

(c) if not, the reaction of Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (c). M/S. K. N. Gutgutia and Company did not, however, accept the said appointment. The Board of the company then appointed M/s. Sanghi and Co., Chartered Accountants as Auditors, and their appointment was confirmed by the company in its general meeting held on 23-3-71. The Government can act only within the powers of Section 224 (3) of the Companies Act, 1956.

**Re-appointment of Auditors for
M/s. Smith Stanistreet and
Company Limited**

2908. SHRI S. M. SIDDAYYA : Will the Minister of COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether inspite of the Shareholders rejecting the re-appointment of retiring auditor by M/s. Smith Stanistreet and Company at their Annual General Meeting held on 24th March, 1971, the same Auditor was re-appointed for the Company by the Central Government under section 224 (3) of the Companies Act, 1956; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUNATHA REDDY) : (a) and (b). Having regard to the facts and circumstances of the case, the Regional Director, who is empowered by the Government, appointed the retiring auditors as auditors of the company under section 224 (3) of the Companies Act.

12'08 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO
MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE**

**REPORTED SEVERE DROUGHT AND FAMINE
CONDITIONS IN CERTAIN PARTS
OF THE COUNTRY**

श्री फूल चन्द वर्मा (उज्जैन) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं अविलम्बनीय लोक-महत्व के निम्नलिखित विषय की ओर माननीय कृषि मंत्री जी का ध्यान दिलाता हूँ और उनसे प्रार्थना करना हूँ कि इस संबंध में वे अपना वक्तव्य दें—

“उड़ीसा, राजस्थान, बिहार, पश्चिम-बंगाल तथा अन्य राज्यों के कुछ भागों में सूखे और अकाल की गम्भीर स्थिति के समाचार और स्थिति का सामना करने के लिये केन्द्रीय सरकार की ओर से दी जाने वाली सहायता।”

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE) : The Primary responsibility for undertaking relief measures in the areas affected by natural calamities including drought and famine rests with the State Governments concerned. Nevertheless, the Central Government, through its various Ministries, keep in constant touch with the State Governments so as to be fully in the picture and to be in a position to provide assistance as may be necessary.

At present, drought relief measures are continuing in parts of Maharashtra, Mysore and Andhra Pradesh where drought conditions occurred last year. In Orissa also, relief operations, necessitated by last year's cyclone and floods are continuing. Fresh reports of scarcity conditions prevailing in parts of Rajasthan and small pockets in West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa have been received recently. In all cases, as reported to the Government of India, the State Governments have undertaken necessary relief measures.

These measures include starting of works to create employment opportunities, suspen-

sion of land revenue, distribution of gratuitous relief, supply of drinking water where necessary, opening of fair price shops, distribution of loans for agriculture and rehabilitation programmes. Central assistance as required by concerned State Government, is given according to a prescribed procedure, and wherever necessary, central teams for assessments of the situation and to fix ceilings of expenditure to be shared between the Centre and the State would be deputed. Last year, central teams visited the States of Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Maharashtra and Orissa. On the basis of the recommendations of the central teams, central assistance has been released.

The food situation in the country is comfortable and all reasonable requirements of the States with regard to foodgrains for public distribution in the scarcity areas are fully met.

The Government of India is in constant touch with the State Governments and all steps to provide relief as demanded by the situation would be taken with the cooperation of the State Governments.

श्री फूल चन्द वर्मा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय मंत्री जी ने अपने वक्तव्य में तथ्यों को छिपाया है, वास्तविकता को छिपाने की कोशिश की है और इस सदन को भ्रम में डालने का पूरा पूरा प्रयत्न किया है। मैं आपके माध्यम से निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ क्या उन्होंने दो चार दिन के पिछले अखबार उठाकर देखे हैं ? समाचार-पत्रों में समाचार छपे हैं कि उड़ीसा, बिहार, बंगाल, राजस्थान में भयंकर अकाल की स्थिति है। राजस्थान के जो अकाल राहत मंत्री हैं, श्री परसराम डेबा, उन्होंने सदन में कहा है कि 35 सौ गाँवों में अकाल की स्थिति है और लगभग 25 लाख लोग मौत की कगार पर खड़े हैं। इसी प्रकार से उड़ीसा में वहाँ के राजस्व मंत्री ने विधान सभा में कहा है कि एक करोड़ लोग आज मौत के मुँह में खड़े हैं क्योंकि वहाँ भयंकर अकाल की स्थिति है। इतना ही नहीं, उड़ीसा के अन्दर सौ व्यक्ति अकाल से मर गए हैं और राजस्थान के अन्दर दो सौ लोगों की मौत हो चुकी है। यदि हम देखें तो

पिछले दस वर्षों में राजस्थान के अन्दर निरंतर भयंकर अकाल की स्थिति रही है। पीने के पानी की कमी के कारण पिछले समय वहाँ पर दस लाख पशु मरे और 20 हजार मनुष्यों की जानें गईं। अभी भी वहाँ पर जो पीने का पानी दिया जा रहा है वह इतना दूषित है कि एक और तो भूख के कारण और दूसरी ओर दूषित पानी पीने के कारण लोगों की मौत हो रही है।

अकाल राहत के नाम पर जो पिछले वर्ष विभिन्न राज्यों में अध्ययन दल गया था उसने जो अपनी रिपोर्ट दी है उसमें उसने कहा है कि राज्य अध्ययन दल की रिपोर्ट को कार्य रूप में परिणत नहीं करते। अकाल राहत के नाम पर जो रुपया केन्द्र से दिया जाता है उसको राजनीतिक स्वार्थपूर्ति के लिए उपयोग किया जाता है। उस दल ने यह भी कहा है कि राजनीतिक लाभ उठाने के लिए वहाँ की सरकारें उस पैसे का निरंतर दुरुपयोग करती हैं। अध्ययन दल ने चिन्ता व्यक्त की है कि उसकी सिफारिशों को ठीक रूप से लागू नहीं किया गया है।

मैं एक बात की ओर और ध्यान दिलाना चाहता हूँ। राजस्थान की विधान सभा के अन्दर अनेकों विरोधी पक्ष के सदस्यों ने तथा कांग्रेस के सदस्यों ने इस बात के आरोप लगाए हैं कि वहाँ पर जो राहत के नाम पर रुपया खर्च किया गया उसमें भारी भ्रष्टाचार हुआ है। अभी तक अकाल राहत के नाम पर लगभग सवा अरब रुपया खर्च किया गया है लेकिन मैं सोचता हूँ, मेरा यह निश्चित मत है कि यह सवा अरब रुपया ठीक से अकाल राहत क्षेत्र में खर्च नहीं किया गया। यदि यह रुपया ठीक से खर्च किया गया होता तो वहाँ के लोगों को राहत मिलती। केवल अकाल राहत के नाम पर सड़कों पर मिट्टी डाल देना और वहाँ पर लोगों को रुपया, बारह आना मजदूरी देना—इससे अकालग्रस्त जो क्षेत्र हैं वहाँ के लोगों को राहत नहीं मिलेगी। प्रयत्न यह करना चाहिए कि ज

[श्री फूल चन्द वर्मा]

अकाल ग्रस्त क्षेत्र है, जिन जिन राज्यों में अकाल की स्थिति है वहाँ पर कुछ स्थायी योजनाओं को कार्यान्वित करना चाहिए, तथा ऐसा निदान निकालना चाहिए जिससे अकाल की परिस्थिति से निपटने के लिए हमेशा हमेशा के लिए फुरसत मिले। लेकिन इस ओर कभी हमारी सरकार का ध्यान नहीं गया। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ अकाल राहत के नाम पर जो धन खर्च किया गया है जिसके संबंध में राजस्थान विधान सभा के सम्मानित सदस्यों ने आरोप लगाया है क्या उसकी आप जाँच कराने के लिए तैयार है? आज अकाल राहत के नाम पर जो पैसा दिया जाता है उसमें काफी भ्रष्टाचार और गोलमाल हुआ है—यह बात अध्ययन दल ने भी कही है। तो मैं चाहूँगा कि इसके संबंध में आप जाँच आयोग बिठाये।

सारे पश्चिमी राजस्थान में जहाँ हमेशा अकाल की स्थिति रहती है उसके लिए मंत्री जी से मैं जानना चाहूँगा कि जो राजस्थान कंनल (नहर) है उसे चौथी योजना के अन्दर क्या आप युद्धस्तर पर उसके काम की शुरुआत करेंगे जिससे कि अकाल की स्थिति का सामना करने में सहायित हो सके और अकाल को हमेशा हमेशा के लिए समाप्त किया जा सके? दूसरी बात यह है कि राजस्थान के अन्दर लगभग 50-60 ट्यूबवेल बन्द पड़े हैं उनको तुरन्त चालू करने के लिए क्या आप राज्य सरकार को निर्देश देंगे? इसी प्रकार से जहाँ-जहाँ राजस्थान में नहरें नहीं जा सकती वहाँ पर ट्यूबवेल खुदवाने के लिए क्या आप तुरन्त राहत के रूप में पैसा देंगे?

एक बात मैं और कहना चाहूँगा कि राज्यों में फ़ेमीन कोड होते हैं जिसमें व्यवस्था रहती है कि जहाँ पर अकाल की स्थिति हो वहाँ पर अकालग्रस्त क्षेत्र घोषित किया जाये ताकि वहाँ पर लोगों को छूट व अन्य सुविधायें दी जा सकें। मैं चाहता हूँ केन्द्रीय सरकार एक फ़ेमीन कोड माडेल रूप में बनाये और उसमें व्यवस्था करे कि अकालग्रस्त क्षेत्र में अकालग्रस्त

स्थिति का सामना करने के लिए क्या स्थायी निदान सुझाये जा सकते हैं, उसकी खोज करनी चाहिए और उनको ढूँढना चाहिए—मैं समझता हूँ इससे काफी लाभ होगा और अकाल की जो स्थिति है उससे निपटने के लिये काफी मार्ग दिखाई देंगे।

एक बात और कहकर मैं समाप्त करूँगा। जिन राज्यों में बरसात न होने के कारण अकाल पड़ता है, क्या सरकार विचार करेगी कि वहाँ पर मास्टर प्लान बनाकर दीर्घकालीन स्थायी योजनाएँ लागू करे और अकाल की स्थिति जो वहाँ पर हमेशा रहती है उसको हल करने की दिशा में एक प्रयत्न करे?

अंतिम बात यह है कि जो अकालग्रस्त क्षेत्र है वहाँ पर मजदूरी की जो दर है वह बहुत कम रखी गई है। बच्चों को 12 आने, महिलाओं को एक रुपया और पुरुषों को सवा रुपया दिया जाता है। यह जो मजदूरी की दर है वह बहुत कम है। आज इस बढ़ती हुई मंहगाई के जमाने में 12 आने, एक रुपया और सवा रुपया कोई विशेष माने नहीं रखता है। इतने में तो एक किलो ज्वार का आटा भी नहीं आना है। इसलिए मेरा निवेदन है कि चूकि यह मजदूरी की दरें बहुत पुरानी हैं और सूचकांक तथा मंहगाई जब इतनी बढ़ गई है तो उसको ध्यान में रखते हुए मजदूरी की इन दरों को इंक्रीज किया जाना चाहिए।

मैं मंत्री महोदय से निवेदन करूँगा कि जो स्पेसिफिक क्वेश्चन्स मैंने पूछे हैं उन सभी का उत्तर देने की वे कृपा करें।

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : I appreciate the enthusiasm of the hon Member, but he should not make statements which are not justified by facts.

First, he made a statement that there have been starvation deaths. No State Government has reported to us any starvation deaths nor any complaint has come to us. If the hon Member has any specific information with him, he should be good enough... (Interruptions) Why don't you listen

to me ? I have listened to you patiently. He should be good enough to give me specific information, then we will go into individual cases. Starvation death is not a very ordinary thing. We will take it very seriously and we will examine and investigate every individual case. Our information is that there have been no starvation deaths. With the present comfortable food situation in the country, there must be no such situation. We are prepared to meet fully the requirements of the State Governments as far as food is concerned.

Then, as far as the drought relief is concerned, may I submit that as I explained in the statement, the State Governments have to take necessary measures. They need not wait for the Central Government's suggestions or instructions. Constitutionally it is within their jurisdiction. They will have to take necessary steps. As soon as the margins which are provided by the Finance Ministry and the funds which have been provided in their budgets are spent, then they will have to write to us. Then there is an established procedure. We depute central teams for the purpose. For that purpose, there should not be any red-tape or delay. Representatives of the Planning Commission, Ministries of Finance and Agriculture are included in that team. They go to the spot, consult the State Governments, make inquiries and suggest ceilings required under the various heads and if the amounts are required for the various State Governments, they make recommendations and on the basis of those recommendations necessary assistance is given to the State Governments. As soon as any State Government writes to us, immediately the central teams are deputed and measures are taken to help the State Governments.

Regarding his question about the Famine Code, may I submit that Famine Code is a State subject. It is for the State Governments to bring it up to date. We have drawn the attention of the State Governments over a number of years to this aspect of the problem and many State Governments have made their Famine Codes up to date. If any State Government has not done so, we will take it up with them.

Then, the hon. Member raised the question about the Rajasthan canal and asked what permanent measures are being adopted for giving relief to the drought-prone areas. Now, as the House is aware, the Government of India, during the last two years, have taken up a programme called the Rural Works Programme for providing permanent relief to the drought-prone areas. Almost Rs. 100 crores have been provided for this project during this plan. This year Rs. 25 crores have been spent under this plan. Activities and works of a productive nature are taken up under this scheme. In drought-prone areas, necessary relief measures are taken up. Then he went on with his usual allegations, which, I must say, are a little out of date now. So far as the Rajasthan Canal is concerned,...

श्री कूलचन्द्र वर्मा : मेरा कहने का मतलब यह था कि आपने जो पिछला रुपया दिया उसमें भ्रष्टाचार हुआ तो क्या उनको यह विश्वास है कि अब वह जो रुपया देंगे उसमें भ्रष्टाचार नहीं होगा ?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : The hon. Member has been making such allegations frequently in Rajasthan Canal area this year about 4 to 5 lakh acres are likely to be irrigated by this Canal. If the hon. Member wants further information he may take this up with the Ministry of Irrigation and Power.

SHRI D. K. PANDA (Bhainagar) : The hon. Minister made a statement,...

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record.

SHRI D. K. PANDA :*

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI (Bhubaneswar) : I agree with the hon. Minister when he said in the statement that the primary responsibility of giving food to the people rests with the State Government. I agree with what he has said. But, Sir, this House is aware and the whole country is aware that there were unprecedented havoc

* Not recorded.

[Shri Chintamani Panigrahi]

and damage in Orissa last year. We have been getting reports from newspapers of the terrible famine conditions now prevailing in Orissa. 9 to 10 districts out of 13 districts in the State have been affected. The hon. Minister tells us that no State Government has reported cases of starvation deaths. It is on that very point that we wanted your approval for tabling this Calling Attention Notice. I have visited some of these areas in Thakurmunda area in the district of Mayurbhanj, when I visited that area on the 6th of February, already 4 persons had died of starvation by then and no relief measures were started by then, and the names of the persons were reported to the State Government and this has come in the papers and this matter was reported to the Governor also. Starvation deaths have started taking place from the last week of January onwards in the State. The district-wise figures are : In Cuttack 11; in Keonjhar 6; in Mayurbhanj 22; in Dhenkanal 6; in Balasore 17; and in Sambalpur 3, making a total of 65. Reports of starvation deaths are also reaching from the districts of Puri, Sundergarh and Ganjam no relief measures have yet been undertaken in these places. The Minister said that unless State Government reports cases of starvation deaths, it is difficult for him to say anything. I want him to understand this problem.

The cyclone of last year was due to a natural calamity. But during this year, the famine and the starvation deaths are due to something which is man-made. The hon. Minister says that there is enough food. The State Minister and the State Government say that in Orissa there is 1 lakh tonnes of food-grains with the Food Corporation of India, but rice is selling in Orissa today at Rs. 1.50 per kg. in those drought-affected and cyclone affected areas; the maximum controlled price ranges from Rs. 1.10 to Rs. 1.25 per kg or Rs. 1.30 per kg but it is selling at Rs. 1.50 per kg. An artificial scarcity has been created in rice deliberately. The Food Corporation is asked to send its rice to other States, but the people there do not get any rice to eat, and the prices are rising. So, this is one problem that we would like to place before Government.

During all these six months, when so

many people have died of starvation and the Leader of the Opposition has come out yesterday with a statement saying that about hundred people have died of starvation now suddenly, the State Government has risen from its slumber and they are now sending frantic calls to the Prime Minister and others and asking them to send a Parliamentary team, because everything has gone bad there and famine is there. When the Congress Party and the entire country has now taken up this problem and had focussed attention, the State Government now says that everything has gone bad and famine is there.

I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister the reply that Shri R. K. Khadilkar gave in this House on the 30th March, 1972, namely :—

"At the request of the Orissa Government, 15,000 tonnes of rice were allotted by the Government of India, but as desired by the State Government, an allotment of 10,000 tonnes was subsequently cancelled. The actual quantity lifted by the State Government was only 3,600 tonnes of rice."

So, you can see from the answer that the Government of India wanted to allot 15,000 tonnes of rice to the starving people of Orissa in the cyclone-affected areas, but only 3000 tonnes could be lifted and the balance was cancelled.

I would also like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to another statement made recently by Shri R. K. Khadilkar wherein he has said :

"Altogether, the Central Government has allotted Rs. 23 crores for meeting the problems arising out of cyclone and for relief, and the State Government could not spend it fully."

So, we find that even where a hundred people have died, Rs. 3 crores even has not been spent, and when the Government of India allotted 15,000 tonnes of rice, that also could not be lifted.

I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to another statement in regard to the crash programme. The Central Government have released up to date Rs. 1.26 crores, but the State Government have been able to spend not even Rs. 20 lakhs by February this year, while it is necessary however to open a vast number of relief works everywhere and open thousands of fair price shops where Government could dump rice. About 8 million tonnes of foodgrains are available with the Government of India, and I would like to ask the hon. Minister and the Central Government here, whether in case the State Government does not report to them about starvation deaths, is it not their responsibility to step in and do the needful. Supposing the State Government want to hide their black face and their corrupt face from the people of Orissa, is it not the responsibility of the Government of India to come forward and help, especially when there is enough foodgrains to the extent of 8 million tonnes in the buffer stock? I would plead with the hon. Minister that they must send at least 1 million tonnes of rice through the Central Citizens' Council which has been doing useful work in Orissa in the cyclone-affected areas. Why should the hon. Minister not discuss this with the Chief Minister of Orissa? I would like to know whether he discussed it with the State Chief Minister. Did he discuss this question at the Chief Ministers' Conference?

Recently, a Central study team has been sent to visit all these areas in Orissa. I would like to know whether they have sent their report to the hon. Minister. Have they suggested any increase in the quantum of relief and also in the other types of assistance in view of the fact that Rs. 23 crores have been sanctioned by the Central Government?

I would also like to know from the hon. Minister whether besides this official aid of Rs. 23 crores, the non-official aid which has come from the international agencies like the Red Cross etc. from the different countries has reached there, and how much of it has been utilised. I am surprised to know that Rs. 13 crores of promised aid is still to reach there; it has not reached there yet. Even the aid worth Rs. 3 crores which reached Orissa has not been spent properly. May I know whether the Central team which went there looked into these problems and inquired

whether the relief which was given did not reach the proper persons and whatever amount was allotted was also not fairly and impartially distributed? There have been allegations of discrimination from all sides in the Assembly. Even the members of the Utkal Congress and the Swatantra Party also say that the Government has been unable to cope with the situation arising out of the calamity.

SHRI P. K. DEO (Kalahandi) : Question.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI : It was openly said in the State Assembly.

In view of the fact that the price of rice has been soaring very high and there are no fair price shops, and the next three or four months are going to witness a serious tragedy and thousands of people are going to die of starvation in Orissa and it has become a most acute problem, I would like to know categorically whether within a week Government are going to take some serious steps so that whatever further amount of money and other assistance needed to relieve the misery of the starving people is given and the Government see to it that it is properly spent. Also will the recommendations of the central study team for affording relief be implemented forthwith so that the necessary relief work is started in all the affected areas? Even a crash programme may have to be undertaken where there are scarcity pockets. A large number of fair price shops stocked with adequate quantity of foodgrains have to be opened and run for at least three or four months. The disabled should be given gratuitous relief. Will all these measures be taken on an expeditious basis?

SHRI ANNASAIIEB P. SHINDE : I appreciate the anxiety of the hon. Member. Before I go into the other points raised by him, I would like to assure him that the Government of India will spare no efforts to help the State Government to see that all necessary relief is provided for the distressed people.

The hon. Member referred to starvation deaths. This information has not been corroborated by the State Government. But since he has mentioned it on the floor of the House, I would again ask the State Government to look into this matter.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : He has quoted figures.

SHRI D. K. PANDA : In *Prajatantra*, which is a Congress paper, this information has been appearing for the last one month.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : Orissa has been really a very unfortunate area. There was a cyclone tragedy last year when thousands of people died. The whole House sympathised with them. Thereafter the Government of India took a number of steps. As the hon. member himself mentioned, Rs. 19 crores have been released to provide relief. Recently, on the request of the State Government, a central study team also visited Orissa. They went into the problem again. They have investigated whether there is any further need to provide any assistance to the State Government. The report of the team is awaited because they visited the State only recently.

As for the food situation, there is no cause for anxiety. The Orissa Government themselves have in their stocks—I am reading from very recent information—88,000 tonnes of rice and 6,000 tonnes of wheat. As the House is aware, there is no difficulty as far as supplying foodgrains to the State Government is concerned. In fact, even yesterday we discussed this with the Chief Ministers. We have requested all the Chief Ministers, particularly the Chief Minister of Orissa, to see that the public distribution system is strengthened and all steps taken in that regard because even if we have a comfortable stock position, unless there is a well-organised network of public distribution, it will not be possible to protect the interests of the consumers by way of providing foodgrains at reasonable prices, more especially to the poorer sections so that starvation is warded off. We requested the Orissa Government to take adequate steps in this direction. After opening an adequate number of fair price shops, if the Orissa Government tell us that they want more foodgrains, it can be supplied as there is no scarcity of food in the country.

It is true there are 7 cyclone-affected districts plus certain pockets where there has been failure of rain. There is need for providing some relief because of loss of crop

etc, because the consumers will be facing difficulties. But let me repeat that we will take every care to see that all necessary help is provided to the State Government to take the necessary relief measures.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore) : Sir, the most astonishing thing is that this time also, on such a vital issue, the Minister has come forward with a very stereotyped statement and also in the reply he has given, there is nothing new. There is no specific answer to the question.

So far as West Bengal is concerned, there is a mention that in some pockets there is a scarcity condition. May I remind the Minister that only in the month of September last, there was a serious and unprecedented flood all over West Bengal and almost all the districts—Burdwan, Burdhum, Malda, Howrah, Hooghly, Midnapore, Nadia, Murshidabad, West Dinajpore, Cooch-Behar, etc—were seriously affected, and all told there was damage to the extent of Rs. 200 crores. The aftermath of it is still continuing, and no positive step was taken to see that the flood-affected people were really given substantial relief so that they can sustain themselves. That has not been done even after this so-called Ministry has come to power there.

AN HON. MEMBER : Why 'so-called' ?

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : "So-called", because after so many corrupt practices and rigging, they have come to power. Everybody knows it. (*Interruption*) The hon. Member has mentioned that there have been starvation deaths in Orissa. I agree with him. But you will find that no Government will ever come forward with a statement that there has been any starvation death. There have been deaths by continuous starvation, and when the particular person dies, the Government will say that because of some disease he has died.

Now, Malda has been mentioned. If the Minister takes the trouble of visiting some of the villages he will find that most of the labourers on land, share-croppers and poor peasants are not able to secure even one meal a day. Even if relief measure are there, they do not reach them. Physically they are so much depressed and due to continuous star-

vation they cannot even reach the place of their work. This is not only so in Malda but also in all the rural areas of Burdwan, Hooghly and Nadia he will find the same feature.

My accusation is this. Every time the Centre will say that it is the primary responsibility of the State Government to adopt the relief measures. When we approach the State Government, they say they have no funds. For the last one year there was the rule of the Centre in West Bengal and we have approached the authorities there no many occasions. Every time, stereotyped answers were given that the Centre was not giving them enough money. Even the meagre relief could not reach the rural people. In West Bengal, the Congress party and the authorities there played politics with it. Just a week before the election, bags and bags of maida and flour were sent to different places. The Congress volunteers and the Yuva Congress people travelled throughout the countryside and distributed them only on one understanding. Whether the person who received the relief required it or not was not the criterion. Whether he would vote for the Congress or not was the only promise that was to be given by the recipient. This was the feature through out the rural areas of West Bengal just prior to the election. Before that, no gratuitous relief was given even after the devastating floods for so many months. But suddenly; just before the election, gratuitous relief in the form of maida and flour was distributed only to play politics.

Then, what is the feature? The other hon. Members should know what is happening. If you read Bengali newspapers you will know. My friend Chintamani was saying that in Orissa rice was selling at Rs. 1.50. Last year in West Bengal too it was selling at Rs. 1.50; then it went up to Rs. 1.80 and now after the new Government of Shri Siddhartha Shankar Ray had assumed office, the price is Rs. 2.50 per kilo. It is higher in West Bengal than anywhere else. The hon. Minister says that there is no scarcity of rice or other foodgrains, I agree. Still people are starving. Why? Because they have no purchasing power. That is so everywhere in the rural areas, be it West Bengal or any other place. The middle-class people also suffer but the middle-class or the rich do not

starve; poor people in the rural areas, especially landless labour, always starve in these conditions.

My question is : what positive steps are the Government taking to see that the prices of foodgrains, especially rice do not go so high? Secondly, what positive steps are they contemplating so that the meagre amount of gratuitous relief are not used to serve political ends in the villages? The Centre should see that politics do not come into play in gratuitous relief and other relief matters. The pick and choose method should not be there by the Congress Government which has now come to power. It should be given on as wide a scale as possible among the rural people. I deny totally the suggestion that only in some pockets of West Bengal there are scarcity conditions. In rural areas of West Bengal people are starving; they have no money to buy. What positive steps are the Government taking to raise the purchasing power of these poorer sections? I expect the hon. Minister will give proper and satisfactory replies to my questions.

MR. SPEAKER : Members are asking more than one question inspite of my repeated requests. According to the rules they can put only one question. They should be careful about it.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : I am sorry that the hon. Member and his party cannot raise any issue, an issue relating even to distress, without bringing in politics and making wild allegations. It is for him to decide how he should behave.

As far as relief measures are concerned, despite Bangla Desh refugees and a number of other difficulties, the Government of India have upto 31.3.1972 spent Rs. 73 crores for relief in various parts of the country. If even now any difficulties arise in any part of the country, the Government of India will not spare any efforts to help the State Governments.

The hon. Member has stated that the Central Government always points out the fact that relief for national calamities has to be carried out by the State Governments. What can I do? It is a constitutional matter.

[Shri Annasaheb P. Shinde]

The hon. Member himself, while in West Bengal, speaks in a different strain, saying that the State Government should have more powers. This is the constitutional distribution of work between the States and the Centre. We are consulting the State Government, and if they feel that any additional measures have to be taken and our assistance is required, we will do everything to help them.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : What about the price rise ? The price of rice is Rs. 2.60. What are you doing about it ?

SHRI ANNAS AHEB P. SHINDE : Is a discussion of the general price rise relevant to this ? I am prepared to answer.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA : It is relevant.

SHRI ANNAS AHEB P. SHINDE : West Bengal has been one of the areas in the country which was subjected to an influx of almost six to seven million refugees. Then, there were floods and dislocation of transport. Despite all this, there was never any dislocation of supplies. The Government of India did everything to see that the rice and wheat required by the West Bengal Government were supplied. Even now there is a marginal rise all over the country, it is not confined to West Bengal alone, but the price increase in West Bengal is much lower than in other parts. But the food situation has been so comfortable during the last two weeks as a result of the expected bumper crop, that the prices of all cereals have started coming down. In West Bengal there is a wide network of fair price shops and the public distribution system. We are taking adequate steps to see that food stocks are maintained and that the public distribution system functions satisfactorily.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY (Kendrapara) : While expressing my gratefulness to you, Mr. Speaker, for admitting the motion, may I submit that the situation in Orissa should have been put on a different footing altogether, because, in the words of the President of India, the calamity that

befell this unfortunate State last year was an unprecedented tragedy of the century. Be that as it may, I would request the hon. Minister to pay some special attention to this State without politicking, because it involves human misery and this is not the time nor the forum where we can indulge in petty politicking.

SHRI D. K. PANDA : Destitutes are starving.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : Some people think it is their exclusive monopoly. There is no monopoly in serving the people.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : We are against monopoly.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : The dividing line between Central and State responsibility in meeting catastrophies and tragedies of this nature is very thin. I invite the attention of the minister to item 33 in the Concurrent List wherein he will find that supply and distribution of foodgrains is exclusively the responsibility of the Centre. Therefore, it is for the Minister of Agriculture to reconcile these two irreconcilables, the paradoxes of green revolution on the one hand and famine and starvation on the other. Therefore, he should not take the plea that it is primarily the responsibility of the State Government. It is true that it is the responsibility of the State Government, but the over-riding responsibility is that of the Centre and there should be no shirking of this responsibility on this flimsy ground.

It is true no State Government ever concedes starvation deaths. No death ever occurs due to starvation. The biological system is such that a man tries to live till the very last moment by eating something, which may be unfit for human consumption and dies on that account. Therefore, all these deaths are ascribed to gastro enteritis or diseases like that. But that does not give an excuse to the Government to take the plea that no starvation death has occurred. I want to know whether the Government of India will conduct an enquiry through their own agencies not only in Orissa but throughout India, even in States administered by

the Ruling Congress, whether such conditions are prevailing or not.

The Minister said that the central team which had visited Orissa has been working in consonance with the State Government. May I invite his attention to the fact that the central team has arrogated in certain instances to itself a position which overrides the State Government and is considered calculated bureaucratic insolence. For instance, Orissa Government asked for Rs. 2 crores for gratuitous relief, but the Central team has recommended Rs. 1 crore. What is the answer for that? The State Government wanted Rs. 5 crores for test relief against which the Central team fixed the ceiling at Rs. 1.50 crores. Though, I do not want to indulge in any controversy, it has been suggested by Mr. Panigrahi that the State Government is not spending the money which has been so liberally released by the Government of India. To set the record right, by 31st March 1972 the State Government have incurred an expenditure of Rs. 23.77 crores as against the central ceiling of Rs. 23.23 crores. This Rs. 23.23 crores includes Rs. 3 crores for flood which visited the State last year and has nothing to do with the cyclone. Therefore in a nut-shell, whereas the State Government wanted Rs. 23.77 crores, the Government of India has released only Rs. 19 crores out of which Rs. 3 crores is grant and the rest loans.

I want to know whether now the Government of India will take a compassionate view of the human misery which is doing no credit to the national government to see that immediately relief is rushed to such States, particularly Orissa, without depending upon the prejudiced views of the central team which has been visiting and arrogating to itself a kind of attitude which really does not speak well of a democratic government.

In conclusion may I ask the Government to take certain immediate steps to see that wherever the purchasing capacity is lacking, the purchasing capacity is injected into the community and foodgrains are made available at subsidised rates in those pockets where the prevailing price of rice is very high, not only in Orissa but in other States as well?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : As

far as the Government of India is concerned, we would never like to play with the misery of the people and bring in politics. It is for the hon. member and his party and others to consider whether to bring in politics into such matters. As far as central assistance is concerned, there is a well-established pattern. The pattern of Central assistance is, 75 per cent of the amount required is provided by the Central Government. Out of that 50 per cent is grant and 25 per cent is loan. The rest of the 25 per cent have to be provided from the resources of the State Government. This is the pattern applicable to the whole country. On this basis, the Central team works out the ceilings under various heads.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : That is under normal conditions.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : I am very sorry that the hon. Member has made an aspersion against the Central team. We have so much of experience of providing relief in various parts of the country and our experience is that the Central team is helpful. Their assessment is truthful and realistic and the State Governments invariably accept them, because the team goes into the question of the capacity of the State Government also. Therefore, as far as the Government of India are concerned, we will accept the recommendation of the team. Of course, if there are any specific complaints by the State Government, we are prepared to look into them.

Coming to the supply of foodgrains by fair price shops at reasonable prices...

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : At subsidised rates.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : I have already stated that it is for the State Governments to organise a network of fair price shops. In fact, my grievance against the Orissa Government is that they are not organising adequate number of fair price shops to take care of the affected people, particularly in the distress areas. As far as subsidised food is concerned, if the State Government want to provide it within the allotment of Central assistance, it can do it,