

Twelfth Loksabha

**Session : 2**

**Date : 06-07-1998**

**Participants :** Mukherjee Smt. Geeta, Radhakrishnan Shri Varkala, Banerjee Kumari Mamata, Khan Shri Arif Mohammed, Patil Smt. Suryakanta, Khurana Shri Madan Lal

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Title : Demand to make a statement on price rise of essential commodities and requests the Government to withdraw the notification banning the sale of common salt.

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the situation after the Lok Sabha elections held in February is before the country. The present Government supported by 20 allies had committed to control the price rise ...(*interruptions*) Please have patience to listen...(*interruptions*)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Do not disturb her please. [*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL: The life of common man and Jhugi-Jhonpari dwellers has become miserable in this country. Earlier labour community used to eat chapati with common salt and drink water. But now-a-days even drinking water is not available for them. The prices of common salt are sky rocketing. Potatoes and tomatoes with the seasoning of onion were the part of common man's meal but due to the increased price, tomatoes and onions being sold at the rate of Rs. 40 and 15 per Kg respectively. Now the prices of 'arhar' and edible oil have raised to Rs. 35/kg and Rs. 45/kg respectively. Millet and wheat is not available to common man. The goods which were made available to poor man in Fair Price Shops have now been stopped. The poor man is finding himself helpless to live the *Wie....(Interruptions)*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I have allowed her. Please do not disturb her.

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL: Some people may not like it but after the Pokhran Test, economic aid from foreign countries has been stopped...(*Interruptions*)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Madam, not like this, I have allowed her. Please let her complete.

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL : You may feel offended but the common man is finding himself helpless. He is feeling helpless after stoppage of economic assistance from other countries and increase in inflation.

**12.27 hrs.**

(SHRI P.M. SAYEED *In the Chair*)

\*Not Recorded.

I request you to give an opportunity to all the members to the House to participate in the discussions and there should be a wide discussion in this regard...(Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS (MUKUNDAPURAM): Sir, this is a very important matter...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, not like this. I am on my legs. Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs wants to react to this matter. He wants to say something on this. .

(Interruptions) MR. CHAIRMAN : Government wants to react.

(Interruptions) MR. CHAIRMAN: I am on my legs.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. What is going on here?

(Interruptions) [Translation]

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the matter regarding the price rise has been raised here.. .(Interruptions)

[English]

KUMARI MAMATA BENERJEE: Sir, we have also given notice. He may reply after we have spoken. Sir, let him listen to other Members also...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I call Kumari Mamata Banerjee to speak. ...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please listen to her. I have called Mamatajs to speak on the same matter.

(Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: We are also a part of the Government. Please do not raise objections.,,  
(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : Sir, it is an issue which we have raised and we are asking the Govenment to reply.

We are part . of the Opposition and as Opposition Members, we have raised this issue. She is not part of the Opposition. She is part of the Government and she wants to raise the issue herself. This is not correct....

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : She wants to make a submission.

*(Interruptions)* MR. CHAIRMAN : I have already called her.

*(Interruptions)* MR. CHAIRMAN : The Government is going to react.

*[Translation]*

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA : I have yielded. ...*(interruptions)*.

*(English)*

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : We have to oppose., *(interruptions)* It is not a democracy... *(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please cooperate with me. I have called her.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri A.C. Jos, this is 'Zero Hour'. I have permitted her to speak.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, please sit down. *(Interruptions)*

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ (BARAMULLA) : Sir, I am on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no point of order during Zero Hour.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have already called her. You cannot question it.'

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : You have raised a matter. The Government wants to react.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have called her. *(Interruptions)*

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ: Sir, I am on a point of order... *(Interruptions)*. This is not about Zero Hour. This is regarding business of the House under Rule 376. ...*(Interruptions)* You kindly listen to me. If you give a ruling, I will accept it ...*(Interruptions)* Actually, this is a point of order. You have to listen to me. I am quoting the rule. You please do care for the rule....*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Kindly resume your seat. PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ: I am on a point of order. MR. CHAIRMAN: Under what rule?

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ: Under Rule 376. Whenever the Chair asks a Member from the House to speak, that becomes the business of the House. You called Shri Madan La! Khurana to answer a point raised by Shrimati Patil. Therefore, Shri Khurana was on his legs. That is the business of the House...*(Interruptions)* Let Kumari Mamata Banerjee speak afterwards,... *(Interruptions)* Shri Khurana was on his legs.... *(Interruptions)* Shri Khurana will respond to Shrimati PaXW... *(Interruptions)*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : During Zero Hour, there is no point of order...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to give the ruling.

(*Interruptions*) MR, CHAIRMAN : He has raised a point of order.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Radhakrishnan, will you please allow me to give the ruling?

(*Interruptions*) MR. CHAIRMAN: I am not asking for your cooperation.

(*Interruptions*) MR. CHAIRMAN: I want to give the ruling.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN; Shri Pramothas Mukherjee, please resume your seat,

(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN ■ Nothing will go on record. (*Interruptions*)\*

SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: They also are responsible ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you please resume your seat?

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, I am on a point of order...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Radhakrishnan, I am on my legs, please resume your seat,

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN ; Sir, I am on a point of order...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can raise it only if I allow you. You please resume your seat.

(*Interruptions*) MR. CHAIRMAN: Please hear my ruling now.

This is not happening for the first time, During the intervention by a Minister if an hon. Member wants to ask a question on the same issue, then the Minister can reply later on. I have called her name. Kumari Mamata Banerjee will now ask a question and then the hon. Minister will reply.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K. KARUNAKARAN (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM): Sir, I am not objecting to your ruling. But I would like to submit a point...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have already given my ruling. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE (BERHAMPORE) (WB): Sir, you have called the hon, Minister...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have called Mamataji. I have given her permission to speak.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE: No, Sir. You have called the hon. Minister...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Are you questioning my authority? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI K. KARUNAKARAN: Sir, I am only placing a suggestion for your consideration and further action. This is a burning issue of the day. The people are fed up with this crisis. They are very much worried and upset as to what is happening in the country. So, it is our primary duty to bring it to the notice of the Government.

Sir, the Members of the ruling party have the opportunity to meet the Ministers at any point of time but we can raise it only on the floor of the House. The Government has to reply only when we raise it. So, I would like to request the Chair to give opportunity to all those Members who want to raise it and then only the Hon. Minister should reply to it ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN; That is what I am doing. Kumari Mamata Banerjee also wants to ask a question.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A.C. JOS : Sir, the only point is that Kumari Mamata Banerjee is a part of the Government and she cannot eat the cake and have it too...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: As a Member of this House she can ask any question.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A.C. JOS: Sir, she is supporting, the Government from outside...*(interruptions)*

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Shri Jos, you were the Speaker of the Kerala Assembly and you know that whether or not she is a part of the Government, in the first place she is a Member of this House.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, let us hear Mamataji. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN: Sir, let Shrimati Suryakanta Patil complete her submission...  
*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Kumari Mamata Banerjee is already on

'Not Recorded.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PAUL : Sir, ! want to say something regarding your ruling. I am not disturbing her ... *(Interruptions)*

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You already have made your submissions.

*(Interruptions)* , . . . \_

*[Translation]*

SHRIMATI SURYAKANTA PATIL: Please listen to me for a minute. I would like to state one thing. First listen to all those members who have to speak after Mamataji. Then ask Shri Khurana to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is what I am doing. The matter jumbled up here. I had stated that I will also call them.

*[English]*

Please cooperate now,

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: I am very grateful to you, Sir.. *(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Wili you give her a patient hearing? *[Translation]*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Sir, I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to speak as a member. I am not a Cabinet Member but I am a member of the House. I feit hurt when a very senior member like Shri Rajesh Pilot has stopped me from speaking...*(Interruptions)* When Shri Rajiv Gandhi was P.M. he allowed me to speak when ever raised a matter.

*[English]*

I was then the Member of the ruling Congress Party, *[Translation]*

i would like to submit that I have not come here on behalf of the Government. I would like to talk about the common people. You are stating another thing, it should not be happened.

It is true that Price rise is taking place and there are many reasons for it. It is the desire of the people that Central and State Governments should meet together and formulate a Plan of action to solve this problem. Prices differ from one state to another. These differ from one locality to another.

*[English]*

There is no control in the overall situation. *[Translation]*

The prices of onion and tomatoes are Rs. 14/-kg and 42/- kg. respectively. Green Chilly is being sold at Rs. 35 per kg in Delhi and Rs 110/- in Calcutta. I would like to speak on behalf of the common man... *(Interruptions)* The price of edible oil has also been raised. Prices of vegetable have also shot up. How a common man will eat only boiled potatoes ,. *(Interruptions)*

*[English]*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please cooperate with the Chair. Let us hear her.

*[Translation]*

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Essential Commodities Act did not become successful due to the black-marketeers and hoarders.

*[English]*

The Prime Minister should make a statement on price rise, stating the actual position in different States. Why the State Government is not taking action on the Essential Commodities Act? He should call a meeting with all the Chief Ministers of the States. Secondly, the Prime Minister should make a statement so that a message goes to the people that the prices are under control and they will not be allowed to go out of control. The Minister should take a strong note of it. This is my submission.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (PANSKURA): Nobody can deny the fact that the prices of essential commodities have gone beyond the reach of not only the poor but even the upper middle class. This has never happened in the past. Not only that, we should also remember that the present Government has done away with all kinds of rationing, including what was agreed upon during the UF Government, that is to supply essential commodities at half the price to the people living below the poverty line. The excise duty on a number of essential commodities has been scrapped. All this has given rise to the present situation.

We cannot go on like this, We must resort to rationing system. We must distribute essential commodities through ration shops. That is number-one priority in the country now and not the nuclear tests. Let the Minister make it clear whether the Government is going to ration the sale of essential commodities till the prices do not come down.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN: I come from- the State of Kerala which is deficit in all essential commodities. Prices of vegetables in the market have shot up beyond imagination. Adding fuel to the fire, the Government has issued a notification to the effect that common salt should not be stored in the markets. Sale of common salt is completely banned by the Union Government. The price of common salt was less than Rs. 1 per kg in the market. Following the ban, the poor man is compelled to purchase iodised salt at about Rs. 6 or Rs. 7 a kg. Even the medical opinion is differing on whether common salt should not be consumed at all and whether iodised salt alone should be consumed. These issues have not been decided upon as yet. The High Court also intervened in the matter. By this decision of the Government, the poor man is put to a lot of hardship. It is not just the prices of vegetables in the market going up even the common salt is not available in the market now. The poor man is forced to purchase iodised salt which is distributed to those travelling in the aircraft. This has created a very difficult situation in the State of Kerala. I would request the Government to withdraw the notification banning the sale of common salt, especially so in the light of the soaring prices of vegetables, and save the poor man the hardship.

*[Translation]*

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the concern expressed by the Members from both the sides regarding the price rise is natural. The Government also want to state the reasons for it, whether

prices have increased now or these were rising since long. You have just now stated about the common salt which Government is responsible to take the decision regarding the salt to be iodised. ...(*Interruptions*)  
Let me complete first.

I would like this matter to be discussed in the House under any rule. It is upto the Chairman. I would like the Government to present its views also when the whole House is very much concerned about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Business Advisory Committee should decide about it.

[*English*]

Nothing will go on record.

(*Interruptions*)\*

SHRI ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN (BAHRAICH): I am on a point of order.

Sir, you have given the direction to the hon. Minister to respond to the sentiments which have been expressed by the hon. Members from both the sides, not to seek his opinion as to whether the matter should be discussed in this House or not. Basically, what the House is concerned is about the steps the Government proposes to take to bring down the prices of the commodities which have gone totally beyond the reach not only of the common man but even the people belonging to the middle classes. Today it is being said that a man goes to the shop and says, I will buy a particular vegetable only if the doctor prescribes it. Prices of commodities have gone beyond the purchasing power and beyond the reach of the common man.

Basically the hon. Minister needs to give confidence to the entire House and to the whole country that the Government has not favoured the middlemen who are earning the profits and that the Government would try to bring down the prices.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Arif Khan, the Government is prepared to have a discussion under any Rule. Therefore, as a whole, the House will discuss it and the Government will come out with the steps as to how to tackle this problem. (*interruptions*) That will be decided by the Business Advisory Committee,

[*Translation*]