

श्री काशीराम गुप्त : पुरानी मशीनरी होना भा शामिल है क्या ?

श्री शफी कुरेशी : जी हाँ ।

श्री किशन पटनायक : महाराष्ट्र में जितनी मशीनें मिली हैं उन पर करीब 6 हजार रुपये लगा है और हमेशा कुछ न कुछ खामियां इनमें मिलती हैं, तो मैं मन्त्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या उन्होंने कोई इसका मूल्यांकन किया है और इस नतीजे पर पहुंचे हैं कि इनमें जो असल समस्या है ज्यादातर मिलों के बारे में वह मशीनरी की है। यह सब मशीनरी पुराने ढंग की है और नयी मशीनरी की जरूरत है और इसलिए इधर उधर कोई मदद दे देना लाख दो लाख रुपये की, उससे कुछ नहीं होगा। कुछ रुपये खर्च करके इन को बिल्कुल नयी बनाइए और राष्ट्रीयकरण करने की बात सोचिए क्योंकि सरकार को इतना पैसा खर्च करना पड़ेगा।

श्री शफी कुरेशी : यह तजवीज है। इस पर गौर किया जायगा।

श्री किशन पटनायक : हमने पूछा अग्र्यक्ष महोदय, क्या मन्त्री महोदय को यह जानकारी है आलरेडो..... (व्यवधान)

11.28 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED DEPLETION OF RICE STOCK IN KERALA AND PROPOSED CUT IN RICE RATION

Shri A. V. Raghavan (Badagara): 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:

"The reported depletion of rice stock in Kerala and the proposed cut in the rice ration."

The Minister of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Cooperation (Shri C. Subramaniam): It is a fact that the stocks of rice available with the Government for distribution through informal rationing that is in force in Kerala have

become depleted. This is the leanest period for the rice crop season and stocks of rice available with Government of India have fallen to a low level all over the country and not in Kerala alone. As the House is aware, we had a shortfall of 8.4 million tonnes of rice. We have stepped up our imports of rice to the maximum extent possible. It is expected that with the steady arrivals of the rice that has been purchased abroad and with the releases from the stocks from the surplus States, it will be possible to keep the distribution system going till the situation improves with the harvesting of the new rice crop. The Government is watching the position very carefully and is doing every thing possible to maintain supplies to the State. There is no proposal for any immediate cut in the rice ration in Kerala.

Shri A. V. Raghavan: May I know what is the quantity of rice required this month and what is the present stock position in the State?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Generally I do not give the stock position. But we have adequate rice to meet the situation for distribution during September.

Shri Kappen (Muvattupuzha): Are Government aware that many families in Kerala today do without a meal a day and the price of rice in many parts of the State ranges from Rs. 2.80 to Rs. 3.00 and even at that price rice is not available, while in the neighbouring State of Madras the price is much lower? What steps are Government taking to rush rice to the State and also...

Mr. Speaker: Not so many questions.

Shri Kappen: Is it also a fact that the shortage of rice is due to corrupt practices in some of the checkpoints? What steps are Government taking to remedy this situation?

Shri C. Subramaniam: As far as the distribution is concerned, it is only in Kerala State that every individual is assured of a supply of rice and wheat; it happens in no other State, and it is only with regard to the extra quantities available that some people purchase in the open market. Even with regard to the open market price, prices in Madras have also shot up; if anything, in my own district adjacent to Kerala,

[Shri C. Subramaniam] it is much more than in Kerala. This is bound to be because this is the leanest season, the pre-harvest season. The harvest is coming in Kerala just now and also in October. As a matter of fact, during the last two weeks there is a significant drop in the open market price in Kerala.

Shri P. Kunhan (Palghat): Is it not a fact that all sections of people have put forward a persistent demand that they must be supplied 180 gms. of rice? What is the reaction of Government to that demand?

Shri C. Subramaniam: At present, we cannot consider any increase. It is with great difficulty that we will be able to maintain even the present level.

Shri A. K. Gopalan (Kasergod): He has said in his statement that the stocks of rice available with Government have become depleted. He also stated that it is possible to keep the distribution system going till the situation improves with the harvesting of the new paddy crop and also with stocks available from the surplus States. With regard to availability from surplus States, is it a fact that the availability was much less than the target? Also as regards the harvesting of the new paddy crop, is it true that due to a bad harvest, there is a shortage? If so, what steps are Government taking to avoid an immediate cut in the rice ration?

Shri C. Subramaniam: Unfortunately, less year even in the so-called surplus states, the production was very much less than before. Therefore, they are not in a position to supply as much as we expected from them. In spite of that, I have given an assurance that it would be possible to keep the distribution system going by imports and also reliance on whatever quantities we are able to get from surplus States. They are also coming to our help; in spite of difficulties in their own States, they are giving us some quantities for distribution in Kerala.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri (Berhampur): The Minister stated that it would be possible because of imports and also supplies available from surplus States to keep the distribution system as it is going. But has he taken into consideration the fact

that although this is the lean season, it has always been the complaint in Kerala that the rice quantum there is very low? Taking all these things into consideration, may I know whether there is any proposal at least to increase the import quantum, or is there any possibility of getting additional imports in the near future, so that something can be done in Kerala?

Shri C. Subramaniam: We are trying to get as much import as possible. Unfortunately, rice is a scarce commodity in the world market, but we have searched throughout the world, and wherever rice was available even at a high price, it has been possible for us to purchase and we are getting them. As far as the rice content in the ration of Kerala is concerned, I am sure the hon. Member will make a comparison between what is distributed in West Bengal and in Kerala. As a matter of fact, Kerala is getting a little higher than what is being given in even West Bengal.

Shri Nambiar (Tiruchirapalli): It is far less than the need. Why can't you give two more ounces.

Shri C. Subramaniam: How can I give it unless I have it?

Shri Vasudevan Nair (Ambalapuzha): In the first place I challenge his statement that the open market prices in his own district are much more than in Kerala. He has to prove it by facts and figures, we do not agree with that.

My question is this. Two months back there reports that the Minister had a discussion with the Andhra and Madras Chief Ministers and he wanted loaning of food-grains, rice, from those two Chief Ministers for supply to Kerala. What I should like to understand from the Minister is this, whether it is the responsibility of the Madras and Andhra Chief Ministers to supply rice to Kerala or whether it is the direct responsibility of the Union Government to supply rice to Kerala, whether we get it only if they give or whether Mr. Subramaniam and his Ministry are responsible for it.

Shri C. Subramaniam: I take full responsibility for the supply to Kerala, and I am

trying my best to keep Kerala supplied. The State Governments of Madras and Andhra also have co-operated in this effort. Instead of appreciating, I hope they will not cast aspersions on these Governments.

Mr. Speaker: Shri Muhhammad Ismail. Shri Hiren Mukerjee.

Shri Shinkre (Marmagao): Mr. Ismail is there.

Mr. Speaker: I did call him, he did not stand up.

Shri Shinkre: He did not hear.

An hon. Member: The Minister has left.

Mr. Speaker: He does not want to put any question unnecessarily.

11.36 hrs.

RE THREATENED CLOSURE OF RIVER STEAM NAVIGATION COM- PANY IN ASSAM

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): I want to make a humble submission for your consideration: I addressed a short notice question to the Transport Minister about a disturbing report regarding the threat posed by the River Steam Navigation Co. to close down their services in Assam from 6th September. This would not only throw out of employment many people; that being a strategic area, if the services are closed down like that, you can understand the consequences.

This morning I got a communication from your office telling me that there are two or three short notice questions already which the Government have accepted and which you have also accepted, and therefore nor more short notice questions can be admitted. Yet the relevant question arises whether you have stipulated any number, that not more than three short notice questions can be taken up on a day. One is that. Another is whenever there is a very important matter, a very urgent matter like this, threatening to close down the river steam navigation services in Assam which is one of the main arteries of communication in that frontier State, whether that can be taken up or not, or whether that can be brushed aside as you have

brushed aside just now through your communication.

Mr. Speaker: He need not use such words that I have brushed aside anything. The Members would realise that normally it is only one short notice question that we admit, and this time in this session I have been admitting them freely and the Ministers have also accepted them. We have been getting them daily these days, and 27 or so notices have already been covered. I have put two and three also for the rest of the days.

Shri Hem Barua: Why not make it four?

Mr. Speaker: The time factor also should be there. Some business should also be done.

Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath (Hoshangabad): This is no business?

Mr. Speaker: This is extra-ordinary business. I have allowed even three questions a day; today also we had three questions.

Shri Hem Barua: Every day I am getting telegrams and express letters from the people who are affected in Assam.

Shri Surendranath Dwivedy: This being an important subject....

Mr. Speaker: I will consider if it is possible.

11.41 hrs.

SEATING ARRANGEMENT OF GROUP LEADERS

श्री किशन पटनायक : (सम्बलपुर) : मुझे दो बातें कहनी हैं। एक तो आपने खुद आश्वासन दिया था कि अगर नया सीटिंग अरेंजमेंट नहीं भी हो सकता है तो कम से कम हमारे दल के नेता को आप प्रागे कोई स्थान देंगे लेकिन अभी तक उन्हें प्रागे स्थान नहीं दिया गया है। दूसरे यह कि मैंने आप को नियम 377 के अन्तर एक नोटिस दिया था...