

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(Part I—Questions and Answers)
OFFICIAL REPORT

2443

HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Thursday, 7th August, 1952

The House met at a Quarter Past Eight
of the Clock

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Short Notice Questions and Answers

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: There are some short notice questions. **Sardar A. S. Saigal.**

FAMINE CONDITIONS IN WEST BENGAL

Sardar A. S. Saigal: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the report published in the *Times of India* dated the 21st July, 1952, Delhi Edition, alleging that five million people in West Bengal were starving and another five million were living in near-starvation conditions;

(b) if the answer to part (a) above be in the affirmative, whether Government will make prompt arrangements in order to save the lives of people from starvation; and

(c) whether Government will place the full facts before the House?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: There are some other short notice questions also relating to Food and Agriculture. Will it be convenient to answer all these Questions together?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): I have no objection but they relate to U.P. whereas this one pertains to West Bengal.

My Parliamentary Secretary will read the answer.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): According to the information supplied by the 206 PSD.

Government of West Bengal the total population affected by distress resulting from failure of crops is estimated to be about 45 lakhs. This estimate includes not only those who are utterly destitute but also those who are in difficulty on account of temporary absence of agricultural employment. About 80 families have been affected by floods in Malda and on account of communication difficulties, it has not been possible for the Government of West Bengal to obtain from their district officers an estimate of the population likely to have been affected by floods in Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur.

As has been stated already in reply to short notice questions on the 5th June and 26th June and during the course of the adjournment motion on the 16th and 17th July, in the House of the People, steps have already been taken by the Government of West Bengal to provide relief to the affected population in the following ways:—

(1) free distribution of 15,000 maunds of rice and 15,000 maunds of wheat at the rate of 3/4th seer of rice and 3/4th seer of wheat/wheat products per adult per week through non-official organisations;

(2) fifteen thousand tons of rice and 15,000 tons of wheat are being sold at the subsidized rate of Rs. 15/- per maund to people having extremely low purchasing power through modified rationing shops at the scale of 3/4th seer of rice and minimum 3/4th seer of wheat/wheat products per adult per week. Wheat/wheat products can be issued upto a maximum of 1½ seer. During the discussions with West Bengal Government last week, it was agreed that in consultation with the Government of India, West Bengal Government may, if they think it necessary, increase the limits of sale of subsidized grains from 15,000 tons each of rice and wheat/wheat products to 30,000 tons each. The limits of gratuitous doles may also be raised above 15,000 maunds each of rice and

wheat/wheat products as needed. At present about 1,50,000 people are receiving gratuitous relief and besides the free distribution of wheat and rice referred to in (1) above, Rs. 3,39,000 has been sanctioned for gratuitous relief;

(3) more than 100 relief work centres have been opened and the latest report received from West Bengal indicates that about 50,000 people are engaged in test works. The scale of payment is as follows:—

Nadia—Rs. 1/- to 1/8 per labourer per day,

24 Parganas—Rs. 10/- per labourer for cutting and carrying 1,000 c.ft. of earth,

Bankura—Rs. 10/- to Rs. 20/- per labourer for cutting 1,000 c.ft. of earth; and

(4) the following expenditure has been sanctioned by West Bengal—

(i) Test works ... Rs. 8.7 lakhs.

(ii) Agricultural Improvement loans ... Rs. 15.85 lakhs.

(iii) Land Improvement loans ... Rs. 18.11 lakhs.

(iv) Cattle loans ... Rs. 1.5 lakhs.

(v) Gratuitous relief doles etc. ... Rs. 6.5 lakhs.

Government of West Bengal have also sanctioned expenditure for purchase of 4032 lbs. of milk powder for distribution in the affected areas. A sum of Rs. 10,000 has also been given to West Bengal from the Prime Minister's fund.

Dr. S. P. Mookerjee: It is a very long statement. We cannot follow it.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: There is a lot of subdud noise in the House. The Parliamentary Secretary may read the answer slowly and distinctly.

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: I crave the indulgence of the House. This is my first answer.

The following steps have been taken to provide relief in the flooded areas in North Bengal—

Jalpaiguri—Rs. 20,000/- have been sanctioned for gratuitous relief. One bale of *dhoti*, one bale of *sari*, 2,000 pieces of children's garments, 900 lbs. of milk powder, 20,000 multi-vitamin tablets and 50 lbs. of biscuits have been sent for free distribution. 480 maunds

of foodgrains air-dropped in Alipur Duars and further 520 maunds of foodgrains flown to Cooch Behar and transported from there to Alipur Duars by train after restoration of train communication.

Cooch Behar—Rs. 10,000/- have been sanctioned for gratuitous relief. 340 pieces of cloth, 2,000 pieces of children's garments and 960 lbs. of milk have been sent for free distribution. 15,000 maunds of foodgrains flown to Cooch Behar.

West Dinajpur—Rs. 15,000/- have been sanctioned for gratuitous relief and Rs. 1,00,000 for distribution as agricultural loan. One bale of *Sari*, 1,500 pieces of children's garments and 960 lbs. of milk are being despatched for free distribution.

Malda—Rs. 2,200/- have been sanctioned for free house building grants to the flood-affected people.

During the first half of July for which information is available, out of the total population of 24.8 millions in West Bengal, 11.2 millions were covered by Government distribution of foodgrains. Under statutory rationing, the population was 6.5 millions and under modified rationing 4.7 millions. According to a recent statement made by the Food Minister, Government of West Bengal, more than half of the total population is now covered by government distribution. The area covered by statutory rationing are Calcutta industrial area, Darjeeling district, Kharagpur and Asansol. Elsewhere distribution of foodgrains is in accordance with the scheme of modified rationing which means that a free market is allowed. In statutorily rationed areas, the quantum of ration is 2 seers and 10 chattaks per adult per week composed of one seer of rice and the balance in wheat/wheat products. In other areas, the quantum is 2 seers composed of 3/4th seer of rice and 1½ seer of wheat/wheat products.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I find from the way he is reading that it is an answer covering some ten or twelve pages. I do not know if the time of the House need be taken up by reading the whole of it.

Shri Syamnandan Sahaya: This is the maiden answer of the Parliamentary Secretary. Let him complete it.

The Prime Minister (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): I suggest that the answer may be placed on the Table of the House. It is impossible to follow what he is reading. I do not know why my colleague has read this out.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He may give the substance of it.

Shri Kidwai: There are only one or two more paragraphs in this answer. The other answers will be placed on the Table.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Very well. Let this be completed.

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: In areas covered by modified rationing, the population is divided in two classes, "A" and "B". In rural areas, families which are utterly poor, have no land and are exempted from payment of union rates or *chowkidari* taxes, and families paying Union rates or *chowkidari* taxes amounting to -/8/- come under "A" class. Families paying Union rates or *chowkidari* taxes upto Rs. 2/- are placed in "B" class. In urban areas, families having an income of Rs. 100/- per month come under "A" class and families within Rs. 150/- per month come under "B" class. Modified rationing is introduced for all "A" class people wherever the minimum price of rice is above Rs. 25/-. The benefit is extended to "B" class where the minimum price of rice is above Rs. 35/-.

To popularise wheat and wheat products, the Government of West Bengal have distributed rolling boards and pins for making chapaties. It appears from a recent statement of the Food Minister, West Bengal, that there is evidence of increasing popularity of wheat/wheat products in the mufusail now.

The position of stocks of foodgrains with the Government of West Bengal on the 19th July for which latest information is available was as follows:—

	Rice	Wheat
Stock	85,200 tons	134,000 tons
present rate of		
weekly issues	10,000 tons	13,820 tons

The present stocks are thus good for 8 and 9 weeks for rice and wheat respectively.

As has already been stated in the House, apart from the allotment of one lakh tons of rice towards West Bengal's ceiling quota the Centre was also prepared to supply one lakh tons of rice which was to be sold by the Government of West Bengal at no profit no loss, so that consumers in the Calcutta industrial area could supplement their rice ration by purchases through these Economic Price Shops. The Centre have already agreed to supply all the wheat that may be required by West Bengal for Government distribution. During the discussion with the Government of West

Bengal last week it was decided to supply larger quantities of rice from Orissa to West Bengal, so that the present issue price of Rs. 17/8/- per maund in West Bengal could be maintained.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: I am sure the hon. Member who has tabled the question would like to go through the statement leisurely and put questions later on.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: May I put a short supplementary question?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member had no opportunity to look into the reply. So, I will call the next question.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: Then, when will we get an opportunity to put supplementaries—this afternoon?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: As a special case, I will see that these answers which are placed on the Table of the House are circulated this afternoon. We will start supplementaries tomorrow.

FOOD SCARCITY IN EASTERN U.P.

Pandit A. R. Shastri: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a failure of monsoon in the Eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, especially in Gorakhpur, Benares and Fayzabad Divisions;

(b) whether the failure of the rains has affected the growing of food crops in these areas;

(c) whether the people of the area are in great distress on account of shortage of foodgrains; and

(d) if the replies to parts (a), (b) and (c) above be in the affirmative, what steps, if any, the Central Government are taking in the matter?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): *Extent of Area affected:* Eastern U.P. comprises the districts of Basti, Benares, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Azamgarh, Gonda, Ballia, Ghazipur and Bahraich. Owing to prolonged drought over the last 2/3 years and the consequent failure of the crops, the food and economic position in these districts, which are normally deficit, has worsened. There is real scarcity in these districts especially in the extremely deficit pockets of Banaras, Deoria and Gorakhpur districts, but there are no famine conditions as such.