-bodied distressed Women is being organised in the shape of paddy husking by 'dhenkies' in certain areas. Milk, garments for children and cloth are also being distributed among distressed people.

Shri B. K. Das: With reference to part (c) of the question, the hon. Minister has said that it is Rs. 43. Is it the average price that is given or the maximum?

Shri Kidwai: It is reported to be black-market price which it is difficult to ascertain.

Shri B. K. Das: Regarding the relief measures that have been taken, may I know whether any cheap grain shops have been opened in that area, and what is the number of such shops?

Shri Kidwai: The information that was available has been supplied in the statement. I may inform the hon. Member that I am going there to see what further help can be given. I will discuss this matter with the State Government of West Bengal.

Shri B. K. Das: May I know whether modified rationing has also been introduced in that area?

Shri Kidwai: I have no information. In this statement it is said:

"Arrangements have been made for distribution of gratuitous relief among old and infirm women and children. Test works have been started at convenient centres to provide employment to the able-bodied. Broken rice has been sent to the distressed areas to be sold by special shops at As. -/3/9 per seer through a chain of local dealers near the sites of Test works. Relief to the able-bodied distressed women is being organised in the shape of paddy husking etc..."