

[Shri Anant Gangaram Geete]

sell commodities in black market. I demand that foodgrains and oils etc. be allocated to all the States on time as per demand.

Maharashtra has a population of 10 crores of which 1.20 crores live in Mumbai alone. 38 per cent or 1.20 crores Mumbaitees are native Maharashtra and the rest 62 per cent have migrated from other States which account for 70-75 lakh people. The Maharashtra Government is keen to provide ration on subsidised rates to every poor man of the State. 60 per cent of Mumbai's population lives in slums areas and this chunk of 70-80 lakh people are labourers and workers who toil from morning till night to earn a two square meal. They deserve to be provided food items on subsidised rates but they are unable to fetch their rations under PDS due to non-availability of sufficient central allocation.

Mr. Chairman, Madam, my point is that the effective implementation of PDS system is must which is an important and useful part of society. We shall have to ensure that we are able to distribute foodgrains under PDS and the new TPDS system to the deserving families.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, targets are, of course, achieved in such schemes for the poor but the persons whom these are meant do not get the desired benefit. This can be checked from the figures of any State that targets are fully achieved but the poor people for whom the schemes are floated hardly get its benefits in full. The consumer is not benefited. Therefore, the centre should monitor the scheme to ensure that its benefit reaches the targetted person. This is a very good scheme of the centre and I appreciate it.

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Madam, can I intervene just for a minute?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, please.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Madam, I have heard a part of my hon. friend's observations and I agree with it because it is very important for us to have the Public Distribution System which can come to the help and rescue of the very poor sections of the society, and that is what the primary reason was for the Public Distribution System. With the passage of time, we noticed that the prices were going up primarily because the price paid to the producer was going up. Last year, for instance, the Government of India paid higher prices to the farming community, and rightly so. I have no grievance on that because I think that was the right thing we had to do. After all, the farming community constitutes the majority of the country and they must get their due for all the labour put in by them. Naturally that raised the price for the Government's purchase also.

Now, the question before the Government—not my Government but the previous Government, of which I was a member—was how do we come to the rescue of the poorer sections. We always were conscious of the fact that for those people particularly who live below poverty line, it is a terrible burden. My hon. friend has rightly pointed

out that those who live in *Jhuggi-jhonparis* or those who live on the roadside, who are a segment of the urban poor, suffer a great deal, not the rural poor or the better off. This is something which we have to keep in mind all the time. Therefore, this new Public Distribution System was devised. The idea was that we give at least some portion of the needs at a highly subsidised price. So, the scheme was that ten kilograms per family we give at half the economic price. That meant a burden on the finances of about Rs. 9,000 crore annually. The Scheme has been implemented. It is being distributed.

Now, with the passage of time—I have been travelling in various States, particularly in the backward States, and particularly the North-Eastern States, and also I have been talking to the Chief Ministers of various States, including their own Chief Ministers—it has been brought to our notice that there are certain distortions in the system. One distortion is that we give ten kilograms at fifty per cent of the price, but no family can live with ten kilograms. Therefore, it will be very wrong to assume that a family of four or five people will consume only ten kilograms per month. It is not sufficient. It is a very correct objection. For the rest of the need, they buy at the market price which is high. Therefore, ultimately the relief which is intended for them becomes very limited. Relief is there but not to the extent that one would like it to be. Keeping in mind the fact that these things have been brought to my notice, we have discussed it amongst ourselves and I am going to call very soon a meeting of the Chief Ministers to evolve a new scheme. In the mean time, we are trying to work out as to what other alternatives we can have. Naturally, my hon. friends will agree that we can have subsidising up to an extent not because subsidy is not needed but because subsidy has a certain sort of a weight on the finances and we have to decide how much we can afford.

I said that a subsidy of Rs. 9,000 crore is already there. Well, perhaps, marginally it can be increased also. Perhaps, we can do something different.

Therefore, keeping all this in mind, the Ministry has been instructed to work out alternatives and, I think, in the very near future I should be able to meet the Chief Ministers and sort it out. But before I sit down I must repeat what I said in the beginning that our sympathy is entirely with the suffering sections of the society. We do want to do something, particularly in this 50th year of Independence. It is a matter of regret and shame sometime that a very large number of people in this country are still below the poverty line. It is of no satisfaction to me that their number has decreased or the percentage has decreased. And to use Gandhiji's words, "As long as there is a tear in even one eye the country cannot consider itself free". Therefore, I share that. I think whether you are there or the friend sitting behind you, Shri George Fernandes and others, are there, we have spent all our lives feeling like this. I am saying that we did not go to the freedom struggle for the sake of a few who may be affluent. We wanted to build a system where more fair deals should be given to the poor.

Well, partly it may have been achieved but, I think, there is still much to be done and I think this Parliament, by and large, whether sitting on this side or on that side, is simply with a cause and, therefore, we share this. It is not a question of party. ...*(Interruptions)* It is a question of general policy.

[Translation]

VAIDYA DAU DAYAL JOSHI (KOTA): Please formulate some concrete plan ...*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Therefore, I think, it is important for us to keep in mind the fact. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please do not disturb him.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL: Therefore, it is not a question of party. ...*(Interruptions)* The main point is, therefore, it is important for all of us to share this. I assure the House that the moment we have worked out alternatives we will come back to the House, discuss with all of you, both in the Leaders' meeting as well as in the House and evolve a scheme which can be more beneficial to the poor.

Thank you very much.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJAY GOEL (SADAR-DELHI): I had made a request in this regard that when you provide subsidy for public Distribution System it is not necessary that the subsidy be provided to that section which is not in need of it.

SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH BHATI (BIKANER): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you very much for giving me a chance to speak. Yesterday Shri Panigrahi presented a motion for discussion on P.D.S. under Rule 193 and this discussion is continuously going on. The M.Ps. of different constituencies, the M.Ps. of different states are expressing their views. The hon'ble Prime Minister has intervened in the discussion and he has agreed to our apprehensions. It is, definitely a happy state of affairs. We have been highlighting this matter time and again and the discussion on this matter has been going on since yesterday in the house that under the T.P.D.S. scheme 10 k.g. of wheat is being provided to each family which is in-fact inadequate quantity for a family.

30 k.g. of wheat was being allotted to each family under the previous P.D.S. scheme but consequent upon the implementation of the existing scheme, poor family has not been benefited. May be that former Prime Minister, Shri Devegauda has the plan in his mind to provide benefit to them but the scheme is being implemented in such a way that 10 k.g. of wheat would be provided at the rate of rupees 3 per kg to each family, the Minister of Food is sitting here. Before launching this scheme former Prime Minister held a discussion in this regard at the Chief Minister's Conference. Thereafter, this matter was discussed at the food Ministers' Conference and after that Prime Minister has announced this scheme from the

rampart of Red Fort. The objectives of the scheme were good. The Government thought that the poor should get the benefit of this scheme. The person belonging to lowest strata would get the benefit of it but they have not got proper benefit of this scheme.

It is not fair to presume that there would be four members in family of a poor man. It may have even upto seven members. As such, this quantity of wheat is not adequate for a family. Several people are saying 30 k.g. per family is sufficient but I think and my state has also demanded that it will require 40 k.g. per family.

15.00 hrs.

If his requirement is 40 k.g. government will provide 10 k.g. of food grains under P.D.S. scheme and he will have to purchase remaining 30 k.g. of food grains from open market at the rate of Rs. 7.60 per k.g. I would like to cite an example. If there are 4 to 7 members in a family, they will have to spend about Rs. 258 on this item. If we study the previous scheme, we find that under that scheme they were getting 30 k.g. of food grains for only Rs. 153. In this way they will have to spend additional Rs. 100 only and then they can meet their requirement. I and other members have given the same suggestions. The Prime Minister have admitted that this scheme is impractical. He said that to give it a practical shape we will change it again by holding Chief Minister's Conference in future. Finally, we have come to this conclusion that the earlier scheme was impractical, the stand of the opposing this scheme was justified.

I belong to Rajasthan and my constituency falls in Bikaner. Our Chief Minister of Rajasthan honourable Bhairon Singhji had written letters to Prime Minister from time to time. He was apprised of this types of apprehensions before implementing this scheme. He has put this demand, I think he has also sent a letter to Union Minister in this connection, he expressed the fear that if the quantity of food grains is not increased to 40 k.g. for each family, the poor people will be deprived of the benefits which we want to give them. Therefore, earlier Rajasthan was being allotted 13,57,670 metric tonnes, but after the implementation of this new scheme, only 6,61,900 metric tonnes is being allotted to my State. One thing is clear that more allocation was being made to Rajasthan under the previous scheme but half of that allocation is being made under the existing scheme. It is a matter of grave concern. The Government has not allotted even one metric tonne extra before implementing this scheme. No any additional allotment has been made for the entire country this same scheme has been given new name of P.D.S. scheme by making minor changes only on papers.

I would like to put a suggestion, and the Rajasthan Government has also demanded it, in the previous scheme of 30 k.g. or as the Prime Minister has said that he wanted some amendments in it, we would like to submit that if you want to supply the foodgrains at the rate Rs. 3.00 per kg. then you should allot upto 40 k.g. per family only then the poor person will be benefited, and his whole family will get food.