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

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HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Friday, 8th 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.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS TO SHORT
NOTICE QUESTION *re* FAMINE CONDITIONS
IN WEST BENGAL DATED 7TH AUGUST 1952

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: We shall first take up the short notice questions. The answers have already been circulated yesterday, and hon. Members who wish to put supplementaries may do so. We shall first take up Short Notice Question No. 148.

Shri A. C. Guha: May I know when the district cordoning system will be removed?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): There is what is known as the 'Kidwai Plan' which has been very widely welcomed and highly praised in Calcutta. We are going to give effect to that plan in a short time, and then the entire responsibility of feeding Calcutta will be taken over by the Centre. When the area becomes a surplus province, it will be possible for us to remove the inter-district relaxations, the cordoning system etc., and there will be free flow from district to district.

Shri A. C. Guha: Is it the policy of the Government to replace the present procurement system by a levy system, and if so, on what basis will the levy be collected?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): It is the Bengal Government which takes a decision on such
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matters. They have announced that from the next year they will replace the present procurement system by a levy system, and when I was in Calcutta, I had a meeting with the Food Minister. He said that on 1st January 1953, he will remove this inter-district ban.

Shri A. C. Guha: In the Statement I find that certain amounts have been sanctioned to the three North Bengal districts which have been affected by recent floods—Rs. 10,000 for Cooch Behar, and Rs. 15,000 for West Dinajpur for gratuitous relief—may I know whether these amounts are fixed, or if the amounts are found to be inadequate on account of the number of people affected being more, the Bengal Government has got any authority to increase them?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: According to the needs of the place, they can increase the amounts. Originally 10,000 tons of foodgrains were to be sent, but now it has been increased to 15,000 tons. After the recent discussions, the amount has been further increased to 30,000 tons.

Shri A. C. Guha: I am referring to the amounts sanctioned for gratuitous relief for Cooch-Bihar and West Dinajpur. Considering the large number of people affected, will the Government consider the question of increasing the amount if it is found to be inadequate?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: If the West Bengal Government thinks fit, they will increase it.

Shri Barman: It is stated in the 1st paragraph of the answer that '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-Bihar and West Dinajpur'. In view of the fact that it is now more than a month since the floods came, may I

know the reasons why the district officers could not come to an estimate of the number of people affected?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: The difficulties of communication as a result of the floods.

The Barman: The District Officers and other officers have been supplied with jeeps. Are we to understand that the officers could not go to the various affected areas, even with the jeeps and other conveyances at their disposal?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: When there are areas affected by floods, it is not possible to go to those areas by jeeps.

Shri Barman: May I know what was the demand made by the district officers as to the requirements of the foodgrains that are necessary to meet the situation, which the West Bengal Government are not in a position to supply?

Shri Kidwai: When the district magistrates gave the estimates, the sanction was given by the Bengal Government, when they had stocks to feed these people. So we do not come into the picture, except that we have given an assurance that if they require more foodgrains, we shall supply them.

Shri Barman: It has been stated that under the present plan of 'A Class' and 'B Class' of the population, modified rationing facilities will be introduced throughout the whole of West Bengal. May I ask the hon. the Minister as to whether he is aware of the fact that the North Bengal people have not been provided with this modified rationing system, even though that part of Bengal has also been seriously affected by the floods?

Shri Kidwai: It is not true that the modified rationing system has been brought into effect in the whole of West Bengal. It has been brought into effect only in places where the minimum price of rice is above a particular limit; in places where it is more than Rs. 25, the 'A Class' modified system is brought in, and where it is more than Rs. 35 the 'B Class' system has been brought in.

Shri Barman: My point was exactly this. In view of the fact that the price of rice in North Bengal is more than Rs. 35, will the Government enquire as to whether the West Bengal have extended the 'B Class' facilities throughout the areas of North Bengal?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: We will inquire into the matter.

Shri S. C. Samanta: May I know whether there are any Agricultural

Assistants in the Unions and Subdivisions in the Districts of Cooch-Bihar, Jalpaiguri and Malda, and if so, may I know why these officers have not provided at least an approximate estimate of the population affected?

Shri Kidwai: As explained by the West Bengal Government, they are at a great disadvantage in going from place to place, because the whole area is flooded and there are hardly any routes. Still they said that they are trying their best to estimate the population affected, with a view to providing them the necessary assistance.

Shri S. C. Samanta: The hon. the Minister has replied that 45 lakhs of people have been affected. May I know whether this figure includes also the figure relating to these areas where the figures have not been ascertained as yet, and whether it includes the number the people affected in the 24-Parganas and Midnapur also?

Shri Kidwai: There is always a difference between the estimate and the actual.

Shri S. C. Samanta: May I know how the air-dropping of food is going on, and how long it will take for the government to make other arrangements?

Shri Kidwai: The air-dropping was done wherever it was considered necessary.

Shri B. K. Das: In reply to my question dated the 26th June, the hon. the Minister stated that the population affected in the 24-Parganas is 4.1 lakhs; in the reply given yesterday it has been stated that the figure is 45 lakhs for the whole area. May I know whether the rest 40 lakhs relate to people belonging to the other parts of the Province?

Shri Kidwai: Of course, it does.

Shri B. K. Das: May I know whether the new estimates have been taken into consideration while considering the requirements and also the arrangements that have been made to meet those requirements?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: Necessary arrangements have been made to do so.

Shri Barman: May I know from the hon. Minister, whether in view of the fact that transport by railway and other means are in a dislocated condition, the Government have asked the Defence Department to help with military planes in connection with the air-dropping of food?

Shri Kidwai: It is being done, Sir.

Shri A. C. Guha: May I know whether hon. the Minister is satisfied as to whether what is known as 'Kidwai Plan' is being fully implemented by the West Bengal Government?

Shri Kidwai: An announcement has been made in the Press that the arrangements for the next four months have been made, and what will follow will be considered again.

Shri B. K. Das: Excepting that these 30,000 tons of foodgrains, including rice, are going to be sold at a cheaper rate, may I know whether no other arrangements were made to meet the requirements of these 40 lakhs of people?

Shri Kidwai: The announcement was that what I had stated at Calcutta last month, has been carried out. At that time I had announced that 10,000 tons of rice and 10,000 tons of wheat would be released, and I have given an assurance that if necessary further quantities would be released. 15,000 tons of rice and 15,000 tons of wheat have already been released, and another quota of 15,000 tons of rice and 15,000 tons of wheat will be released, when it is found necessary to do so.

Shri B. K. Das: Sir, my question is, that the recent calculation gave the number of people affected as 45 lakhs and not 4 lakhs as given out by the hon. Minister previously. Now no fresh arrangement has been made for this large number of people except that only 60,000 tons of foodgrains are being sold at cheap rates and no gratuitous relief and other measures are being taken.

Shri Kidwai: Sir, it was announced that 5,000 maunds of wheat and 5,000 maunds of rice would be issued for gratuitous relief. The hon. Member will find in the statement that 15,000 tons of wheat and 15,000 tons of rice have already been released and I have given an assurance that whatever quantity will be required will be released.

Shri K. K. Basu: May I know, Sir, whether Government have any figures as to the different classes of persons within these 45 lakhs—I mean agricultural labour and those who have something to fall back upon? Here it is only given as 45 lakhs of people affected.

Shri Kidwai: We have not got the different categories, but it will be found in the statement that in some places people who have been classified as 'A' class i.e., the lower income

group, are being given this subsidised foodgrains and in some places even 'B' class are given subsidised food.

Shri K. K. Basu: In paragraph 8, it is said the Centre is prepared to supply 1 lakh tons of rice. May I know at what price?

Shri Kidwai: At the imported cost.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: No profit, no loss.

Shri K. K. Basu: If the imported cost is Rs. 30 per maund, it is meaningless to give any subsidy.

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: It is being sold on what is known as the 'no loss and no profit' basis.

Shri Kidwai: It is meant for people who were buying at Rs. 45 to Rs. 60 per maund.

Shri K. K. Basu: In view of the fact that 45 lakhs of people are affected and the total amount sanctioned by the West Bengal Government works out to Rs. 50 lakhs, i.e., a little over Re. 1 per head, do the Government propose—either the Central Government or through the West Bengal Government.—to increase this amount?

Shri Kidwai: I think that is a miscalculation, because these 50 lakhs are over and above what we are subsidising in food and other things.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: It appears from the last part of the answer that an additional 2 lakh tons of rice have been promised by the Central Government to be supplied to West Bengal. How far do these 2 lakh tons meet the demands of the West Bengal Government for additional rice as well as the demands of the representatives of public bodies with whom the hon. Minister had certain conferences.

Shri Kidwai: Well, I think this is four times what the West Bengal people were expecting. West Bengal was allotted 35,000 tons of rice for this year, out of which I can't be sure how much they have already got, but they have not got the full quota. When I went there, they said that instead of 35,000 tons they would like to get 1 lakh tons and those who met me also said the same thing. Therefore, the hon. Member will see that I agreed to supply Bengal more than they wanted.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: My question was how far does this additional supply which he has undertaken meets the demands.....

Shri Kidwai: I think it is double the demand made.

Shri K. K. Basu: Have the Government got any figure as to the large number of what is known as middle peasantry in the areas of 24-Parganas specially the Diamond Harbour subdivision who will not be able to cultivate their land next season due to want of working capital?

Shri Kidwai: The Government are giving 'taccavi' to enable them to cultivate their lands. Whatever amount will be required for that will be given.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: I have just received a letter from the Food Commissioner, West Bengal, about the introduction of the modified rationing scheme in certain districts which are known as 'distressed' areas. He has informed me that the District Magistrates in those areas have been given discretion to introduce this modified rationing scheme for three weeks only. Can he give us any idea as to whether the extension of the operation of this modified rationing scheme is in contemplation?

Shri Kidwai: I am afraid it is not possible for me to anticipate the discretion of the District Magistrates.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS TO SHORT NOTICE QUESTION re FOOD SCARCITY IN EASTERN U.P. DATED 7TH AUGUST 1952

Pandit A. R. Shastri: With reference to the extent of the area affected, as given in the first page of the statement. I want to know if similar conditions do not prevail in the districts of Azamgarh and Ballia also.

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): Pockets of Banaras, Deoria and Gorakhpur are affected.

Pandit A. R. Shastri: I want to know whether similar conditions do not prevail in the districts of Azamgarh and Ballia also.

Shri Kidwai: I think Ballia is in Fyzabad Division and Azamgarh in Gorakhpur Division.

Pandit A. R. Shastri: The districts are mentioned here.

Shri Kidwai: The question mentioned Divisions.

Pandit A. R. Shastri: With reference to rainfall, I want to know if the transplantation of paddy crop has taken place up till now or not.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnappa): Three days ago I had the privilege of accompanying our Minister when he paid a surprise visit to these areas. We were happy

to see that the monsoon had set in and there was a downpour of rain on that day. When we reached there, the ryots were busily engaged like bees in their fields in transplanting and weeding.

Pandit A. R. Shastri: Sir, with regard to the food situation, I want to know the basis on which the people are allowed to draw ration or purchase foodgrains from the cheap grain shops and whether this facility is provided to people living in small towns and cities and also in villages or only some selected areas are reserved for this.

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: Firstly, Sir, foodgrains are decontrolled there. The prices in the market are in some places cheaper than the ration price. Secondly, the people whom the hon. Member refers to, people living in towns, they are also being given this ration.

Shri Damodara Menon: The hon. Minister says that cheap grain shops have been opened in the eastern districts of U.P. May I know, Sir, whether there is any truth in the complaint that foodgrains allotted to these cheap grain shops are being sold in open market at higher prices?

Shri Kidwai: Some such allegations have been made and I think the Uttar Pradesh Government inquired into them. The Food Minister there also said that some of the grains supplied to these shops found their way into the 'black market', but that was before decontrol. Now in the eastern districts at least rice is much cheaper in open market than in the Government grain shops.

Shri Damodara Menon: The statement gives the steps taken by the Government to relieve distress. May I know, Sir, if in Deoria and Gorakhpur no relief work has yet been started?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: Relief works have been started and Rs. 3 lakhs has been granted to Deoria District for the purpose; we witnessed one test work being executed there. We visited a number of places and since it was a surprise visit there were no officials with us and there was no room for any put up show and we saw some of these works in actual execution.

Shri Damodara Menon: May I know how many cheap grain shops have been opened in these two areas?

Shri M. V. Krishnappa: I want notice.

Shri T. N. Singh: May I know what is the position with regard to transport facilities available there these days? May I also know whether after the wagons reach the railway stations