

12 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO A MAT-  
TER OF URGENT PUBLIC  
IMPORTANCE**

REPORTED RISE IN THE PRICE OF RICE IN  
WEST BENGAL

**Shri P. R. Chakraverty** (Dhanbad): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Food and Agriculture in following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

“Abnormal rise in the price of rice in West Bengal resulting from the shortage in supply.”

**The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri S. K. Patil):** Sir, we made a statement on the subject in answer to a short notice question on the 5th March. The situation is a continuing one. This year the production of rice in Bengal was short, not very short, but compared with last year it was short. Unfortunately this year the production in Orissa was very short indeed. Bengal is always fed normally from Orissa and from Nepal, the traditional border terrain. Now, from Nepal the rice is coming and will be coming to a certain extent. But so far as Orissa is concerned, that much quantity of rice does not come as it should have come. But so far as the Ministry is concerned, we have placed at the disposal of the Bengal Government all our resources so that whatever rice they want, we supply them.

Now, recently, there was a conference with the officials of the Bengal administration. What Bengal wants is not only rice, but boiled rice for which they have got a preference, and, really speaking, the whole question is not about the foodgrains but about a particular type of rice to which most of the Bengalis have been accustomed. Therefore, it has been decided to have it 50:50 and we have been placing these things at their disposal to be distributed through fair price shops. We have also told them to open as many fair price shops, wherever they

felt the necessity, as they want so far as the outside market is concerned. We cannot always control it. Our duty is that when the situation becomes of that type we open fair price shops and give them the supply, and I have adequate supplies to give them, and do not think that the situation will worsen.

**Shri Tyagi** (Dehra Dun): What arrangements have been made in regard to the smuggling out?

**Shri P. R. Chakraverti** In view of the deepening crisis in West Bengal because of this rise in prices, and in view also of the assurances given by the hon. Minister in reply to my short notice question earlier, may I know by what time, the assured supply will be made available to Bengal so that the crisis does not deteriorate into some form of famine?

**Shri S. K. Patil:** When we go on describing a situation as a crisis, even if a crisis does not exist, a crisis is created. It is not a crisis; nobody will die because there is no food or there is no rice. There is enough of foodgrains except rice at reasonable prices there. We have liberalised the wheat there, and the Bengalis have started eating wheat, but I can quite understand the position. So far as the Government of West Bengal is concerned, I do not think that they have asked for supplies which I have not given them.

**Shri S. M. Banerjee** (Kanpur): May I know whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the news item appearing in *Ananda Bazar Patrika Jugantar* and all other papers that the cost of rice in West Bengal in certain places has gone up to Rs. 36 per maund, or about 96 nP. per kilo, deposit all assurances by the Food Minister at the State and the Minister at the Centre and if so, what effective steps have been taken to see that the prices do not rise, since the prices of all the other essential commodities also have risen because of the rise in prices of rice? What special attention has been paid or what special

[Shri S. M. Banerjee]

encouragement has been given by the Centre to use certain provisions of the Defence of India Rules for checking the prices?

**Shri S. K. Patil:** So far as the latter part of the question is concerned namely that the prices of other commodities have risen, I do not agree with the hon. Member, because I have said that the prices of the other foodgrains have not risen. In fact, I began by saying that.

**Shri S. M. Banerjee:** The reports are there in the newspapers.

**Shri S. K. Patil:** I need not know it necessarily. I know it in general.

So far as the prices in the food-grain shops are concerned, I am responsible for them. If the prices have risen anywhere else, they are not necessarily under my control. Our duty in a situation like this is to open as many shops as we possibly can, and as the Bengal Government, it is their duty to do that. But we have given them a free hand in order to do that, and also supply as much as they want, 50 per cent as boiled rice and 50 per cent as the other type of rice. In a situation like that, even they have got to understand that if they do not get exactly all the boiled rice quantity which they require, they must put up with some other type of rice in the meanwhile till we tide over the situation.

**Shri Mohammad Elias (Howrah):** On a point of order. You, Sir, have very kindly given your consent to this calling-attention notice, but the hon. Minister did not think it fit to reply to the short notice question which was tabled the other day by Shrimati Renu Chakravarty and others. Since the condition in Bengal with regard to the food prices is such that the prices of every kind of foodgrains is going higher and higher every day, should we not be enabled to ask supplementary questions . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** He should formulate his point of order.

**Shri Mohammad Elias:** This is the point of order. The foodgrain prices are going higher and higher, the hon. Minister knows very well the condition in West Bengal. When the short notice question was tabled, may I know why the hon. Minister did not think it fit to give his consent and give the reply to that question on the floor of the House? You have very kindly given your consent. The condition is worsening day by day. Even the Congress papers have admitted that there is a near-famine condition in West Bengal . . .

**Mr. Speaker:** The hon. Member should resume his seat. Has there been a violation of any rule of ours or any article of the Constitution on which I should decide and give my ruling on a point of order?

**Shri Tyagi:** He has to register his views.

**Mr. Speaker:** There is no point of order at all.

So far as the short notice question is concerned, because our rules give that discretion and privilege to the hon. Minister to accept short notice or not, I cannot interfere in that. That is all now. Now, Papers to be Laid.

**Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta Central):** May I make one submission? Certain norms have to be developed in regard to the Ministers accepting or not accepting short notice questions. You, Sir, have accepted the calling-attention-notice and compelled the hon. Minister to come to this House and give an answer. You in your judgment thought that this was an important matter where Government had some answerability to this House. But if the Ministers, because of a certain rule which entitles them to reject short notice questions are behaving in a manner which is not in conformity with parliamentary dignity and decorum and the interests of the country,

which is quite patent from your having admitted this matter and the Minister refusing it, I submit that certain norms have to be developed.

**Mr. Speaker:** Will he kindly refer to any rules under which I can interfere?

**Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath:** May I submit briefly that while there is much to be said in favour of my hon. friend, Shri H. N. Mukerjee, the only remedy is to change the rules. The House should agree to change the rules.

**Mr. Speaker:** I cannot change them.

**Shri Hari Vishnu Kamath:** Not you. The House should agree to change the rules.

12.10 hrs.

#### PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

##### REPORT OF HEALTH SURVEY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

**The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Health (Dr. D. S. Raju):** On behalf of Dr. Sushila Nayar, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Health Survey and Planning Committee (Vol. II).

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1202/63].

##### NOTIFICATIONS UNDER ESTATE DUTY ACT, BENGAL FINANCE (SALES TAX) ACT, CUSTOMS ACT AND CENTRAL EXCISES AND SALT ACT

**The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat):** I beg to lay on the Table:

- (i) a copy of the Estate Duty (Amendment) Rules, 1963 published in Notification No. S.O. 962 dated the 6th April, 1963, under sub-section (2) of section 32 of the Estate Duty Act, 1953.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1203/63].

- (ii) a copy of Notification No. F.4(33)/62-Fin(E) published in Delhi Gazette date the 11th April, 1963 making cer-

tain further amendments to the Delhi Sales Tax Rules, 1951, under sub-section (4) of section 26 of the Bengal Finance (Sales Tax) Act, 1941, as in force in the Union Territory of Delhi.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1204/63].

- (iii) a copy each of the following Notifications under section 159 of the Customs Act, 1962:—

(a) G.S.R. No. 613 dated the 13th April, 1963.

(b) G.S.R. No. 614 dated the 13th April, 1963.

(c) G.S.R. No. 639 dated the 11th April, 1963.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1205/63].

- (iv) a copy each of the following Notifications under section 38 of the Central Excises and Salt Act, 1944, making certain further amendments to the Central Excise Rules, 1944:—

(a) G.S.R. No. 615 dated the 13th April, 1963.

(b) G.S.R. No. 616 dated the 13th April, 1963.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-1206/63].

#### MESSAGE FROM RAJYA SABHA

**Secretary:** Sir, I have to report the following message received from the Secretary of Rajya Sabha:—

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 97 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to enclose a copy of the Iron Ore Mines Labour Welfare Cess (Amendment) Bill, 1963, which has been passed by the Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 22nd April 1963".