

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES

FIRST REPORT

Pandit Thakar Das Bhargava: I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Government Assurances.

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

TWENTY-FOURTH REPORT

Shri B. G. Mehta (Gohilwad): I beg to present the Twenty-fourth Report of the Estimates Committee on the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research on "Administration (Secretariat), Grants-in-aid, Scholarships and Miscellaneous."

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

FOOD SITUATION IN WEST BENGAL AND MEASURES PROPOSED TO BE TAKEN IN CONNECTION THEREWITH

Shrimati Ila Palchoudhuri (Nabadwip): Under Rule 197 I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Food and Agriculture to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

"The food situation in West Bengal and the measures proposed to be taken in connection therewith".

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): I visited Calcutta on 28th April, 1958 and held discussions there with the Chief Minister and Food Minister of West

Bengal on the food situation in that State.

The prices of rice at Calcutta had fallen by about Rs. 2 per maund during the past few weeks. Before the withdrawal of restrictions on inter-district movements, the prices of rice and paddy were ruling high in the deficit districts and important consuming centres like Calcutta. Since the withdrawal of those restrictions, prices in the deficit districts and consuming centres had started declining, but even so, the prices in the Northern districts of West Dinajpur, Malda, Jalpaiguri Cooch Behar and Darjeeling were still ruling high. Efforts to keep the prices under check have to be continued, and the most practicable way of doing so is to continue the distribution of foodgrains on a substantial scale through the fair price shops, more fair price shops being opened as and when necessary.

The final estimate of rice production reveals a shortfall of about 4 lakh tons, and the total shortage may be of the order of 7 to 8 lakh tons. It is not possible to make good this deficit wholly by supplying rice, and it is proposed to cover the gap by supplying rice as well as wheat. The Centre has already expressed its willingness to supply between 5 and 6 lakh tons of wheat during the current year. If the State Government desire to have a larger quantity of wheat for distribution in the State during the year, the Governments of India are prepared to make an even larger quantity available for the purpose. As regards rice, the State Government have already procured about 50,000 tons from within the State and they expect to procure an additional quantity of 25,000 tons. In addition, the Government of India have agreed to supply a total quantity of 1,75,000 tons of rice during the year 1958. Considering the supplies which should be available in the open market and the supplies which the Centre has already agreed to give, it would be reasonable to take the