

11.01 hrs.

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

**REPORTED DAMAGE TO FOODGRAINS IN
COASTAL DISTRICTS OF ANDHRA
PRADESH**

SHRI K. SURYANARAYANA
(Eluru): I call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Reported damage to several thousands of metric tonnes of rice and paddy purchased by the Food Corporation of India from farmers and rice millers in West Godavari and other coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and also damage to imported wheat kept in open places due to hot weather followed by recent heavy rains."

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND IRRIGATION (SHRI SHAH-
NAWAZ KHAN):** Due to unprecedented and heavy procurement during the Kharif and Rabi seasons and due to the off-take from the public distribution falling because of the plentiful availability of foodgrains in the country, the stocks with the Food Corporation of India have increased substantially in the past few months. Since the covered accommodation available was not enough to store the stock, the Food Corporation has had to resort to storage of foodgrains in the open with suitable covering and have also had to resort to storing foodgrains on the runways of certain abandoned airstrips in various States.

It is reported that in Tadapalligudem where foodgrains are stored in one such abandoned airstrip, there were 60 mm of rain on the 13th and 30 mm of rain on the 16th. At this airfield, stocks were being moved from various places for being stacked on the runway with suitable dunnage.

Some of the stocks to the extent of 5000 bags of rice which were in the process of being received got wet due to the rains. Salvage operations were immediately undertaken. So far 2,000 bags have been salvaged and out of this, the total quantity found damaged is reported to be 8 quintals. Salvage operations are continuing and the balance stocks would also be salvaged soon. It is expected that the total damage out of the 5,000 bags affected may not exceed 12 to 15 quintals. The Collector, West Godavari, also visited the spot and has verified that the damage is only slight and salvage operations are proceeding properly. It has also been reported that out of 55,000 tonnes of foodgrains stored in the open under covers in various places in Krishna District about 4 tonnes were damaged due to rain.

Every effort will be made to see that the stocks which are kept in the open are suitably protected.

SHRI K. SURYANARAYANA: Mr Speaker, Sir, while thanking the Hon. Minister for his statement on my call attention motion, I would like to make a few more observations in this regard.

I am not fully convinced that no serious damage has been caused to the stored foodgrains. The authorities always deny but the facts are otherwise. It happened a number of times in the past I have before me a big bunch of press clippings regarding the past incidents of damage to foodgrains in storage and in transit. I do not want to take the time of the House in quoting from these reports. Some time back nearly 12,250 million tonnes of food grains were damaged by rain in open wagons during 1967-68 and 1969 according to the figures available with the Government.

At the outset, let me make it clear that I have raised this subject in the House not as a complaint against any officials of the Food Ministry or the

[Shri K. Suryanarayana]

Food Corporation of India. We are aware of the big task undertaken by the FCI in procuring large quantities of paddy and rice. This has helped the farmers in a critical situation caused by the falling paddy prices in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere. The agriculturists are grateful to the Government for this. But, we cannot shut our eyes to the instances of wastage and losses.

Let me briefly tell you what happened in my district of West Godavari. I am told that the FCI has procured, till now, about 1,90,000 tonnes of rice and over 16,000 tonnes of paddy in the district. After despatches to the other States, about 1,20,000 tonnes of rice are held in stock, either in covered godowns or in the open under cap storage. It is also learnt that the entire stock of paddy and about 14,000 tonnes of wheat, imported through Madras Port, are lying in the open. I fail to understand why such huge quantity of wheat has been brought to a surplus district like West Godavari where there is no demand for wheat and where there is no sufficient godown capacity even to store the procured paddy and rice in the district.

The paddy and wheat as well as a large quantity of rice, are kept in the open at six places in West Godavari District. During my visit to my constituency on May 15 and 16, farmers and public men told me that these stocks kept in the open are liable to be damaged to the extent of 30 per cent due to the excessive heat, despite the polythene covers. On the top of it, the unusually heavy rain on May 13 and 16 in the area has aggravated the situation. Accompanied by the District Manager of the FCI, I visited one of the storage areas i.e., Tadepalligudem on May 16.

I found that a large number of paddy bags have been kept in the open exposed to sun and rain for want of godown in 6 places. I had

not tried to check on the exact quantity reportedly damaged or the position in the other five storage areas as there were heavy rains.

I do not want to blame the local officials for the loss or damage. They have taken necessary precautions within their capacity. But the question is this. Should we allow such situations to arise at all? When we know about the impending monsoon cannot we think of better methods for storage to meet contingencies like this? I hope the Food Ministry would give serious attention to this problem and devise methods to meet such situations.

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not read.

SHRI K. SURYANARAYANA: Only one sentence, Sir. I do not want to mislead the Government or mislead the House. Please allow me, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: By your reading, the Minister may not be able to follow you. Please do not read it.

SHRI K. SURYANARAYANA: I am just concluding. In our villages we have big houses, cattle sheds and paddy godowns unused at present. These can be profitably utilised.

The Planning Commission has already allotted Rs. 21.5 crores to FCI for setting up warehousing facilities in 1976-77. A crash programme for construction of warehouses should be taken up immediately. I would also request the Minister to depute some senior officials and food technologists to enquire into the nature and extent of damage to foodgrains in West Godavari and other coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh and submit a report to Government. They can also report on the condition of the damaged foodgrains and their suitability for human consumption. This is necessary to prevent cases of epilepsy due to grain contamination, as happened in some U.P. districts recently.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: I am grateful to Shri Suryanarayana ji for bringing this matter before the House and drawing the pointed attention of the House to the very serious problem of storage. This year we have been lucky to have had kharif crop which has been unprecedented so far. The rabi crop is equally good. Procurement target for kharif crop has already been exceeded. We hope to exceed procurement target for rabi crop also. As a result of this we find that covered storage space is rather limited. We have been during the last few years storing foodgrains in the open without much loss. We have developed expertise of covering foodgrains with polythene bags and tarpaulins and these have saved the foodgrains and these have not caused any substantial loss in open storage. This year, I am afraid, we will have to continue the practice of storing foodgrains in the open. I entirely agree with Suryanarayana ji that we should take up construction of foodgrain godowns. We are doing that. We are also encouraging private enterprise to set up godowns so that we can hire those godowns also.

At present the storage availability with FCI is 12.42 million tonnes. That is a very substantial storage capacity which is both open and covered.

We hope that we will be able to meet the exigency of the situation. Only when there is a heavy downpour, some losses are bound to occur. But the loss, as I said, was due to the downpour in Tadepalligudem and it was only marginal and the assessed damage is only 12 to 15 bags.

We are grateful to him for making this suggestion and we shall take full advantage of it. But, I do not wish to create any alarm or any panic because the paper that reported the loss of one crore of rupees, the very next day had corrected that statement and it said that the loss had been only marginal.

SHRI K. SURYANARAYANA: Sir, my information is that the loss may run into a crore of rupees.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: As I said in my statement, the total tonnage may not be more than four.

SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY (Nizamabad): Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Shah Nawaz Khan usually makes a very correct statement. But, this time he has made an underestimation of the losses that have been suffered by the F.C.I.

Now, the Minister says that there was an unprecedented levy procurement. I want to know from him the plan for foodgrains production, the plan for the procurement of foodgrains and the plan for storing them. It has not happened in one day: It is a continuous thing. Why has the Ministry failed to make adequate godown availability for storing these foodgrains?

The foodgrains in our country have touched the figure of 116 million tonnes. The Government are trying to achieve this figure during the last several years. But, they have not created the godowns capacity. So, I want to know from the hon. Minister what has been done in this regard. Moreover, now-a-days, there is a terror created among the kisans that if anybody keeps the foodgrains beyond a certain limit, he will have to declare them. There is a rule in Andhra Pradesh. I do not know whether it is so everywhere. In Andhra, if a kisan has 100 quintals of foodgrains with him, he has to declare it to the Government. If he keeps more than this limit, the whole of the grains is confiscated. This has happened in a village where most of the people are not aware of the law and most of them have stocks with them exceeding the prescribed limit which were brought from the field the previous night. The next morning, the vigilance inspector goes there and seizes the grains under the present law. If the Government

[Shri M. Ram Gopal Reddy]

relax, that rule at least during the bumper period, some of these kisans can hold back the paddy in their godowns.

There are many godowns on the seashore which were owned by the private people which were used for the storing of smuggled goods. I have made repeated request to the Government several times in this House to acquire those godowns and store the imported wheat and other things there. Government has not done that. I now request the Minister to see that all such godowns are acquired and suitable storage capacity is created.

It is a strange phenomenon that when they procure more the FCI suffers from more losses and they can't make any profit. Now, the Minister says that the loss is very marginal. On some other day he will come and say that after all it is only 2 or 3 per cent loss in storage. This will run into several crores of rupees. The rats have eaten away the whole thing and sometimes the rats in human form have eaten away the whole thing! Like that he will go on making a statement. I want to know from him—he said that the loss was only about four or five tons—whether the figure of loss given by him in Tadepallegudem and other places on account of recent rains is correct and whether the quality of grains has deteriorated as a result of that or not.

As pointed out by my colleague, Shri Suryanarayana, I want that some senior officers from the Ministry of Agriculture should visit these places immediately and assess the actual losses. There is no use hiding the losses. In some form or other the losses would be shown in the end at a future date. Of course, the FCI officials in my State are doing a very good job. It is of course beyond their capacity. Where should they store? Should they not stop procurement for some time so that the

farmers may keep the foodgrains for some time in their houses? What is the hurry in procurement? If the Government advances some money to the kisans, the kisans may store the foodgrains in their houses for some time and hand over the same to the Government in good form. I may also point out that the shortage in the houses of the kisans is merely 1 per cent. May I also know what is the percentage of shortage in the godowns of the Food Corporation of India?

MR. SPEAKER: I think the Minister has come from some Conference and has forgotten to take off the badge. Preferably it should be removed.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA (Serampore): Is it permissible?

MR. SEAKER: No. He has forgotten to leave it behind.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: Sir, I am sorry.

The hon. Member has said that the farmers are asked to declare their stocks. I do not see any difficulty in the growers declaring their stocks. If they have more than what is prescribed by the State, all that is required is that they should declare it.

SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY: Say one evening the farmer brings paddy from his field and the next morning any vigilance inspector can go and seize it saying that he has not declared his stocks.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: I do not think any such harassment is caused to the farmers. If the hon. Member would bring any specific instance to my instance, I will take up the same with the State Government.

Sir, we are hiring all private godowns that are available and we are acquiring other godowns that might be lying vacant. We are making full use of it.

श्री विभूति मिश्र : (मोतीहारी) :
अनाज को स्टोर करने के लिए स्कूल,
कालेज और दूसरे इन्स्टीट्यूशन्स लेंगे, इसके
बारे में मैं श्री जगजीवन राम जी ने पटना
में एलान किया है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ये तो खुले गोडा-
ऊन्स की बात कर रहे हैं।

श्री विभूति मिश्र : उन्होंने कहा है
कि स्टोरेज कैपेसिटी कम है, इस लिए
हम स्कूल और कालेजों की बिल्डिंगें लेंगे।
कितने स्कूलों और कालेजों को अभी तक
लिया गया है, इसके बारे में ये बताएं।

**SHRI NASINGH NARAIN PAN-
DEY (Gorakhpur):** Sir, this is
happening in all the States.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: Sir,
we are building godowns as fast as
possible but it takes about six to eight
months to put up a storage godown.
We have taken note of the fact
that there is a steep rise in pro-
duction and we must keep pace
with the construction of godowns.
Our experience in the past four to five
years has shown that we can safely
store foodgrains in the open provided
it is suitably covered with tarpaulin
and polythene.

MR. SPEAKER: Can you store in
the open in the heavy rainfall area
like Goa?

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: In
Maharashtra we can store. Even in
Northern India they stored well.

MR. SPEAKER: It is a very happy
development.

SHRI SHAHNAWAZ KHAN: Fur-
ther, sir, when the farmers bring their
produce for sale to the Food Corpora-
tion of India, we cannot tell them
to go back. We are committed that
whatever amount of foodgrains the
farmers would like to sell, the Food
Corporation of India will purchase the
same and we cannot tell them to go
back.

11.26 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. INDOCANADIAN NUCLEAR DISCUSSIONS

**THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS (SHRI YESHWANTRAO
CHAVAN):** On 18th May, 1976 the
Canadian Secretary of State for Exter-
nal Affairs informed me through his
High Commissioner in Delhi of
Canada's decision that further nuclear
co-operation with India was not possi-
ble. His message states *inter alia* that,
in view of Canada's policy to have nu-
clear cooperation only with countries
which had renounced the use of Cana-
dian supplied materials equipment and
technology for nuclear explosions,
further co-operation with India would
have to be compatible with this policy
and since this Canadian requirement
was not acceptable to India, a settle-
ment on any other basis was not pos-
sible. The Secretary of State made a
similar but more detailed statement in
the Canadian House of Commons.

As the House is aware, Indo-Can-
adian discussions have been going on
for two years to resolve differences on
nuclear matters stemming from
Canada's decision to suspend nuclear
co-operation with India after 18th May,
1974. The final round of talks was
held in New Delhi in March this year.
After three days of detailed negotia-
tions, an agreement was reached on
differences on nuclear matters. It was
also agreed that after this draft Agree-
ment has been approved by the two
Governments, Indo-Canadian nuclear
co-operation will be resumed and re-
lations between the two countries res-
tored to their traditional level.

The Government of India cannot but
regret Canada's decision to terminate
nuclear co-operation and turn down
the agreement negotiated and initialled
by its own representatives in the
March discussions. We are indeed
disappointed that, after two years of
strenuous negotiations, when a detail-
ed understanding had been reached,
the Canadian Government should have
unilaterally taken the step to termi-
nate nuclear co-operation which form-
ed an integral part of the Nuclear Co-
operation Agreements of 1963 and 1966.