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Title: Introduction of the National Food Security Bill, 2013.

MADAM SPEAKER: Item No. 26B. Prof. K.V. Thomas.

...(Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): Madam, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.....(Interruptions).

MADAM SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

Dr. Thambiduraiji.

DR. M. THAMBIDURAI (KARUR): Madam, on behalf of my party AIADMK, I rise to oppose the Bill at the introduction stage itself. ...(Interruptions) AIADMK party is against this Food Security Bill, 2013 in its present form because it is against the federal set up enshrined in our Constitution. ...(Interruptions) It is against the principles of the Constitution. Also, they are interfering in the functioning of the State Governments. Their taking over this right is against the principle of federalism. Therefore, I oppose it at this stage. ...(Interruptions)

The Union Government has unilaterally and hastily promulgated this National Food Security Ordinance, 2013. Though the Bill claims to provide food security to all, unfortunately contrary to such a claim, there are several flaws in the Bill which have created serious apprehensions and actually raised the spectre of food insecurity for a State like Tamil Nadu. ...(Interruptions)

Under the able leadership of Hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, we are successfully implementing the Universal Public Distribution system and when this Bill comes into effect, it will affect our State Tamil Nadu. We have requested that a proviso be inserted in the relevant clause of the Food Security Bill to protect the existing level of allocation of food grains for Tamil Nadu. However, no such proviso is made. ...(Interruptions)

Madam, Section 3(2) of the Bill envisages that nationwide, 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population are to be covered as households eligible for allocation of subsidized food grains. This is totally arbitrary. How have they reached these figures of 75 per cent in rural areas and 50 per cent in urban areas? This is against the principle of social justice. Therefore, we oppose this. ...(Interruptions)

Secondly, as a consequence of this, the monthly allocation of food grains for Tamil Nadu would decline by nearly one lakh tonnes from the present level of 2.96 lakh tonnes. Already, the State Government of Tamil Nadu is providing Rs.5000 crore as subsidy for Universal Public Distribution System. Due to this Bill, another amount of Rs.3,000 crore has to be spent by the State. For that, we need protection.

It is also stated that this Bill would assure the limited allocation of subsidized food grains only for a period of three years. What will happen after three years? How will the State Governments implement this? May I know whether the Central Government would come forward to give subsidy? They have not given that guarantee.

Section 8 of the Bill requires the State Governments to pay food security allowance when the food grains cannot be supplied. This provision does not answer the fundamental question of making adequate food grains available. If there is no availability of food grains, what will the State Governments do at that time? How can they give?

Therefore, this Bill is not 'Food Security Bill', but this is actually 'Food Insecurity Bill'. So, we are opposing it.

Also, the design of food security for the country needs to be reconsidered; and the Bill in its present form must be replaced with a Bill which reflects our concerns adequately. The Government of India is duty-bound to protect the food security of the States like Tamil Nadu. Hence, the Bill should be introduced only after detailed consultations with the State Governments.

Moreover, the State Government of Tamil Nadu is giving Rs.5,000 crore as subsidy, which covers distribution of rice to all. There is no charge for that. The Supreme Court said that the food grains like rice and wheat are just lying in the go-downs and getting rotten, and they are eaten by the rats. So, on the basis of what the Supreme Court said, they have to distribute the food grains free to the people. Why are they charging? So, we are saying that the Government should give food – wheat and rice – for all without any charge. We are also requesting that this Bill must not be introduced now. They have to consult the State Governments and other stakeholders. So, we have raised this issue. This has to be considered first and then only, this Bill should be introduced.

So, I am opposing this.

SHRI T.R. BAALU (SRIPERUMBUDUR): The National Food Security Bill was just now introduced by the hon. Minister, Prof. K.V. Thomas. This has got a lot of issues to be settled. For that matter, the DMK Party will be submitting the amendments to Sections 3 (2), 9 and 10. The proposed Bill should not be detrimental to the off-take of a particular State. The States' powers should not be ridiculed and should not be reduced to the extent of making them municipalities.

This particular Bill which is going to be discussed here will have far-reaching implications on the States' interests. So, we are going to give amendments to Sections 3 (2), 9 and 10 of the Bill.

PROF. K.V. THOMAS: Madam, this Bill does not infringe on the rights of the States. It protects the Constitution.

Madam, when the discussion starts, all the points that have been raised now can be discussed here. More than that, we have sent this Bill to the Standing Committee and we have accepted many of the proposals of the Standing Committee. So, there is nothing against the federal system. This Bill will enable the people to get food as the right. This is the first time in the world, food is given as the right. This Bill will be discussed and then, it will be passed.....(*Interruptions*)

MADAM SPEAKER: The question is:

"That leave be granted to introduce a Bill to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

The motion was adopted.

...(*Interruptions*)

PROF. K.V. THOMAS: I introduce* the Bill.

...(*Interruptions*)
