

[Shri Shyam Sunder Mohapatra]

was an expert committee which was to give its report by the end of August, about the utility of the project, about the dimension of the project, the complete picture about this multi-purpose project and of the three participating governments, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. I think, the expert committee has not given this report, and the Government of Orissa has also not given its final feasibility report. The hon. Minister should impress on the Government, on the respective Department, so that this project may be taken up immediately and Balasore district, at least the northern part of Orissa, is not threatened by floods any more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This debate will be taken up tomorrow.

17.35 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

DETERIORATING RATIONING CONDITIONS IN KERALA

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we take up the half-an-hour discussion.

Mr. Chandrappan.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Tellicherry): Answering a question on 23rd July, the hon. Minister had said:

"Distribution of foodgrains within the State is the responsibility of the State Government. Keeping in view the overall availability of foodgrains in the Central pool and the needs of other deficit and drought-affected States, the reasonable requirements of the Government of Kerala are being met from the central pool. The following quantities of foodgrains were supplied to Kerala from the central pool during May and June."

He said that in May they have supplied, considering the reasonableness

and the requirements, 85,300 tonnes of foodgrains and in June, it is slightly more—86,100 tonnes. This was a rather misleading statement, a statement by which the Minister had tried to hide the fact from the House. That is how this half-an-hour discussion rises.

Nobody can dispute the fact that the distribution of foodgrains in the State is the responsibility of the State. But, with regard to Kerala, as you know, there is a special situation. In 1965, when the Central Government had abolished the Southern Food Zone and set up a single State Food Zone, they have made certain solemn promises to the State of Kerala. They have promised that they will give 12 ounces per head per day for every adult individual in that State and to maintain that ration they also said that they will supply 80,000 tonnes of rice and 80,000 tonnes of wheat per month. Our point is that this Ministry, Central Government had failed so miserably in fulfilling its own promises. That has created a serious situation in Kerala, a State which is chronically deficit in the matter of food.

The requirements of Kerala is 27 lakhs of tonnes of food every year and the production there is only 13.5 lakhs tonnes. The deficit is 50 per cent and this deficit the Central Government had agreed that they would make up and because of their continuous failure in fulfilling their own promises made to that State, the situation in that State now is pretty serious, serious to the extent that the normal life in the State has come to a standstill. That is the fact of life. The Government might say so many things. There are series of *bandhs*. People are coming to Delhi to demonstrate in front of the Parliament. Every day in the State buses are pelted with stones by the students. The educational institutions are not functioning normally and in the ration shops—there are 12,000 of them through which the Government used to distribute foodgra-

ins to 95 per cent of the population in that State—what is happening today? Because of the wagon shortage, even the paltry amount of rice the Centre has allotted to Kerala has not reached. So, in many places, the ration shops are kept open with no rice. Then the Centre has made promises. I am not referring to their big promises. When the people are starving, an all-Party deputation headed by the State Chief Minister visited Delhi. They came, they met the Prime Minister, they met the hon. Minister, Shri Shinde and Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. Everybody was nice to them. Everybody talked very politely and they have promised, 'We will give you some more rice and wheat.' But that promise has never been fulfilled. Not only that, most shameless is the fact that we in Kerala in the past used to get our rice requirements from the State of Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh is under President's rule. This Government is responsible for whatever now happens in Andhra Pradesh. Kerala Government has been allowed, as has been mentioned in the answer itself, to go and purchase rice. But, even the rice which has been purchased from that State was not allowed to be lifted from there under the President's rule. This is the position, Sir. The representatives of the Centre have done that big service to our State! Whose responsibility is this? We are not coming here with a begging bowl. If any body has got that impression it is totally wrong. Sir. This is a State which is producing lot of agricultural crop, but I don't say, unfortunately, but fortunately, all these are mainly of cash crops. We earn thereby a lot of foreign exchange which comes to the Central exchequer. We have a right claim or rather, a rightful claim, and we demand that the Centre should fulfil its obligations and its responsibilities.

Also, Sir, one thing also has to be understood. This is not something which has happened suddenly this

year. What was the situation in 1971? They could supply for three lean months, June, July and August. These are the three lean months in Kerala; because of accidental monsoons, flooding and all sorts of things, in 1970, Government had supplied 2.27 lakhs tonnes. In 1971 this figure was 2.54 lakhs and in 1972, 2.30 lakhs. This is just 50 per cent of what was promised. Coming to this year what is the performance? It is very low. They have sent in the month of June they have sent 45,000 tonnes of rice in place of 80,000 tonnes and 30,000 tonnes of wheat in place of 80,000 tonnes of wheat. As a result of that what happened? Ration had been cut in Kerala. Instead of 160 grammes of rice, we are giving 100 grammes of rice to the people. Instead of 160 grammes we are giving 80 grammes of wheat. In the past the Government at the Centre have been telling the people of Kerala and they have been advising the people of Kerala saying, change your food habits. The Kerala people have changed their food habits, Sir. Mr. Shinde knows it, that Kerala people have changed their food habits. They are ready to use wheat. But is Mr. Shinde in a position to supply wheat? He cannot supply wheat, he cannot supply rice. This is the situation and this has created the worst type of conditions there and conditions have come to a standstill, I should say. This situation should be remedied.

In two weeks there will be a national festival in Kerala, Onam. It is known for its festivity, for its colour, for affluence, for prosperity. But this year, I am afraid Mr. Shinde will give us an Onam which will be an Onam with starvation.

He had promised. When the Ministers had come from Kerala when the Kerala Finance Minister and Food Minister had requested Shri Shinde and the Prime Minister that they should give some rice, some wheat, to the people of Kerala so that at least, during these four days of Onam, they will have something to eat, we were told that

[Shri C. K. Chandrappan]

they had been promised 10,000 tons of foodgrains. I had read this in newspapers. I would like Shri Shinde to listen to me because he has made the promise before, earlier also, but he had failed to fulfil that. My request is that if you can make the promise on the floor of the House that you will supply without fail 10,000 tons of foodgrains to Kerala during Onam at least, that will make the people a little happy. It will not of course solve the problem but they will feel a little bit happy about it. But, to solve the problem, the Government must have a different approach to the whole question. This morning I had been seeing Shri Shinde being reluctant in answering a question on whether he was going to take over the wholesale trade in rice. He did not answer that. He did not even accept the fact that the Government had failed in the matter of wheat procurement and as a result my State has been made victim of it. Otherwise they could have supplied us with wheat even if they had no rice. So, the solution to the problem in Kerala will be found only if the Government will have a new policy, a policy, by which they can procure not the marketed but the marketable surplus of rice and wheat and send that on to our people in Kerala. I am not saying that you should not send food to other drought affected areas and deficit areas. They should also be definitely sent. But, considering the special situation and special conditions of Kerala, the Government should give some priority. It should take the matter most seriously. My complaint is that he gives a routine answer that it is the responsibility of the State. He has given an impression that 86,000 tons have been sent in May-June this year. But, we should not be misled by the figure of 1 lakh tons. It is only just over 50 per cent of the requirements which they have promised to fulfil.

So, my request to you is to make a categorical statement right now on the

floor of the House that you will immediately take appropriate measures by which you can at least send enough food materials for the people of Kerala to celebrate their national festival 'Onam'.

Now coming to the deficit, at least what is your commitment which you may fulfil? I would like you to make a statement on the floor of the House about this.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am happy that my friend, Shri Chandrappan has correctly voiced the feelings of the case of the people of Kerala.

It is surprising that even after the delegation which was led by the Chief Minister himself which not the Food Minister, the Prime Minister and all others, they made very tall promises and it was assured that it would be the responsibility of the Centre to see that adequate supplies were made of rice and wheat-both to meet the requirements. I would like to know from him what was the demand of the Chief Minister of the State in this regard-quarterly, six-monthly or even yearly? To which extent the Centre has been able to meet that? Whether it is a fact the condition is deteriorating there and it has become a law and order situation there and almost all colleges were closed? And then, the Chief Minister, to overcome this situation, had sought the help of the Centre. I would like to know what is the quantity that was sent and what were the other promises made during the interviews that the Chief Minister and his colleagues had and whether those promises were likely to be fulfilled or they are still waiting? This is a law and order situation in Kerala. Is it because the ministry is headed by a non-Congressman that has led to the step-motherly treatment that is given to this State?

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: (Begusarai): I would only preface my question with a few general remarks. The food situation is now very disturbing in Kerala, and it has