

Company and this was considered to be in the best interests of HPF. Also the benefit of extending the time limit was intended to be passed on to the consumers and not to the distributors. It has since been reported that, in fact, it was actually so."

I would quote further, and this will clear the entire position, whatever doubt the hon. Member may be having in his mind ...

MR. SPEAKER: The Question Hour is over.

SHRI B. P. MAURYA: I will take only half a minute. Very wild allegations have been made against the Chairman. If you permit me, I would like to quote for another half a minute ...

MR. SPEAKER: No. We have already exceeded the time. The Question Hour is over.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

Society of Edible Oil in Maharashtra

SNQ 1. SHRI VASANT SETHI: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the acute scarcity of edible oil in Maharashtra and the restrictions put by other surplus States; and

(b) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken to normalise the supply position of edible oil in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI A. C. GEORGE): (a) and (b). Government of Maharashtra have brought to the notice of the Central Government that adequate quantities of edible oils were not moving into Bombay City. A meeting of the State Civil Supplies Ministers and their Secretaries of major edible oils producing and consuming States was held at which State

Governments were urged to ensure that no restrictions be placed on inter-State movement of edible oils. To meet the urgent requirements of Bombay City arrangements have been made by National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation to move groundnut oil held in stock with S.T.C. originally meant for export. The NAFED is also making arrangements for moving further supplies of edible oils from Gujarat to Bombay City. About 10,000 tonnes of imported groundnut oil is expected to be received in Bombay in mid-September and substantial portion of this will be available to Maharashtra.

SHRI VASANT SATHI: It is really intriguing that while in the year 1974-75 in this country, the groundnut production increased from 51.1 lakh tonnes to 69.9 lakh tonnes, that is an increase of nearly 20 lakh tonnes in one year, and the export that was allowed by the Government was of 2.15 lakh tonnes, why there should be a shortage when you are still surplus by 18 lakh tonnes of groundnut. I would like to know from the Government, whether with the entire machinery in this period of emergency with MISA and all that at your command you cannot regulate the groundnut particularly in States like Gujarat where the Central Government is in power. You have received a report that the oil kings have offered to cooperate with the Government. I would like to know if you are at the mercy of these oil kings. What kind of cooperation are you getting from them when you cannot have groundnut oil sent from one State to another, just across the border, where the price is exactly double? What kind of control do you have on the movement of oil? You said that you were importing 10,000 tonnes of groundnut oil, but you exported 2 lakh tonnes of groundnut and deprived the people of groundnut oil. What kind of policy is this and how are you going to meet the requirements of the people, particularly on the occasions of festivals? In the rural areas in Maharashtra, the

groundnut oil sells today at Rs. 8/- per kilo and even then it is not available. What do you expect the poor people to do? This is their only edible oil for cooking food. What is the policy of the Government in this regard?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: As was clarified by the hon. Member himself, the export has an interesting background behind it. Just two and a half months back, towards the middle of May, when the price of groundnut oil slumped to Rs. 4/- per kilo, obviously the prices of groundnut came down. There was a general demand from Gujarat and the main groundnut producing areas that the farmer is not getting a remunerative price and on this price, there may not be any incentive for the farmer to go in for the next crop. There was almost a universal demand that the glut has to be removed and some quantity has to be exported. There was a demand for a support price also. It was as per the demand coming from the producing areas, as the hon. Member himself pointed out, that less than 3 per cent of the total production of groundnut—70 million tonnes was the production—that is 2.15 lakh tonnes, HPS quality was exported. This is the whole background, as was explained some time back. There was a good crop, and the availability was there and it was at that time that the prices came down and there was a demand for support price and export also. But I still maintain and I think the hon. Member has also mentioned in between, that it is not the export which has caused this spurt in prices. The scarcity, the monsoon getting delayed and obviously, the possibility of the crop being delayed or spoilt, gave room for some of the undesirable traders who are still lurching behind, to come into the field and there was a sudden spurt in the market. But, as soon as we noticed this situation coming within a short span of 6-7 weeks, the different departments of the Government took immediate measures. Export was banned, the movements were facilitated and the States

were requested to take a very intensive de-hoarding operation. As the Member pointed out, though 10,000 tonnes of groundnut oil is only a paltry amount, taking into consideration the fact that towards early September or middle of September, some of the crops in different producing areas will start arriving—already in Tamil Nadu, what is known as Coromandel crop from the South Arcot District has started coming in and in Pollachi though the crop is not good, it is expected within a week or so and even in some areas of Karnataka and even in some southern districts of Maharashtra the crop season is arriving within two weeks—and so, in between, realising the fact that we have the festival season coming, we are trying to take some *ad hoc* measures to tide over the present crisis, the gap between the crop arrival and now. So, in this background you have to see the purchase and arrival of the 10,000 tonnes of groundnut oil. Apart from that, day before yesterday, I was in Maharashtra. I had been to Gujarat also and had a discussion with the Governor and the officials and they have assured that they would not put any impediments on the movement. Only thing, they were trying to be cautious so that undesirable private traders did not get into the market and spoil the situation. When we assured that the machinery of the Government of India and the National Co-operative are available and that it will be a State to State deal, then the Gujarat Government has assured all co-operation. As a result of that, apart from the stocks which are available with the STC meant for export—that I have pointed out in the main reply—and which we are steadily despatching to Bombay city alone, now we have arrived at some arrangement with the NAFED as well as the Apex Co-operative of Gujarat to see that the refined oil is moved through the machinery of the NAFED into the hands of the Maharashtra Civil Supplies Corporation so that no malpractices will take place and we will be in a position to tide over the present difficulty. Yes.

terday I was again in touch with the Maharashtra Civil Supplies Minister and we have offered nearly 5000 tonnes of rapeseed and soya-bean oil which could be refined near the port itself. Though it may not be of an excellent quality and may not come upto the mark of a superior variety, still for the common man this may be available.

We are taking all measures to see that we tide over the present difficult situation in-between now and the arrival of the new crop and the festival season. We are taking some pre-emptive and advance action not only in groundnut oil but in all the items of mass consumption in which there is normally this phenomenon of prices showing a tendency of going up just before the festival. So, we are taking some advance action with the background of the festival coming.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I am really not satisfied with the long reply which our hon Minister has given. What is still not answered is: where has this surplus of the country gone? Even taking your 2 lakhs tonnes export, even granting that, there is a surplus of 18 lakhs. And where has it gone? It only shows that we have no control on the private trade. I can understand the phenomenon if it is said that because there is a shortage, the prices have gone up. That is the usual answer which the Ministry gives. But how can you...

MR. SPEAKER: Why do you not say that hoarding is going on? Put it directly.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I am saying so. I would like to know.

MR. SPEAKER: It has gone underground.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Precisely. You are right. You have taken it out of my mouth. Thank you very much. These underground stocks—have you no way of unearthing them? Cannot

you think in terms of a national marketing organization or some such machinery where the entire marketing of such essential commodities at least will be done by you? Why are you at the mercy of the private traders? This is the point I would like to know. What steps are you taking? Again and again he replies that when the new crops come in—the Karnataka crop is coming, the Andhra crop is coming, this thing and that thing and, and with the 10,000 tonnes you are going to import, things will improve. But you must tell the people on the spot whether next month they are going to get it at reasonable prices and in some reasonable quantities. How are you going to ensure that? That is a problem, and that you are not satisfied about the position. Where has this surplus gone? How are you going to get that surplus?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: Even earlier I made it plain. There was some apprehension that the monsoon is delayed and the crop may not be good as that of last year. I did mention that we are aware that some traders who are waiting for the opportunity, they did resort to hoarding. I do not deny the fact. But the only thing is, as soon as this tendency was noticed, prompt action was taken and more than 2,300 raids all over the country in regard to edible oil alone have taken place in Tamilnadu, in Gujarat, in Maharashtra, in Karnataka and in various other States.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: How much quantity have you been able to unearth?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: I am not in a position to give that figure.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I am saying of about 18 lakh tonnes more production. Where has this gone?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: This figure of 18 lakhs is confusing. He is only giving the figure which is an increase in production over that of the last year.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: It is correct.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: The figure that is given—52 lakh tonnes groundnut in shell and in 1975-76, 69.9 lakh tonnes in shell, is not actually the oil. The oil will be nearly 40 per cent of that. Not going into the quibblings of statistics I must make it plain that we did notice the tendency of hoarding and vigorous steps were taken all over the country. In many States various stern actions were taken. We are trying to tide over that. I was in Bombay three days back. There is no particular reason for being panicky. I say the crop is reaching in ten days or so. Only to impress on this House, I may say that there is no reason to be panicky.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I need your protection. Again it is no good to evade the question because ultimately we have to go and face the people. What will I carry from here to the people of Maharashtra that you will get groundnut oil in the next fifteen days at a lesser cost and it will be available? Can I say this on your behalf?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: He can definitely say on my behalf.

MR. SPEAKER: He has assured you. You can quote him.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: But I will not get the oil.

SHRI DHAMANKAR: While there was acute shortage of groundnut oil in Maharashtra, it was reported in the press that the groundnut oil tanker was lying unclaimed at Sangli Railway yard. Has the Minister got this information and has enquiry been made about it?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: This information was not given to me even by the Minister for Civil Supplies. Since this information has been given to me I shall look into it.

SHRI DHAMANKAR: This appeared in the press.

SHRI ANNASAHEB GOTKHIHDE: It contains oil worth more than Rs. one lakh.

MR. SPEAKER: It seems the Minister has no control over it. The problem is not of Kerala. This question is about Maharashtra. You ask about Maharashtra.

SHRI ANNASAHEB GOTKHIHDE: It is about the scarcity of edible oil. What is happening in Maharashtra? There is non availability of groundnut oil in some districts and especially in my parliamentary constituency Sangli where that oil tanker is lying unclaimed. The situation is very alarming particularly in the rural areas. What steps are being taken to rush sufficient quantity of groundnut oil in the rural areas?

Secondly, we were informed that the hon. Minister has met the Governor of Gujarat. Will he assure us that no restriction will be placed on the movement of groundnut oil from other States? I want to know whether levy was imposed on the oil producers by Gujarat administration and only limited quantities were allowed to be moved to Maharashtra. I want to know whether movement of oil tankers was held up on the border of Gujarat and Maharashtra and Karnataka and Maharashtra or the pretext of those tankers not having proper lights and danger signals. These things have contributed to scarcity in Maharashtra. We are facing a situation of artificial scarcity in the midst of plenty. So I want to know what he is going to do to improve the situation immediately to rush sufficient quantities of groundnut oil to the rural areas of Maharashtra.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: I fully appreciate the anxiety of the hon. Member from Maharashtra. Maharashtra is a deficit State in the matter of groundnut oil and Gujarat is a surplus

State. Traditionally Gujarat supplies and Maharashtra always buys. It is for the State Government to see where it goes, to the city or district and the rural areas and so on.

MR. SPEAKER. Are you in a position to say how much is moving? Is it on State account or private account?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE. We are utilising the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation. It is a movement between the State of Gujarat and the State of Maharashtra.

MR. SPEAKER. How much will move so as to relieve their distress?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE. This comes from different areas including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat, which are adjoining States. We are not confining the activity to Gujarat alone. I talked to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He said that they have some problem in the State itself but he assured me that he will see that some quantity is moved to Maharashtra. The officers of the Civil Supplies Corporation of Maharashtra went to Hyderabad. They had a discussion three days back. More than 1,000 tonnes are being moved from Andhra Pradesh. Apart from that, there is daily movement of nearly 40 to 50 tonnes from Gujarat through the Apex Co-operative Society of Gujarat and National Agricultural Marketing Federation and these are put in the hands of the Maharashtra Civil Supplies Corporation so that distribution is done equitably. All these things are being streamlined and we are taking various measures.

SHRI ANNASAHAB GOTKINDE. I wanted to know whether oil tankers were stopped on the border on the pretext of not having proper lights, danger signals etc.

MR. SPEAKER. You can look into it. That is not a serious problem. He asks this. Are you satisfied that adequate movement will take place and

these things will move into Maharashtra from all these three States? Are you in a position to assure the House?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE. Whatever best could be done we are doing.

MR. SPEAKER. You have discussed with them. You can take steps to see that adequate quantities move to Maharashtra State.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE. I can assure the House that from these three States we will see that adequate supplies are moved to Maharashtra.

MR. SPEAKER. Now, Papers to be laid on the Table.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

समाचार-पत्रों तथा सम्पादकों के लिए

प्राचरण संहिता

† 206. श्री ज्ञानेश्वरी प्रसाद यादव : क्या सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्री यह बनाने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार का विचार समाचार-पत्रों तथा सम्पादकों के लिए प्राचरण संहिता बनाने का है ;

(ख) क्या इस सम्बन्ध में विभिन्न समाचारपत्रों के सम्पादकों से मुझाव आमन्त्रित किए गए हैं, और

(ग) यदि हा. तो उसके तथ्य क्या हैं ?

सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्री (श्री विद्या-चरण शुक्ल) : (क) से (ग) : पत्रकारों और समाचारपत्रों के लिए प्राचरण संहिता सम्पादकों की केन्द्रीय समिति और अखिल भारतीय समाचारपत्रों सम्पादक सम्मेलन द्वारा बनाई गई है। इन दोनों निकायों में देण के विभिन्न भागों के प्रमुख सम्पादक हैं।