

STATEMENT *Re* : SCHEMES TO  
AMELIORATE THE LOT OF  
WEAKER SECTIONS

[English]

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE  
(SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH) :

The House is aware of the commitment of this Government to the amelioration of the lot of the weaker and the vulnerable sections of the society. The Annual Plan for 1985-86 and the Seventh Five Year Plan as approved recently by the National Development Council fully reflect our concern for the Welfare of these sections.

2. Honourable Members would recall that in May last I had announced, a special scheme for the construction of two lakh houses every year in this Five Year Plan period for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and bonded labour. This scheme sought to combine the objective of provisions of increased employment opportunities to these sections, with utilisation of local materials in the construction programmes so as to fillip to the local economy.

3. Government have now decided on three more measures for the improvement of the level of living of those below the poverty line. Incidentally, they also seek to take advantage of our comfortable stocks of food for the benefit of the weaker sections.

4. First among these is a programme for distribution of foodgrains at a concessional price to the people in the integrated tribal development projects. There are 181 integrated tribal development projects in the country which cover 633 community development blocks fully and 280 blocks partially, spread over 17 States and two Union Territories. There are over 50 million people in these project areas, nearly two thirds being tribals. It has now been decided that wheat would be made available to these 50 million people in these project areas at a subsidized rate *i.e.* the same rate at which foodgrains are being made available under the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme and the National Rural Employment Programmes. The issue price to the beneficiaries will be Rs. 1.50 per kg. for wheat and Rs. 1.85 per kg. for rice. While the distribu-

tion will be mostly in the form of wheat, in those areas where rice is preferred, rice would also be given in addition to wheat. This programme will be implemented through the State Governments and the Union Territories. Allowing for the fact that in many areas the infrastructural arrangements will have to be augmented, and various agencies pressed into action, it is expected that the implementation of this scheme will be initiated by the different States and Union Territories in all tribal development project areas before the 1st January, 1986. The entire expenditure on the subsidy involved will be borne by the Centre.

5. The second measure pertains to the nutrition programme for young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers. This programme is being implemented by the various States and Union Territories in the tribal areas, urban slums and backward rural areas covering 11 million beneficiaries. It has now been decided to provide necessary additional support to the States with effect from 1-1-1986, so as to enable them to increase the coverage to 14 million even in 1986-17. The Central Government will meet in full the entire cost of wheat as well as all supportive costs corresponding to the higher coverage to be achieved over and above what the State Governments have already programmed to achieved every year in their Seventh Five Year Plan. The additional outlay on this account to the Centre is estimated at Rs. 45 crores in 1986-87. ;

6. The third measure relates to the expansion of the coverage of the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme and the National Rural Employment Programme. An allocation of one million tonnes of foodgrains, with full cost being borne by the Centre has been authorised last month so as to enable the States to provide an additional 50 million mandays of work under these programmes in the current year. It has now been decided to further enlarged these programmes so as to step up the coverage in 1986-87 by an additional 100 million mandays. It is expected that with this expansion, the offtake of foodgrains under these programmes would increase to about 2 million tonnes in that year apart from creating permanent assets.

7. Hon. Members would be happy to know that in addition to these measures, it has been decided that the ration card holders will not have any restriction on the quantities of wheat they can draw from Fair Price Shops from now till 31st March 1986.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The House will now adjourn for lunch to meet at 14.15 hrs.

13.13 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for  
Lunch till fifteen minutes past  
Fourteen of the clock.

(The Lok Sabha reassembled after lunch  
at Nineteen Minutes past  
Fourteen of the Clock.)

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DISCUSSION *Re* : SITUATION ARISING  
OUT OF FLOODS, DROUGHTS AND  
OTHER NATURAL CALAMITIES  
IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE  
COUNTRY—Contd.

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The House will now take up further discussion on the situation arising out of floods, drought and other natural calamities in various parts of the country.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (S. BUTA SINGH) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all let me express our gratitude to the hon. Speaker and to you, Sir, personally for having given this opportunity to this august House to discuss the situations created in the whole country by the natural calamities like floods, drought and cyclone. It was in the fitness of things that, on the first day of the Session, the House devoted its attention to the most serious problems affecting the lives of our people in the most difficult areas on the coast, in the interior and in the deserts.

Naturally, Sir, every Hon. Member who participated in the debate had his own story full of miseries and hardships to the people who suffered during these havocs. Sir, our

hearts go out in sympathy to those who suffered as a result of these calamities and those who were killed as a result of floods cyclones. Our sympathies are also with the bereaved families who are left without earning hands.

I cannot express better than what you did when you asked the Government of India from the Chair to take special efforts in mitigating the situations, the problems of our people suffering under these conditions.

As you know, scarcity, famines and calamities are a thing of the past. They are in our history from time immemorial. They have been hitting our country. In the ancient times also there has been a mention in the Mahabharata and in our literatures about long drawn droughts, famines plagues, floods, cyclones and things like that.

Sir, the thing is that now we are moving in a century when the science has developed to an extent that if we cannot stop all these calamities, we can at least reduce the impact on the human life through the scientific knowledge that is available.

Even before our country became independent these things used to be with us. As a matter of fact, they started right from the day the human beings started wrestling with nature in search of subsistence and the story is rich, full of incidents in which the man sometimes conquered the nature and the nature repelled and reacted in a very very sharp manner. The consequence was that a few lakhs of lives were lost. Before the country become independent, the attitude of the Government was casual. At the best, they used to write off the revenue for a particular period.

But soon after we become independent, our Government our national leaders started paying more attention to this very serious problem and they started tackling it in a scientific manner. If you look at the expenditure of the Government from the day we achieved independence and especially with the coming in of our five year plans, it runs into thousands of crores. It looks as if the whole money was available at a given point of time and we could have really stopped all these famines and floods, but as the time went on the resources at our disposal became short compared to demands of States. Every