

12.35 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**ALLEGED FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA TO SUPPLY QUOTA OF RICE TO KERALA**

Shrimati Suseela Gopalan (Ambalapuzha) Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon

"Failure of the Government of India to fulfil its commitment of even the reduced quota of rice to Kerala resulting in virtual breakdown of rationing system there"

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Jagjivan Ram) Sir, the grave food situation that the country is facing at present specially the critical rice position was discussed at the Chief Ministers' Conference held at New Delhi on 7th July 1967. The Kerala Chief Minister who attended this Conference was informed of the fact that it may not be possible for the Government of India to supply more than 44,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala in July. This promised quota of 44,000 tonnes included 35,000 tonnes to be supplied by the Andhra Pradesh Government.

Andhra Pradesh Government has, however, recently indicated that they have outstanding commitments for supply of rice to West Bengal and Maharashtra amounting to a little over 6,000 tonnes and that they would be able to send to Kerala only 28,700 tonnes of rice during July. About 4,500 tonnes of rice were also due from Madras, representing the outstanding balance of June allocation from that State to Kerala. The Chief Minister Madras, was also requested to supply another 5,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala during July in exchange for an equal quantity of wheat products to be supplied to Madras. He, however, expressed his inability to supply any

more rice to Kerala. In order to make up the possible shortfall in supplies from Andhra Pradesh, efforts were made to find one more rice steamer for Kerala and it has been possible with the good offices of the Government of Ceylon to divert to Cochin a ship which was making some Thailand rice to that country. This ship carrying 10,000 tonnes is expected to reach Cochin by the end of this month.

Unfortunately, due to difficulties in availability of rice and procurement in Andhra Pradesh, movements from there to Kerala have not been as good as was hoped. Movement from Madras also has been quite slow. Till the 18th of this month a total of about 15,470 tonnes have been dispatched to Kerala from Andhra Pradesh and Madras. One ship carrying about 7,500 tonnes of rice has reached Cochin. Both Andhra Pradesh and Madras have been requested to speed up the movements.

Arrangements have been made to supply sufficient wheat to Kerala to make up for the shortfall in the supply of rice. Government of India are aware of the difficulties felt by the people of Kerala because of the shortfall in the supply of rice but are doing their best in the matter. While inconvenience is no doubt being felt due to shortage in the supply of rice, the provision of additional wheat ensures that alternative foodgrains are available under the rationing system in Kerala.

Shrimati Suseela Gopalan I think the Minister will remember that on the 30th May when the members of the House were passing through anxious moments he made a promise in the House which reads as follows: within ten days you can see the improvement in the situation prevailing in Kerala. Now not ten days but two months have passed. What is the position today? Schools and colleges have been closed down, for want of food, and a very explosive situation prevails in Kerala. Last month, in spite

[Shrimati Suseela Gopalan]

of all the promises, you have given only 14,000 tons. This month up to date the supply is only 23,000 though you promised 44,000 tons of rice to Kerala. Only promises are given and even those assurances given on the floor of the House are not fulfilled. I want to know from the Food Minister whether the assurance given to Kerala to supply rice will be fulfilled and whether the Centre will rush supplies to Kerala to ease the explosive situation that prevails there.

Shri Jagjiwan Ram: As I have said, in view of the shortfall in the despatches from Andhra, we made a special effort to see whether some of the ships loaded for other countries can be diverted. The Ceylon Government has been very helpful in this matter and so we are able to divert one ship. Day before yesterday the Agriculture Minister of Kerala was here and he met me. I have been requesting the Chief Minister of Madras to give some loan of rice to Kerala. The Agriculture Minister of Kerala told me that he was going to meet him personally in Madras. Then I sent a message to the Chief Minister of Madras that the Agriculture Minister of Kerala is going to see him and that I will be grateful if he could ensure that at least 5,000 tons of rice is rushed to Kerala. I have been keeping in touch with the Chief Minister of Andhra also to expedite the despatches from Andhra. He has promised that in spite of the difficulties that they have at present, during these few days he will try to increase the despatches from Andhra.

Shri E. K. Nayanar (Palghat): The Minister's statement itself says that this is a lean month because of the rainy season in Kerala, that out of the 44,000 tons promised 35,000 tons were to be supplied by Andhra Government, that according to the information received from the Andhra Government only 28,700 tons out of the 35,000 tons had been sent up to July. Then, though Kerala was

assured that 5,000 tons would be supplied by Madras, the Madras Government have expressed their inability to supply any more rice to Kerala.

Then, in his own statement he admits that Thailand rice to Ceylon has been diverted to Cochin. It will reach there only at the end of this month. That means that the assurances are only on paper and there is no actual allotment of rice; it is only in the sea of assurances.

When there was Governor's rule under Shri A. P. Jain in 1964 and last November Government agreed that every month 75,000 tonnes will be allotted from the Centre to Kerala. Even on the floor of this House on May 31 last the Minister assured, "Hereafter we will supply 75,000 tonnes to Kerala". But at the end of this month, which is a lean month—it is rainy season in Kerala—according to his statement, 10,000 tonnes will reach Kerala. Then the harvest season will begin and there will be no urgency.

In my opinion it is only discrimination. It was admitted on the floor of this House that in the six months from December to May Government did not allot 80,000 tonnes and during May and June Government gave the assurance which has already been refuted. There was no supply to Kerala. Now Government says that 10,000 tonnes of rice will reach there as the end of this month. For three, four or five days in a week not an ounce of rice is supplied at the ration shops. At the same time, Government says here that they have instructed and informed Madras to send 5,000 tonnes or that Thailand must send 2,000 tonnes. This is political discrimination. We cannot endure this.

Schools and colleges are closed in Kerala due to scarcity of food for the last three days. In three or four districts people have come into the streets, obstructed traffic and taken away whatever they could get. One

island workers struck work in Quilon. This is a very explosive position in Kerala. The Food Minister has not the heart to see that the people of Kerala are suffering for want of an ounce of rice. Does our Minister want that the people must agitate against the Government for getting rice? This is political discrimination.

If the Government thinks about the people of Kerala, Government can give some rice or wheat or anything to eat immediately. This statement is nothing to the people of Kerala. We want to know whether the Government will give 5,000 tonnes or 10,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala within two or three days

Mr Speaker: Shri Vasudevan Nair

An hon. Member: The hon. Minister has not answered the question

Shri E. K. Nayanar: There are reports of strikes. All Malayalam papers are full of strike reports

Mr. Speaker: Naturally, they are agitated because there is scarcity condition. All that they want is that within the coming two or three days at least 5,000 to 6,000 tonnes of food should be rushed there

Shri E. K. Nayanar: 10,000 tonnes will come only at the end of this month. We want it at present.

Shri Jagjitwan Ram: All that he has stated is that there has been short supply. When we discussed this question about the supply of rice the Chief Minister of Kerala was present. In view of the difficulties I wanted to know in the Chief Ministers' Conference itself as to what will be the internal availability of rice. The Chief Minister of Andhra had said there that during this month he would not be able to give more than 35,000 tonnes. The whole programme of supply of 44,000 or 45,000 tonnes of rice to Kerala was based on that, 35,000 tonnes from Andhra, one or two

thousand tonnes from Madras and the rest from imported rice.

When I noticed that despatches from Andhra have not been according to expectations, we took action to locate whether some loaded ship was available from any country and whether we can request that country to divert that ship to Kerala. We succeeded in that. The ship was to depart from Thailand on the 18th but, unfortunately, it departed from Thailand only on the 23rd.

As I have said, we are making our efforts in the matter. But the House would appreciate that there is no stock with the Centre that we can rush in there. We have to approach one or two State Governments which are surplus in rice. Andhra Government has explained their own difficulties. I have been trying to request Chief Minister of Andhra—I have done that even today—if he can rush in something during the course of the next two or three days so that, if not more, we can get from Andhra at least 24,000 tonnes during the course of this month.

I have myself admitted that Kerala is facing great difficulty and the people, naturally, feel agitated over that. I can assure the House that there is no question of political discrimination in the supply of rice. The position is difficult for other States also in the Supply of rice, to West Bengal or to Jammu and Kashmir. The same difficulty is being felt by others also. There is no question of any political discrimination in this matter.

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Peermade): Sir, you may kindly bear with us a little because the statement of the hon. Minister poses serious problems. The hon. Minister, of course, tries to express pious sentiments and we know pious sentiments will not solve the problem of hunger.

You, Sir, also intervened when we, Members from Kerala, decided to resort to some drastic step in the month-

[Shri Vasudevan Nair]

of May The hon Food Minister at that time told us that we should wait for ten days and watch his performance The Prime Minister herself intervened and appealed to us that the Government of India will do its best and that we should wait and see Even after that when he appealed to us that we should wait for ten days what happened in June? He promised that 77 000 tonnes of rice would be sent in June There again the story is that the Government of India could not fulfil that commitment Now we have to appeal to the House we have to appeal to the country because all these statements and pious sentiments expressed by the hon Minister do not at all solve the problem Today we are in need of 75 000 tonnes of rice of a quantity of 160 grams of rice has to be distributed the barest minimum for a human being per day They promised 44 000 tonnes and today it is 24 000 tonnes and they have sent 23,000 tonnes Where 75 000 tonnes are needed they claim that they have sent 23 000 tonnes You can understand why the boys are out of schools and colleges In tens of thousands they have come out of schools and colleges The colleges are closed the schools are closed

Now this statement poses this problem He says "I ask Andhra Andhra is failing I ask Madras Madras is failing I ask other countries they are failing I have no stock here with me I don't find rice So you have to starve" Sir Kerala was a part of the southern food zone You were the Chief Minister of Andhra at that time In September 1964 the southern zone was scrapped without consulting the State of Kerala Of course Andhra Government might have had their own reasons, Madras Government might have had their own reasons At that time the Government of India stepped in and came forward to say that they would take the responsibility of supplying 75 000 tonnes of rice to Kerala every month, 50 per cent of

our requirement, because even from our grandfathers' time we used to get 50 per cent of our requirement of rice from outside, from somewhere

Now, they are miserably failing in that for the last six months It is not a story of one month For the last six months we are not getting even one third of our ration What are we to do? Parliament has to say something about it the Government of India has to say something about it We do not know what to do That is the position in which we are today I should like to know whether the Government of India is taking the sole responsibility of supplying the promised quota to Kerala or whether they are always going to plead with us and tell us how they have appealed how they have sent telegrams how they have sent emissaries to other States and other countries and how they are failing in that We are not concerned with these stories We are not concerned with these tales We want the Government of India to be responsible Otherwise what should Kerala do? Should Kerala go in search of rice? We have to pose that question today though we did not want to pose that question all these days If a Central authority is failing miserably then the State in India will have to look after its own interest I have come to that pass? That is why I say that this statement poses a very serious problem This statement of the hon Minister puts one State Government against another State Government As a result of this why should we have to quarrel with Andhra Pradesh or with Madras? That is the sum and substance of this statement We are not interested in that quarrel We are only interested in seeing that the Ministers in the Government of India sitting here if they have formed a single State zone and cordoned off a 50 per cent deficit State so that we cannot go to any other part and purchase rice should supply us those 75 000 tonnes Are they prepared to undertake that responsibility? Are they going to send their emissaries if

net to Andhra Pradesh, to Burma, to Thailand and to any country in the world so that in this lean season our people may not have to starve? You must be familiar with the term 'Pankajakadam,' it is a notorious month, this month and the next month would be very difficult months; Onam is also coming. Every year, during Onam festival we used to get more rice. But now we are not getting even one-third and our children are fainting in the schools. This is the misery of the situation. I want the hon. Minister to understand his responsibility and not shift it on to Shri Brahmananda Reddy or to Shri Annadurai. Let him take the responsibility and tell us whether he is going to do his maximum to give 75,000 tonnes to Kerala.

Shri Jagjwan Ram: I have not much to add to what I have said. Of course, we are doing our maximum in this matter.

Shri Jagjwan Ram: He always says that.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: He always says that.

Shri Jagjwan Ram: Of course, I always say that, and I always try.

श्री जगज्वल राम (बंगलोर)
श्री वसुदेवन नायर ने स्टूडेंट्स को
बताने के लिए कहा है कि वे अपने बच्चे को
हिलाते हैं।

Shri Vasudevan Nair: That does not satisfy anybody. Let him advise us what we should do.

Shri E. K. Nayanar: Let him please advise us whether we should starve or else what we should do.

Shri Jagjwan Ram: As I have stated not only today but on previous occasions also, and at the earliest opportunity I had taken the House into confidence to convey to the House not only by myself but also through the report of the Food Ministry the situation in the country and in the world is very serious in regard to rice. In fact, it is true that we have not been able to supply not only to Kerala but

to Bengal and other States which are predominantly rice-eating, the full quantity of rice that was allotted; though we have been making the best efforts in that direction, yet it is a fact that we have not succeeded in giving the full allocation to any of these States which are rice-consuming and where the commitment was there to supply it.

I can assure Shri Vasudevan Nair that we shall make our best efforts, but at the same time, I may add that in spite of our best efforts it might not be possible, and that has been the case last month and also this month, to fulfil the quantity that we had reasonable expectation of despatching to Kerala. In that case, the only alternative that I can place before the House will be that whatever is the shortfall in rice will be made good by wheat. That is the only thing that I can say. But I can assure my hon. friend that we, that is the Prime Minister, myself and the officials in the Food Ministry have been making frantic efforts to see how far we can fulfil the commitment that we have.

Shri Dhireswar Kalita (Gauhati): On a point of information....

Mr. Speaker: We are dealing with a calling-attention-notice. The hon. Member cannot get up like that and start putting a question.

Shri Dhireswar Kalita: I only rose on a point of information....

Mr. Speaker: He cannot rise like that on a point of information also.

Shri Dhireswar Kalita: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: He cannot rise like that even on a point of order. On a calling-attention-notice; I have to call only the names which appear in the list. I cannot call others. Now, Shri Viswanatha Menon.

Shri Viswanatha Menon (Ernakulam): From the statement of the Food

[Shri Viswanatha Menon]

Minister, it appears, although he says and feels that the situation is grave and all that, he does not at all take it to be serious. According to him, it is only inconvenient according to us, the situation is desperate. We are really praying that you must give us some food, otherwise, the people of Kerala starve. You cannot do political vendetta against us, because we, the people of Kerala, have voted the Congress down. Do not do that at this stage. By such action, you are not going to win over the people of Kerala. At least treat them fairly and give them some food. From the statement, it appears to me that he is not feeling that seriousness. Instead he is playing politics with the situation. Let him go to Kerala and see with his own eyes. Everywhere people are queuing before ration shops but there is nothing in the ration shops except tapioca.

The situation is very grave. The Minister is talking about what Andhra has done, what Madras has done and what has been done in the case of West Bengal and so on. He is trying to play politics. By this his party is not going to get a single vote there.

My question to the hon. Minister is this: Is he prepared to go to Kerala and pacify the people there? Is he prepared to take up the responsibility to feed the people of Kerala? Without doing that it is no use issuing statements in the unconditioned Parliament Chamber that the people of Kerala are happy and all that. It is not a question of inconvenience, it is a question of survival for us. So I again ask him, is he prepared to go over to Kerala and pacify the people and give them food?

Shri Jagjivan Ram: It pains me to learn that politics is there. On the question of food, there should be no politics. It is pure and simple a question of food. Whether the people there have voted pro-Congress or anti-Congress, whether it is convenient or

inconvenient, that is not at all the question. There is no question of looking at the problem that way.

Shri Viswanatha Menon: You are not realising that.

Shri Jyotirmoy Basu (Diamond Harbour): Is he prepared to go to Kerala and address a meeting and state what are the measures he is taking to supply them food?

Mr. Speaker: I know members from other States are also concerned. But I have been allowing only Members from Kerala in this.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: My effort is to seek food for Kerala. If my going to Kerala will help the situation, I have not the slightest hesitation in going there. (Interruptions)

Shri A. Sreedharan (Badagara): You issue a statement that you are responsible for starvation. You need not go there.

Shri C. Janardhanan (Trichur): It has become the routine to feed the people of Kerala with empty promises instead of food. Is it the opinion of the Government that they have done everything possible and cannot do anything more and that if the Kerala Government want to feed their own people it is their internal problem, and if they want to do that, they can get food from inside or outside India anywhere they like?

An hon. Member: Give a categorical answer.

Shri Jagjivan Ram: No, that is not the position. I have already stated in the House that the responsibility for food is a joint responsibility of the Central Government and the State Government. I have never shirked that responsibility. I reiterate it.

Shri V. Krishnamoorthi (Cuddalore): I protest against the hon. Minister's accusation that the Madras Government have failed in the matter. You must give me an opportunity to refute it.

Mr. Speaker: No, no. I am on my legs. Everybody understands the difficulties of Kerala. The food problem is very serious, very acute. The hon. Members also came to me and represented to me about this matter. Naturally, I am sure the Minister will also take whatever steps are possible. I do not know myself, they are also not aware of it. The promised quota apart, something must be done immediately, that is why they represented. I am sure the Government of India and the Minister will do something, whatever is possible, maize, wheat or something I am sure will be rushed there, so that the people will be helped immediately.

Dr. Ranen Sen (Barasat): The Kerala members said before, now both Kerala and West Bengal members will do it. Instead of giving food to West Bengal and Kerala, he is giving food for thinking only. (Interruptions).

Shri Jyotirmoy Basu (Diamond Harbour): He is a very good salesman of promises

12.56 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

NOTIFICATION UNDER INSURANCE ACT

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Shri K. C. Pant): I beg to lay on the table a copy of Notification No. SO 2246 published in Gazette of India, dated the 8th July, 1967, exempting Boda Bros. Private Limited from operation of section 2C of the Insurance Act, 1938, under subsection (2) of section 2C of the said Act. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1152/67].

12.57 hrs.

REPORT OF CENTRAL WAGE BOARD FOR COAL MINING INDUSTRY

The Minister of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (Shri Nathi): I place on the Table of the House

copy of Government Resolution dated 21st July, 1967 on the Recommendations of the Central Wage Board for the Coal Mining Industry, which will come into effect from the 15th August, 1967. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-1153/67]

The Resolution contains a summary of the Board's recommendations on the matters referred to it for report and Government's decisions on these recommendations. The recommendations on several issues were not unanimous and minutes of dissent by Members were appended to the Report. Questions connected with the total financial implications of the wage increase etc recommended by the Board had also to be examined. I had discussions with employers' and workers' representatives regarding measures for the smooth implementation of the recommendations as accepted by the Government. I am glad to notice appreciation by both sides of each other's difficulties. Both sides have desired further discussion for the same purpose. I propose to initiate such bipartite discussions shortly. I hope that these discussions will assist in the smooth implementation of the recommendations in an amicable and peaceful atmosphere in the coal industry.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): The hon. Minister has made a statement regarding the wage board for the coal mining industry. I invite your kind attention to a news item which has come out in the newspapers, especially the Times of India and others, regarding the integrated plan to freeze wages..

Mr. Speaker: May I know how it arises out of this?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I am not talking of the adjournment motion. This is implementation of the wage board award.

Mr. Speaker: Whatever it is, how does it arise?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: It does arise,