

Proceedings of the Fifteenth Session of the First Assam Legislative Assembly, assembled under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 11 A. M., on Monday, the 20th November, 1944.

PRESENT :

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the Chair, the ten Hon'ble Ministers and sixty-six Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(to which oral answers were given)

Rani Gudiliue

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

*102. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether Rani Gudiliue is still lodged in the Aijal Jail ?
- (b) If not, in which jail she has been lodged now ?
- (c) Whether she is in good health now ?
- (d) Whether Government propose to lay on the table a statement showing (i) her fortnightly weight for the months of June, July and August 1944, (ii) terms of imprisonment she has served and (iii) terms remain to be served ?
- (e) Whether she can be released before the expiry of her term of imprisonment ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA replied :

- 102. (a)—No.
- (b)—District Jail, Tura.
- (c)—Yes.
- (d)—(i)—

	June	July	August
1st half	123 lbs.	124 lbs.	120 lbs.
2nd half	123 „	124 „	120 „
(ii)	11 years 9 months 19 days (excluding remission).		
	<u>14 years 7 months 29 days (including remission).</u>		
(iii)	8 years 2 months 11 days (excluding remission).		
	<u>5 years 4 months 1 day (including remission).</u>		

(e)—The question of her premature release was recently examined and it was decided that it was inexpedient to release her at present.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY : Was her case considered by the Jail Advisory Board, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA : That is altogether a new question, Sir, which I cannot reply off-hand.

Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI : May I know, Sir, why it was considered inexpedient to release her at present ?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA : It is quite obvious, Sir, that she cannot be released now for reasons of security.

Increment of salary to Government servants

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*103. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they intend to give a general increment of salary to the employees of the Province excluding the all-India service men ?

(b) If so, since when, and at what rate or rates ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI replied :

103. (a) & (b)—It is not in the contemplation of Government to grant a general increment of salary to Government servants. They have granted dearness allowance on a percentage basis up to a pay limit of Rs.250 per mensem as detailed in the statement laid on the table.

Statement referred to in reply to Starred question No.103(a) & (b) asked by Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee at the November Session of the Assembly, 1944

	Khasi and Jaintia Hills	Rest of Assam
	Per cent.	Per cent.
Government servants drawing pay of Rs.30 or below.	50	40
Government servants drawing pay of more than Rs.30 but not more than Rs.60.	25	20
Government servants drawing pay of more than Rs.60 but not more than Rs.100.	20	15
Government servants drawing pay of more than Rs.100 but not more than Rs.150.	15	12½
Government servants drawing pay of more than Rs.150 but not more than Rs.200.	12½	10
Government servants drawing pay of more than Rs.200 but not more than Rs.250.	10	10

With marginal adjustments at each stage so that the emoluments of a Government servant on a higher rate of pay do not fall short of those on a lower rate of pay. Since then they have granted with effect from 1st November 1944 an extra dearness allowance of Rs.5 per mensem to all Government servants up to the abovementioned pay limit.

Government servants (including those of the Secretary of State's Services) drawing pay exceeding Rs.250 but not exceeding Rs.1,000 have been granted a war allowance with effect from the 1st July 1944 as follows :—

The Secretary of State for India has been pleased to grant a War allowance to services and officers under his rule-making control on the following scale :—

(1) Married Officers, drawing pay up to Rs.1,000 will receive a War allowance equal to ten per cent. of pay, subject to a minimum of Rs.50 and with marginal adjustments up to Rs.1,100.

(2) Single Officers, drawing pay up to Rs.750 will receive a War allowance equal to five per cent. of pay, subject to a minimum of Rs.30 and with marginal adjustments up to Rs.788.

The term "married" will include widowers with a dependent child or dependent children.

2. The Government of Assam have also been pleased to grant a War allowance equal to ten per cent. of pay to all Government servants (whether married or single) under their rule-making control. The allowance will be admissible to those only drawing pay exceeding Rs.250 but not exceeding Rs.1,000 with marginal adjustments up to Rs.1,100.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do Government consider the desirability of reopening the cases again so as to give a better scale of increment?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Sir, the situation is being reviewed from time to time and the Government has very recently granted an increase of Rs.5 on a flat rate upto a pay limit of Rs.250.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do Government think that the present increment of Rs.5 is very inadequate in these abnormal days?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: This is a matter of opinion, Sir.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: What is the Government opinion, Sir, in this respect?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I am to supply information and not to give views of the Government, Sir.

Externee Sirdar Waryam Singh of Dibrugarh

Srijut JOGENDRA CHANDRA NATH asked:

*104. (a) Are Government aware that the externees from Dibrugarh are passing their days in great hardship being cut off from their source of earning their livelihood and being away from their places of residence for a long time?

(b) Are Government aware that Sirdar Waryam Singh of Dibrugarh who has been externed from the five districts of Assam Valley and at present living at Goalpara, had a good motor business previous to his externment?

(c) Is it a fact that he applied for maintenance allowance or in the alternative permission to go to Dibrugarh?

(d) Do Government propose to withdraw the externment order on the said Sirdar Waryam Singh or in the alternative grant him a maintenance allowance?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

104. (a)—Government have received representations from or on behalf of Dalbir Singh and Beiram Singh.

(b), (c) & (d)—A reference is invited to the replies given to similar questions [unstarred question No. 94 (a)—(h)] by Srijut Jadav Prasad Chaliha at this session.

Allowance and parole of security prisoners of Jorhat Jail

Srijut RAJENDRA NATH BARUA asked:

*105. (a) Is it a fact that great delay is caused in the disposal of petitions regarding allowance and parole of the security prisoners of Jorhat Jail?

(b) Do Government propose to issue orders to the proper quarters to treat such petitions as important and to make such reports available by certain returnable dates for the purpose of speedy disposal?

(c) Is it a fact that an interval of six months to one year is required for disposal of such petitions?

(d) Do Government propose to cause an enquiry to be made by some responsible officers not below the rank of Sub-Deputy Collectors into the family conditions of those security prisoners whose petitions have been rejected?

(e) Will Government be pleased to state why no adequate family allowance has been granted in the case of Srijut Surendranath Bharali, B. L., Jorhat and Srijut Bishnu Prasad Chaliha of Sibsagar, both security prisoners in the Jorhat Jail?

(f) What is the total number of security prisoners in the Province and how many of them have been granted family allowance?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

105. (a) & (b)—Government recognize that there has been delay in some cases and have directed the Deputy Commissioner to see that they are promptly disposed of. The Deputy Commissioner has a large number of petitions, but I think he should do more to expedite reports. They are not prepared to fetter the Deputy Commissioner by fixing specific dates, which may in some cases not be fair to the prisoners.

(c)—No.

(d)—Government must leave it to the Deputy Commissioner to obtain the required information on the manner he finds most suitable and convenient. They have no reason to suppose that the enquiries are not conducted by responsible officers.

(e)—Government sanctioned an allowance of Rs. 40 for the family of Srijut Surendranath Bharali in view of the prisoner's circumstances. The family are living with the father-in-law—wife and three minor children. An allowance of Rs. 30 per mensem was sanctioned for the family of Srijut Bishnu Prasad Chaliha in view of the fact that they have some income from a Press. The prisoner has refused to accept this sum and insisted that the income in all is inadequate. The Deputy Commissioner has been directed to re-examine the case and ascertain the income from the Press.

(f)—There are 162 security prisoners of whom 50 are in receipt of family allowances.

Srijut RAJENDRA NATH BARUA: Do Government consider that Srijut Surendranath Bharali is a Pleader of considerable standing and deserves a little more allowance, say about Rs.60 per mensem?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: As I mentioned in reply to very many questions the other day, the criterion of granting allowance is the need of the family of the person detained. The Deputy Commissioner reports that the person in question has sufficient means and if it is supplemented by an allowance of Rs.40 it will suffice. We have accepted the Deputy Commissioner's recommendation.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(to which answers were laid on the table)

Re Fenchuganj Engineering Workers' Union

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

90. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether it is a fact that the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet has ordered Barindra Chowdhuri, Joint Secretary of the Fenchuganj Engineering Workers Union to remove the office of the Union from Fenchuganj on 7th July, 1944?
- (b) Whether the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, has any authority under the rules to order for the removal of an office of a registered Union?
- (c) Whether it is a fact that the President and the General Secretary of the aforesaid Union applied to the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, on the 24th July 1944, for permission for opening the office?
- (d) If so, why no permission was given in this respect?
- (e) Whether it is a fact that Barindra Chowdhuri sent a letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, on the 28th July 1944, explaining the labour situation in Fenchuganj Engineering Workshop?

- (f) Whether it is a fact that the Union submitted a scheme for increased production to the Deputy Commissioner, Sylhet, and Labour Commissioner, Assam, on the 14th January 1944 ?
- (g) If so, why the authorities have taken such steps against the Union ?
- (h) Why the said Barindra Chowdhuri has been externed from Fenchuganj ?
- (i) Whether Government propose to cancel the orders so that the office of the aforesaid Union may be re-opened at Fenchuganj ?
- (j) Whether Government propose to cancel the externment order passed on Barindra Chowdhuri, the Joint Secretary of the Union ?
91. Will Government be pleased to state—
- (a) Whether Mr. S. Nath, a Sub-Deputy Collector was sent on the 29th February 1944, to Fenchuganj Workshop for enquiry about the alleged repression on the Union Workers by Mr. Kannedy, the Manager of the Workshop ?
- (b) Whether any action has been taken by Government on the report submitted by the said Sub-Deputy Collector ?
- (c) If not, why not ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY replied :

90. (a)—Yes.
- (b)—On it being pointed out to the Deputy Commissioner, that his order requiring the removal of the office of the Union was *prima facie* not maintainable, the Deputy Commissioner amended the order in so far as it related to the removal of the Union's office.
- (c)—No.
- (d)—Does not arise.
- (e)—Yes.
- (f)—No such scheme was received by the Deputy Commissioner.
- (g)—Does not arise.
- (h)—Srijut Barindra Chowdhuri was causing trouble amongst workers.
- (i)—The order has been withdrawn as already stated.
- (j)—No.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Will Government please state what was the nature of trouble he was creating at Fenchuganj Workers' Union ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: I think the hon. Questioner knows it better than I do.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Is it an answer, Sir ? The Hon'ble Minister ought to be courteous in his reply, Sir. The question has not been answered and we want an answer to the question.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: May I know, Sir, the nature of trouble that he was creating at Fenchuganj Workers' Union ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: There was some agitation among the labourers.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Is it a fact, Sir, that Mr. Kannedy wanted to start another union and compelled many of the workers to join his union ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: There was a proposal for starting another union but I do not know whether there was any compulsion or obstruction.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Shall I be correct if I say that Mr. Kannedy is causing the trouble for which Comrade Barindra Chaudhury is being made responsible ? Will Government make an enquiry into this matter, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: We had enquired into this matter and the Labour Commissioner went once to Fenchuganj to enquire into it. I think he should again go there just to have a full enquiry and if possible to settle the matter.

Srijut MAHI CHANDRA BORA: Did the workers complain against the activities of Mr. Barindra Chaudhury?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: The Manager complained against his activities.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Was Comrade Barindra Chaudhury the Joint Secretary of the Union, Sir?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: I think so, Sir.

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY replied:

91. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes, the Additional District Magistrate endeavoured to effect a reconciliation, but so far apparently without effect.

(c)—Does not arise.

Tour of the Hon'ble Ministers, Revenue and Finance.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI asked :

92. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether it is a fact that every time the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali Revenue Minister, goes on tour to Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong, he is always and invariably followed by Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri, the Finance Minister?

(b) If so, why?

(c) The number, destinations and dates of tours performed by the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali, Revenue Minister and the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri, Finance Minister in the Districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong during 1943 and up to September 1944?

(d) The number, destinations and dates of tours performed by the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali and the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri to Sylhet and Upper Assam Districts during the same period?

(e) Whether the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali was being followed by the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri in the former's recent tours to Sylhet and Upper Assam Districts?

(f) The business transacted by Hon'ble Ministers in their tours to Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong?

(g) The amount of travelling allowances drawn by each of these Hon'ble Ministers in their tours referred to in questions (c) and (d) above?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri replied :

92. (a)—No.

(b)—Does not arise.

(c), (d), (f) and (g).—A statement is placed below.

Statement showing the number, destinations and date of tours performed by the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali, Revenue Minister and the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Choudhuri, Finance Minister in the districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong during 1943 and upto September 1944 and to Sylhet and Upper Assam districts during the same period and the Travelling Allowance drawn by each of the Ministers in their aforesaid tours and business transacted by them in the districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong.

The Hon'ble MAULAWI MUNAWWAR ALI, Revenue Minister—

Dates of tour	Destinations					Amount (8)	(9)
	Kamrup (1)	Nowgong (2)	Darrang (3)	Sibsagar (4)	Lakhimpur (5)			Goalpara (6)	Sylhet (7)
24th December 1942 to 8th January 1943. (Also availed holidays).	Bhadeswar Sunamganj (3rd-4th January 1943), Karimganj (6th-7th Janu- ary 1943), Patherkandi Landing Ground. Rs. a. p. 189 4 0
10th January 1943 to 18th January 1943 (also availed holidays).	Kulaura Land- ing Ground. 117 0 0
4th February 1943 to 9th February 1943.	..	Nowgong, Jagi Road, Jamu- namukh, Kampur.	..	..	..	..	162 2 0 Purpose of visit.— Inspection.
28th March 1943 to 16th April 1943.	Sunamganj (30th March 1943 to 13th April 1943) Sylhet. 210 10 0
23rd May 1943 to 10th June 1943.	Sylhet (24th- 25th May 1943, 7th-9th June 1943) Derai, Salu- tikar. 195 15 0

Dates of tour	Destinations							Amount
	Kamrup (1)	Nowgong (2)	Darrang (3)	Sibsagar (4)	Lakhimpur (5)	Goalpara (6)	Sylhet (7)	
13th June 1943 to 23rd June 1943.	Sylhet (14th June 1943) Karimganj (16th-17th June 1943).	122 8 0
17th October 1943 to 20th October 1943.	Sunamganj, Chhatak, Sylhet.	55 5 0
2nd December 1943 to 7th De- cember 1943.	Barpeta 4th December 1943.	..	Mangaldai, 5th-6th Dec- ember 1943.	..	..	..	..	155 0 0 Purpose of visit.— Inspection.
15th January 1944 to 27th January 1944.	Habiganj, Raghnandan Hill and other Forest Planta- tion areas, Sunamganj, Chunarughat Landing Ground.	260 4 0
6th February 1944 to 26th February 1944.	Sylhet, Haila- kandi, Lala- cherra, Sil- char, Karim- ganj, Habi- ganj, Mau- lavi Bazar, Sunamganj.	402 7 0

Rs. a. p.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11th Jan. 1944 to 13th Jan. 1944	Nowgong, 12th Jan. 1944	..	..	..	..	..	Rs. a. p. 110 12 0	Purpose of visit— To see the work- ing of the Land Settlement policy and acquaint with facts on the question of cer- tain Tribals pro- posed for evis- tion.
5th Apl. 1944 to 12th Apl. 1944 and 15th Apl. 1944 to 20th Apl. 1944.	..	Mangaldai, 11th Apl. 1944	..	..	..	Sunamganj (17th-18th Apl. 1944.) (N. W. F.)	343 11 0	Purpose of visit— To see the work- ing of Land Set- tlement policy and also to en- quire into certain allegations made by the hon. Questioner him- self alleging tres- pass by immi- grants upon the land in the occu- pation of some tribals.
19th June 1944 to 26th June 1944. 25th July 1944 to 2nd Aug. 1944.	..	..	..	..	..	Gagli	126 14 0	
1st Sep. 1944 to 9th Sep. 1944.	Nowgong, (26th-27th July 1944). Neli. Gauhati, Kamalpur.	..	Titabar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Gola- ghat.	..	..	..	342 10 0	Purpose of visit— Inspection.
	..	Mangaldai (4th Sep. 1944). Tezpur (6th & 7th Sep. 1944).	..	..	..	..	219 1 0	Purpose of visit— Working of the land policy and inspection.

REMARKS:—

Kamrup—3 times.
Nowgong—3 ” ”
Darrang—3 ” ”
Sibsagar—1 time.
Lakhimpur—1 ”
Sylhet—10 times.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri, Finance Minister—

Date of tour	Destinations							Amount
	Kamrup	Nowgong	Darrang	Sibsagar	Lakhimpur	Goalpara	Sylhet	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3rd April 1943 to 9th April 1943.	Nowgong (4th April 1943).	..	Golaghat, Titabar.	Dibrugarh, (5th-7th Apl. 1943). Margherita, Lakhimpur.	..	..	Rs. a. p. 309 6 0	Purpose of visit— Inspection.
8th June 1943 to 16th June 1943.	..	..	..	..	Goalpara, 9th Lakhimpur and back to Goal- para.	Sylhet, 9th June 1943.	204 6 0	..
14th July 1943 to 17th July 1943.	Nowgong, 10th mile of Now- gong-Debaka Road (15th July 1943).	..	..	..	..	..	102 8 0	Purpose of visit— Government duty.
28th Aug. 1943 to 31st Aug. 1943.	..	..	..	..	..	Sylhet (29th- 30th August 1943).	82 8 0	..
19th Sep. 1943 to 24th Sep. 1943	..	..	..	..	..	Sylhet & Sil- char, Kum- bhagram, Ba- darpur, Dhu- arband, etc., afterwards.	158 2 0	..
2nd Dec. 1943 to 7th Dec. 1943.	Barpeta (4th Dec. 1943).	..	Mangaldai	..	..	..	146 4 0	Purpose of visit— Government duty.
3rd April 1944 to 19th April 1944.	Gauhati, Kamalpur, Barpeta. (6th-8th April 1944).	..	..	..	..	Sylhet, Sunam- ganj, Maulvi Bazar.	416 11 0	Purpose of visit— Inspection.
2nd Sep. 1944 to 5th Sep. 1944.	..	..	Mangaldai (4th Sep. 1944).	..	..	..	113 4 0	Purpose of visit— Inspection.

REMARKS:— Kamrup
Nowgong
Darrang
Sibsagar
Lakhimpur
Sylhet
2 times.
2 "
2 "
1 time.
1 "
4 times.

(e)—No.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: The Hon'ble Ministers were at Mangaldai on the 5th and 6th December 1943, first time and on the 4th and 5th September 1944, second time. They were also at Barpeta on the 4th December 1943, first time and on the 8th and 9th April, 1944, second time.

In view of these facts how the Hon'ble Minister could say an unqualified 'No' in reply to Question No.92 (a) ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Sir, the Question was "whether it is a fact that every time the Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali, Revenue Minister, goes on tour to Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong, he is always and invariably followed by the Hon'ble Maulavi Abdul Matin Chaudhuri, the Finance Minister ?". I said 'No'. He has cited one or two instances only but it is not always and invariably so.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: Is it not a fact that the object of Hon'ble Abdul Matin Chaudhuri's visits to these places was to make contact with large number of immigrants to encourage them and to espouse their cause before the Hon'ble Revenue Minister ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: No, Sir.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: Is it not a fact that in one of the visits, Hon'ble Finance Minister had a bitter quarrel with the Hon'ble Revenue Minister on the question of settlement of land and eviction of immigrant encroachers from a certain reserve in Mangaldai ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: I had no quarrel with Hon'ble Maulavi Munawwar Ali.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: The purpose of visit by the Finance Minister, has been stated to be "Government duty". May I know the nature of the Government duty performed at Doboka-Road, Nowgong District and at Mangaldai ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Sir, I went to the Sylhet blocks in the Nowgong District to see the conditions of the Sylhet immigrants, but on the way, my car broke down and I had to come back from half the way.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: Is there a Government Treasury or a Branch of the "Imperial Bank of India" at Doboka Forest in Nowgong ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: There is no branch of the Imperial Bank at Doboka.

Srijut RABI CHANDRA KACHARI: Is it a fact that the Hon'ble Finance Minister went there to meet the Sylhet immigrants ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi ABDUL MATIN CHAUDHURI: Yes, as I have already said.

Sugar under the rationing scheme and price of Rice at Dhubri

Srijut JOGENDRA NARAYAN MANDAL asked :

93. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The quantity of sugar required per month under the rationing scheme for the Municipal town of Dhubri ?
- (b) Whether the quantity has been increased to three times the quantity that was required before the rationing order came into force ?
- (c) The quantity of sugar allotted for supply each month for the Subdivision of Dhubri ?
- (d) Whether it is a fact that the price of rice per maund at a higher rate is being maintained within the rationed area of Dhubri town ?
- (e) Whether the price of rice per maund has been gradually falling in areas outside Dhubri town ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

93. (a)—The average quantity of sugar required per month under the Rationing Scheme for the Municipal town of Dhubri is 475 maunds.

(b)—No. The quantity of sugar required before the rationing was introduced was 420 maunds.

(c)—2,500 maunds of sugar is allotted for supply each month for the Subdivision of Dhubri.

(d)—The rates of rice were revised from time to time with the fall of the market price. The present rates of rice as last revised on 5th November 1944 are as follows which are rather lower than those fixed by Government.

	Wholesale			Retail		
	Rs.	a.	p.	Rs.	a.	p.
Bhog rice (sick diet) ...	19	8	0	20	8	0
Fine rice ...	14	8	0	15	8	0
Common rice ...	14	0	0	15	0	0
Aus rice ...	10	8	0	11	8	0

(e)—Yes, the price of rice is gradually falling in areas outside Dhubri town to some extent; but Bhog and fine rice are not sufficiently available in the mufassil area at a rate lower than the wholesale rates fixed from time to time in the rationing area.

Sardar Beiram Singh, an externee of Dibrugarh town

Srijut JADAV PRASAD CHALIHA asked :

94. (a) Is it a fact that Sardar Beiram Singh of Dibrugarh town was served with an externment order in December, 1941 to leave within 72 hours the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Darrang, Nowgong and Kamrup ?

(b) Are Government aware that the said Sardar Beiram Singh subscribes to the creed of non-violence of Mahatma Gandhi and courted imprisonment under Gandhiji's instructions in the individual Satyagraha campaign of 1940-41 ?

(c) Are Government aware that he is an anti Fascist ?

(d) Do Government propose to withdraw the externment order passed on him and remove the restrictions on his movements ?

(e) Is it a fact that the said Sardar Beiram Singh is the proprietor of Dibrugarh Khowang Motor Service and an established businessman of Dibrugarh town ?

(f) Is it a fact that he paid annually some thousands of rupees as licence fee and income-tax ?

(g) Will Government be pleased to state whether any family or personal allowance has been granted to Sardar Beiram Singh ?

(h) If not, do Government propose to make any provision for his livelihood or in the alternative allow him to go back to Dibrugarh to resume his normal activities ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

94. (a)—Yes.

(b), (c) & (f)—Government have no information about these statements except from his own account.

(d)—No.

(e)—Government's information is that he was at one time a motor bus contractor, but at the time of his internment had no regular occupation.

(g)—No.

(h)—No.

Externment order on Dolbir Singh of Dibrugarh

Srijut BELIRAM DAS asked :

95. (a) Is it a fact that Dolbir Singh has been under orders of externment from his home in Dibrugarh since 1941 and that he is not allowed to live in any other place than Goalpara ?

(b) Are Government aware of his present helplessness and extreme pecuniary hardship for want of employment and complete breakdown in health ?

(c) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have received from time to time several representations from the said Dolbir Singh, stating these difficulties ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

95. (a)—This is not quite correct. He has been debarred only from residence in the five upper Districts of the Assam Valley.

(b)—Government's only information about the condition of Dolbir Singh is that he was active enough in Goalpara to incur strong suspicion that he was engaged in sabotage operations.

(c)—Yes.

Health of Srijut Siddhinath Sarmah, M. L. A. in Jail

Srijut BELIRAM DAS asked :

96. (a) Are Government aware that Srijut Siddhinath Sarmah, M.L.A., now confined in Jorhat Jail has been suffering from various diseases for the last one year and a half ?

(b) Is it a fact that he gets rheumatic fever every 3 or 4 months and that as a result of the same he has become very weak ?

(c) Is it a fact that on account of pyorrhœa and other tooth troubles almost all his teeth have been completely extracted ?

(d) Are Government aware that he is suffering from "blind piles", causing him unbearable pain, and that he has to be given special diet, which is not available in Jorhat Jail ?

(e) Is it a fact that Jorhat Jail does not suit his health generally ?

(f) If the reply to any or all of the above questions be in the negative, do Government propose to enquire into the matter ?

(g) Do Government propose to release him for his treatment outside and for recoupment of his health ?

(h) If not, do Government propose to transfer him immediately to Gauhati Jail, for better facilities for diet and medical treatment and for consultation with Dr. Bhubaneswar Barooah, M.B., his former consulting physician ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

96. (a)—Government received a report only on the 19th October that he is in ill health.

(b) —There is no reference to this in the medical report.

(c)—Not so far as Government are aware, but he has pyorrhœa.

(d)—The medical report discloses that he has "Fissure in ano" and "internal piles". It is not correct to say that all the ingredients of the diet prescribed were not available at Jorhat Jail.

(e)—This appears to be so.

(f)—Does not arise.

(g)—Order of release restricting him to his home town has been issued.

(h)—Does not arise.

Security Prisoners

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI asked :

97. Will Government be pleased to state—
- The total number of security prisoners in the Province, District by District since 9th August 1942 to October 1944 (figures to be shown month by month) ?
 - The total number of security prisoners released month by month within the period mentioned in Question No.97(a) above ?
 - How many of the releases since January 1944 have been conditioned with orders of internment, externment and such other restrictions ?
 - Whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the statement made in the House of Commons by Mr. L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State for India on October 1944 in reply to a question by Mr. Sorensen, M.P., to the effect that the releases of such detenus have been unconditional as a rule ?
98. Will Government be pleased to state—
- The number and names of security prisoners now in jail who have received personal and family allowance showing the amount of such allowance given to each individual prisoner ?
 - The number and names of security prisoners now in jail who are not receiving any personal and family allowance ?
 - The reasons for not granting any such allowance to these prisoners ?
 - The principle under which a security prisoner is refused or granted allowance ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

97. (a) & (b)—It is not practicable to find out accurately the figure monthly and by districts. In all, however, from the start of the movement till 31st October 1944, 463 persons were detained of whom 301 have been released. The numbers detained and released from each district between 1st January and 31st October 1944, which are accurately known, are :—

	Detained	Released
Sylhet	21	4
Cachar	1	...
Nowgong	49	3
Sibsagar	89	17
Lakhimpur	15	9
Darrang	5	1
Kamrup	22	6
	202	40

(c)—Particulars cannot be given by the month from the records. Twenty-eight were either externed or placed under a restrictive order.

(d)—Government have seen newspaper reports.

98. (a) & (b)—Fifty out of 162 are in receipt of family allowances. Government do not consider it desirable to discuss details in respect of individual prisoners. All security prisoners who cannot provide from their own resources are entitled to expenditure of Rs.7-8-0 per mensem on their personal requirements by the Superintendent of the Jail. Two prisoners have been sanctioned higher personal allowances by special order, in one case Rs. 20 and another Rs.10 per mensem.

(c)—When a family allowance is not given, it is either because the prisoner has no family, or because it is known that the family is not in need of such assistance, or because he has not applied.

(d)—Proved need.

Internees and Externees

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI asked :

99. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have taken into consideration the fact that internees and externees have been deprived of their livelihood and all fair and legitimate activities, by virtue of the orders imposed on them ?

(b) Do Government propose to revise this policy ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

99. (a)—As already stated, allowance are based on proved need and not on the income earned or alleged to be earned by the prisoner before he was detained.

(b)—No.

North Lakhimpur-Kamalabari Road

Srijut SARVESWAR BARUA asked :

100. (a) Is it a fact that the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Public Works Department during his last visit to North Lakhimpur assured the members of a deputation that waited on him that the improvement of the North Lakhimpur-Kamalabari Road into an all-weather motorable road would receive his careful consideration ?

(b) If so, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to state what has been done since to implement the assurance ?

(c) Has any estimate been made of the cost involved in the proposed improvement ?

(d) If so, what is the estimated amount ?

(e) Has the road found a place in any of the Assam Communication Boards' immediate projects ?

(f) If not, when do Government expect to include it in such a project ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

100. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Steps are being taken for inclusion of this project in the next year's budget.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Rs. 3,05,476.

(e)—No.

(f)—The question of including this project in the Agenda of the next meeting of the Communications Board will be considered if funds from Provincial Revenues are not forthcoming.

North Trunk Road from Chauldhoa to Sonarighat opposite Dibrugarh

Srijut SARVESWAR BARUA asked :

101. (a) Do Government propose to link up North Lakhimpur with Dibrugarh by extending the North Trunk road from Chauldhoa to Sonarighat opposite Dibrugarh and by providing a steam ferry there ?

(b) Have they ever got any estimate of the cost of this project made ?

(c) If so, what is the estimated amount ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

101. (a)—The project has been included in the Post-War Planning Scheme as a Provincial Highway. The question of ferry will come up after the road is improved.

(b) & (c)—Yes. In 1940 estimated cost was calculated at Rs. 9,00,000 but no work was done. A fresh estimate will be prepared in connection with Post-War Schemes.

Adjournment Motion re Complete stoppage of Municipal Administration in the town of Gauhati

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : There is a notice of an Adjournment Motion from Mr. Mookerjee.

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to discuss a question of urgent public importance of recent occurrence, namely complete stoppage of Municipal Administration in the town of Gauhati, particularly in Wards No.VII, VIII, IX and X.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Was there not another Adjournment Motion on the same subject standing in the name of Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri to be disposed of on hearing the Hon'ble Minister in charge?

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : As the Hon'ble Minister was sitting tight, I thought it my duty to move this Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Where is Mr. Chaudhuri ?

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : I don't know, Sir. He is absent from the House for the last two or three days.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Very well, the Hon'ble Minister may supply the facts, which I hope, he has collected by now.

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is identically the same Motion that was tabled by Mr. Rohini Kumar Chaudhuri who is absent today. As I had not sufficient materials with me that day, Sir, you gave me time to make a statement subsequently. I think, my hon. Friend Mr. Mookerjee today seeing that Mr. Chaudhuri is absent, has brought it up in the Assembly. Perhaps on Friday last Mr. Chaudhuri enquired of you what had happened to his Adjournment Motion and you were pleased to say that you would ask me some other day to make a statement.

Sir, I have collected some information from the Executive Officer and the Deputy Commissioner, Gauhati. I find that in every session Mr. Chaudhuri brings in something about the administration of the Gauhati Municipality. But I think Mr. Chaudhuri's grievance is mainly against the order of supersession of that Municipality by Government rather than anything else. Sir, I have got a report from the Executive Officer, where he has stated the situation with regard to these four Wards mentioned, in this Adjournment Motion.

First of all I should like to deal with Wards Nos.9 and 10. These two Wards have been included in the Municipal area not long ago and they are under the process of development. Actually Ward No.10 was in a low-lying area and there was no good road. In Ward No.9 there are only a few houses here and there and the Executive Officer even now wonders why that portion was included within the municipal limit by the Municipal Board, before it was superseded. Any way, Sir, last year the Municipality constructed a road in this Ward giving facility for communication and the Executive Officer now states that the conservancy of that area is fairly regular. Of course in Wards Nos.9 and 10 there is no water-pipe connection, but the Municipality is maintaining a number of tube-wells there and they are not charging anything as water-tax from the people of these Wards. As for Ward No.10, most part of it is being occupied by the Military now and they themselves, at the report of the Executive Officer of the Municipality, improved many roads. Some roads have been gravelled and the Military in their own interest also look into the sanitation of this Ward.

Next I come to Ward No.8. The Executive Officer as well as the Deputy Commissioner definitely are of opinion that there is no water scarcity since the Chatribari Hostel which is situated there has been getting plenty of water and there has been no complaints from them whatsoever.

Then comes Ward No.7. That is the Ward in which I understand Mr. Chaudhuri's residence is situated. Of course, there was some initial difficulty in water connection there. The line in which Mr. Chaudhuri's house is situated has got a very narrow pipe connection and this difficulty is there for a number of years even

before the order of supersession. The Executive Officer is thinking to remove the difficulty by replacement of the narrow pipe, but he says, it is not possible now-a-days, to get materials and to do the work.

Now, Sir, about communication. I got a report that only last year the road leading to Mr. Chaudhuri's house was repaired by the Municipality and it is in a fairly good condition. A large part of this Ward falls along the Trunk Road and the citizens of that Ward are having plenty of water supply from the main pipe connection, and the Additional District Magistrate who visited a few houses in that locality reports that there is no complaint from any of the residents regarding insufficiency of water-supply. The Trunk Road is being maintained by the Military and it is in a fairly good condition.

Now, Sir, Mr. Chaudhuri, that day, while moving his Adjournment Motion, mentioned that after our visit the situation had deteriorated and the Municipality became vindictive. It is far from so, Sir. That Government have taken this matter up very seriously, will be apparent from the fact that the Hon'ble Premier himself, in spite of his very heavy work, went to Gauhati to attend a conference of the leading people and the Military. Of course, Mr. Chaudhuri was absent that day as his son was ailing in Shillong, but my friend Mr. Kedarmal Brahmin was present in that conference. Everything in details was discussed, and we arrived at certain conclusions. On that day we learnt from the Executive Officer that the number of sweepers in Gauhati was very insufficient; the number of male sweepers was about 56 or so, but to-day, Sir, the total number has been increased to 134. The difficulty is, Sir, that the Military offer very attractive pay, and so these people run away. In spite of the fact that we have increased their pay and have given free rations, etc., still these people are attracted by the higher pay offered by the Military. The Executive Officer, Sir, has been able to recruit some people from outside, and conservancy in Gauhati has improved a lot. In that conference, Sir, the Military people agreed to give some lorries for the speedy removal of night soil. These lorries are now working, in addition to the night soil cars of the Municipality, for the clearance of the latrines.

Now, Sir, Mr. Chaudhuri said that there is a standing order for removal of night soil after an interval of three days. This is not so. The Executive Officer definitely said that there was no such order and no Municipality can perhaps pass such an order. So there is no foundation for this accusation.

My friend, Mr. Beliram Das, the other day spoke to me about a definite matter, and I am asking the Executive Officer to remedy that. As suggested by the Hon'ble Premier, the other day, it would have been better for Mr. Chaudhuri, who is my neighbour in Shillong to bring to my notice any definite grievance, that he might have had. I repeat this, Sir, here, that if Mr. Chaudhuri or anybody else living in Gauhati had any grievance and even after reference to the Executive Officer that grievance had not been remedied, I shall only be too pleased to take immediate action against the Executive Officer if this is brought to my notice.

Besides this, I may point out that there has been a distinct improvement in all the Wards since the Municipality was superseded. As I stated some time ago in connection with some other Motion, that Government had to take recourse to that unpleasant task of superseding the Municipality, when it had a debt of about Rs.1,30,000; the bulk of the debt has now been paid, and I think only about Rs.20,000 remains (it might have been reduced further by this time). Apart from this, Sir, the Municipality had a big arrear, and this arrear has been reduced to a minimum.

Now, Sir, I got the following figures from the Executive Officer, and I quote them for the information of the House. The Municipality before supersession, in the year 1941-42, with regard to these four Wards, spent only Rs.630 for each Ward for road repairing and maintenance works; the very first year after supersession, the Executive Officer spent Rs.1,076 for each Ward on the same account. For jungle cutting and drainage in the same year, the Municipality before supersession spent Rs.134 for each Ward, but the Executive Officer spent Rs.170. For water-supply, before supersession, the Municipality spent Rs.6,773; after supersession, the Executive Officer spent Rs.8,454. For conservancy, before supersession, the Municipality spent Rs.2,567; after supersession, the Executive Officer spent Rs.4,092. So, Sir, these figures show that there

is absolutely no ground for complaint. Of course, the times are abnormal, and there has been a heavy rush of people in Gauhati. Moreover, Sir, all the sweepers cannot be considered to be very responsible people. It might happen that in a particular house a sweeper might not have done his duty on a particular day, but that does not mean that the Executive Officer is not doing his job properly. I am sure that if such complaints are brought to the notice of the Executive Officer, he will take prompt action to redress the grievances.

I have nothing more to add, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to make two positions clear. I could not really follow the exact intention of the Hon'ble Minister so far as the scarcity of good drinking water is concerned at Gauhati. Am I to understand that there is no scarcity of good drinking water at Gauhati according to him? And the other point is whether the roads at Gauhati town are in proper order in the opinion of the Hon'ble Minister. Nothing has been definitely said on these two points. After hearing from him I shall decide my course.

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must thank Mr. Mookerjee because, I was not explicit in my statement, so far as this question is concerned. On the date of our visit, I found the Municipality, due to their usual negligence (I mean before supersession) did not attend to the machinery and as a result, it became unserviceable. Thanks to the Superintendent of Water Works, that he could somehow run the rotten machinery. The Deputy Commissioner himself said that he was very efficient and wondered how he could run the rotten machinery. I visited the Water Works, immediately after this Conference accompanied by the Deputy Commissioner, the Executive Officer and Mr. Kedar-mall Brahmin. Two machines were sent for repair to the Punjab, because the Calcutta firm refused to do any repair seeing the bad condition of the machines. They were not sent back, perhaps, due to transport and other difficulties. Still there are two engines. On the date of our visit these two engines were also out of order. It was the military people who came to our rescue. They set up two engines which were pumping up water on that date. Sir, after our visit these two engines were repaired. On that date I saw military people sending a few mechanics to attend to the engines, because the parts that were brought were not quite suitable. Those had to be rebored and filed so that they might fit properly. The two engines, that were at work, I myself saw, were pumping water to the utmost capacity of the reservoirs. A new filter bed was made some time ago. As to the other machine it was lying idle for want of a belt. I asked the Deputy Commissioner to send a special messenger to Calcutta to see if that is available and to bring it at once. I know, Sir, there is water. I cannot say whether it is quite sufficient or plentiful, but in regular hours people are getting water and the condition has been very much improved. It is not like what it was before our visit.

***Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE:** May I know, Sir, whether in the whole of the Municipal area water is being made available regularly?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: I have stated that, Sir, it was not so, as in some Wards there is no water connection at all and the Municipality is maintaining tube-wells there.

As regards roads, due to the negligence of the Municipality, before supersession, the road condition became very bad as they were doing only surface repair work. As a result, surface of the roads was very very thin and this could not stand heavy traffic. It has embarrassed the Executive Officer very much to attend to them, all at a time, as he cannot procure stones and metal quickly, now-a-days, to do the work, but in spite of that with the help of military he is doing all that are possible.

***Srijut BELIRAM DAS:** I wish to say something about this Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I cannot allow a debate now. Has he got to ask anything for information?

***Srijut BELIRAM DAS:** No. Sir.

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: The Hon'ble Minister said that it was due to the negligence of the previous Municipal authorities that the roads have become so bad, but I would say that due to the heavy traffic of the military ten-wheelers, that they have become so. The military are responsible for the deterioration of the roads.

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: It was really so; the military traffic is damaging our roads very much. For the information of my hon. Friend, I may say that this Government is in correspondence with the Government of India for some funds for setting our roads in proper condition.

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Will Government increase the number of tube-wells just to give the rate-payers sufficient quantity of drinking water?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: The Executive Officer is thinking that pucca wells will be more suitable than the tube-wells and he is ready to do that, but the difficulty is about cement. If he gets cement he will atonce start the work.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Does the hon. Member press for leave of this Motion?

*Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: No, Sir.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: As leave for Motion is not pressed, I need not give any decision as to whether the Motion is in order.

The Assam Money Lenders' (Second) (Amendment) Bill, 1943

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: There is no amendment to the Assam Money Lenders' (Second) (Amendment) Bill, 1943. So, the hon. Member may atonce move that the Bill be passed.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: I beg to move, Sir, that the Assam Money Lenders' (Second) (Amendment) Bill, 1943, be passed.

It is gratifying to note that the matter is so popular that it has no Amendment. At the time of moving the Motion for consideration of the Bill, I made it clear that this piece of legislation was brought in only to remove certain defects which were experienced in the last Amendment Act of 1943. Sir, the Amendments which have been sought in this Bill, are mainly to clear doubts which some of the officers are experiencing in adjudicating some cases. I think, Sir, I need not point out details of the Amendments which have been made by the Select Committee. Each hon. Member is in possession of the Amendments, so I need not waste the time of the House by repeating them.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:
"That the Assam Money Lenders' (Second) (Amendment) Bill, 1943, be passed."

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had no intention to take part in this discussion, because, I find that most of the hon. Members are anxious that the next item in the agenda should be taken up as soon as possible. But, Sir, I have been compelled to say a few words as my hon. Friend, Mr. Abdur Rahman, has said that this Bill is a simple and a popular one. I shall be failing in my duty, if I do not record my protest that it is neither simple nor popular. Sir, the principle of giving retrospective effect has been discussed on various occasions on the floor of this House. I know, Sir, I am crying in wilderness, but still I say that it is high time that we should realise that this is a very bad principle. There is no security of any contract if retrospective effects are given in this way. Depending on the present law, we do something to-day, but after a few days that law is changed and all the agreements and assurances and all the securities are gone. So on principle, I oppose this Motion and record my protest.

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI: I have nothing to say, Sir, except to add that no new policy has been incorporated in this Bill.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Sir, in reply to Mr. Mookerjee I want to say something. He characterised the Bill as bad as it seeks to give retrospective effect to certain matters. What is the meaning of giving retrospective effect? It will be found by this House that the Assam Money Lenders' (Amendment) Bill was introduced in this House in the year 1937—in the December Session and it was also put before the House in the successive Sessions of both the Houses and thus took a long time extending to 6 years.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: On a point of information, Sir. Is it because of its popularity that it took such a long time?

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: That was not due to unpopularity of the Bill, Sir, but due to the usual procedure on the part of both the Houses, as laid down in the Government of India Act. The matter had to be passed first by this House and then it went to the Upper House and then it came again to this House and so on and so forth. And again there was no Ministry for a period of time. All these have delayed the matter. During the pendency of the Bill the Mahajans took the best opportunity to realise their dues by bringing suits against the debtors. So, we have this Bill with a view to giving retrospective effect to the cases, that is, suits for decree that are pending from the time of enactment of this last Act, i. e., the Amendment Act 1943.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The question is:

"That the Assam Money Lenders' (Second) (Amendment) Bill, 1943, be passed".

The question was adopted.

Motion re the food-grains procurement policy of the Government of Assam

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: I beg to move, Sir, that this Assembly is of opinion that the food grains procurement policy of the Government of Assam be taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for affording us an opportunity for discussing the grave food situation, over which the minds of the vast majority of the entire population is agitated. As a matter of fact they are waiting in all eagerness for to-day's deliberations, on the expectation that some solution would be found out to extricate them from the unhappy bog in which they find themselves placed to-day.

During the last Budget Session of the Assembly, the procurement policy of the Government of Assam was subjected to severe criticism. A good deal of heat was generated on that occasion. But perhaps, owing to the cold atmosphere of Shillong, all enthusiasm waned and the kind words of assurances by the Hon'ble Minister in charge became cold mutton even before it could reach the heights of the Secretariat Hill.

During the last few months, the procurement policy of the Government steadily deteriorated. At the present moment, the situation is far too serious and the cultivators are finding themselves in a hopeless and helpless despair. I would appeal to the hon. Members not to treat this matter as a party question. It is too important, too grave, too fundamental to be made the plaything of party politics.

Sir, at this fag end of the year, I do not intend to dilate at length over the credentials of the Government Agents nor do I like to comment over the shady manner in which these agents were appointed. Suffice it to say that in the matter of appointment, the considered recommendations of the Gregory Committee was set at nought and Government launched upon a wreckless experiment fraught with the greatest danger for the agriculturists.

It might be profitable to narrate the actual condition of the country when the procurement machinery first started operation. I am conscious, Sir, that the conditions prevailing in the Surma Valley are looming large in my mind and I might be excused if my remarks mainly centre round the Districts of Sylhet and Cachar.

After a brief spell of free trade, suddenly the ban on export had been reimposed. This had taken the agriculturists quite unawares. Almost simultaneously there was a sharp fall in prices and a considerable stock lying in their hands was blocked for the year. The situation was aggravated when Government backed out from the contractual obligations by releasing lakhs of maunds of paddy they had earlier requisitioned on the grounds of falling prices. What is worse, they recovered the advances made even to the extent of issuing distress warrants. Nature has of late been far too kind to Assam and it helped us to reap yet another bounteous *Amon* crop. Subsequently the *Buro* also proved to be a record harvest. Thus the Government Agents began their operation in a full granary.

The normal trade of the country, however, was stifled at the request of the Government Agents. Almost all the licenses were withdrawn and issue of new license banned. This was done particularly in Sunamganj. Thus the Government Agents were left in virtual monopoly over the grain markets.

The very first thing that strikes a casual observer is the colossal neglect and cold indifference with which the Provincial Government handled the procurement operation. It is indeed a pity that they did not realise the grave responsibility involved. They sanctimoniously allowed more than a crore of rupees to be expended from the Provincial Exchequer without the slightest check. Thus the cultivators were left to the mercy of a few inexperienced adventurers who took the fullest advantage of the situation.

The Government did not think it worth while to enlarge the Supply Department with an efficient inspectorate staff, so that these officers might keep a close eye over the operations at various centres. They did not issue necessary instructions to the District Officers. Rather to use their own words the agents were allowed considerable latitude. As a matter of fact the District and Subdivisional Officers maintained almost an attitude of benevolent neutrality. They or the officers under them did not raise their little finger to check the worst type of profiteering that was being practised by the agents at the expense of the poor agriculturists.

I am filled almost with a sense of admiration, when I find a planned and organised uniformity in the ingenuous methods employed by the agents from Silchar to Sunamganj as if the authors were trained in the same school of devilry.

I submit, Sir, that the agents did not start their work with a good grace. Even during the first two months of operation there was a general cry against their questionable tactics. During this period, rice did not sell at more than Rs. 16 per maund at Sylhet and Karimganj where the market was at the highest pitch. It was much less in the interior. But still the agents charged Government at the rate of Rs. 21 per maund. The Secretary, Civil Supplies, was convinced of the charge. The District Officers corroborated the allegations. But obviously Government was determined to give the matter a go-bye. Long after a face-saving subterfuge was, however, adopted and an officer was deputed for local inspection. I regret to say that this officer toured "all round" in a car provided by the Agency. I am not interested to know what report this gentleman was pleased to submit.

This was the beginning. It bears a special significance. This first indulgence on the part of Government was most unfortunate. It made the agents confident of the Government attitude and encouraged them to be reckless for the future. If the Government exhibited iron will and solid determination, the subsequent events would not have developed.

Before the Budget Session met in last March, already there was intense agitation in press and platform against the corrupt practices of the Government Agents. In the Assembly, there was trenchant attack over their activities. Constructive suggestions were made by more than one hon. Member for better procurement. But the assurances of the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge, only afforded momentary satisfaction. If promises meant anything, by this time, Assam would have been a veritable heaven.

It is really mysterious why Government did not realise the security deposit which was prescribed as a condition precedent and was an integral part of the main agreement. This would have afforded a much needed brake in the hands of Government.

I maintain, that practically there was no supervision on the part of Government. They seem to have abdicated all power in favour of the agents. Moreover, they had no well planned policy. They showed vacillation and indecision at every step. This was manifest in the issue of contradictory orders from time to time. They ought to have realised that they had too much at stake. This "hands off" policy on the part of the Government has brought odium upon themselves and ruin upon the peasantry.

The food-grains procurement policy of the Government is supposed to be based, as a part of an All India Scheme, upon the recommendations of the Gregory Committee's Report. But the main object has been nullified in the working out of details. Here in Assam we did not realise that on it the life and property of thousands of persons depended.

It is indeed very curious that until very recently Government thought it fit to maintain a strict secrecy about the rates allowed to the agents. This enabled them to purchase at any price. It is public information now that when the agents were purchasing at the rates of Rs. 12 to Rs. 14 per maund they were charging Government at the rates of Rs. 17 to Rs. 18 per maund, on the strength of forged vouchers. In spite of repeated representations, Government did not think it worth while to publish the rates in the local papers or to advertise it through the Sarpanches, as suggested by me in the last Session of the Assembly.

We do not understand why Government is still fighting shy to fix bottom prices for paddy and rice. At one time the Hon'ble Prime Minister assured the House that he would fix it if the price level came down below Rs. 10 per maund. Many of the Members will bear me out when I say that rice is selling below Rs. 8 in many places in the District of Sylhet. To use a phrase of hon. Mr. Whittaker, the cultivators are falling through the floor. Has not time as yet come for the fixation of such a price? In the absence of a statutory minimum the agents are granted a very wide berth.

I do not intend to dwell at length over the manner how the cultivators were cheated in weight and rate, how they were subjected to utmost humiliation and hardship—how they were detained for days together, compelled to deliver their stocks at reduced prices and that too on credit.

The weights used were generally $82\frac{10}{16}$ tolas per seer. In many places, even 95 tola seers, were used. In the Sunamganj Bazar, the Special Officer in charge of Rice Control, detected a person while he was purchasing for the Syndicate at 95 tola dry measure. While the Superintendent of Purchases visited Patharia, he found that the agents of the Syndicate were purchasing *Buro* rice at Rs. 9-8 with dry measures of 90 tola seer. Similar have been the complaints throughout the Valley. No doubt it was one of the devices of a pre-concerted plan. As regards rates, I do assert definitely that on a flat calculation the cultivators were cheated to the extent of Rs. 2 per maund for paddy and Rs. 3 per maund for rice.

In cent. per cent. cases the vouchers were fabricated, either these were taken from their own men or signatures and thumb impressions were taken on blank printed forms. Such blank forms were seized by the Superintendent of Purchases at the office of the Syndicate at Sylhet. A little scrutiny could convince Government what a gigantic fraud it was.

Of late, we find that the agents are taking shelter under the sub-agents and private license-holders, who, they say, were responsible for these misdeeds and machinations. But is it not a fact that the biggest purchases were made direct at the area headquarters under the very nose of the partners of the firm and here the worst corruptions were practised?

Who authorised them to appoint sub-agents in direct contravention of the provisions of the agreement?

Is it not a fact that there are only 5 private licensees in Sunamganj? What was the amount of purchase from them before the 15th October?

The quality of rice purchased was often bad. The agents never cared for quality. They only raised this question as a lever to reduce the price. Otherwise they were

after the biggest margin. We heard of instances where water and pebbles were mixed to increase the weight. The Inspecting Officers from Bengal rejected a great quantity of rice purchased by the Agents. A huge quantity of paddy at Inathganj had to be destroyed as this was not found fit for export. The tax-payer has a right to know what became of the 20,000 maunds of rice that were brought to Shillong from the godowns of one of these Agencies and found unfit for human consumption. The residents of Shillong have commemorated the name of Mr. Benode Dutta (*alias* Minu Dutt), the senior partner of the firm by naming after him the rice consumed by them as "*Minu sail*" in grateful recognition of the quality of rice supplied by him.

Who is responsible for this huge waste and loss? Was not an enquiry justified in all these cases? I know, Government can compensate the loss from the huge profits they are earning from the 6½ per cent. *ad valorem* cess they have imposed and thus they can hoodwink the public eye. But perhaps that will not be for all time to come.

There has been widespread agitation all over the Surma Valley over the corrupt practices of the Agents. Public meetings were held and demonstrations staged. Hundreds of telegrams and representations were sent to the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Supply Secretary. Notes were submitted by hon. Members on repeated occasions. But all these efforts could not penetrate the placid calm of the Shillong Bureaucrats.

It is freely given out that this big agitation is stage-managed by an interested few, who had no share in the booty. But what about the Government Reports? What about the reports submitted to Government by no less a person than the Supply Secretary? Why no action was taken on the notes of the highest Executive of the Department? What about the reports submitted by the Deputy Commissioners of Sylhet and Cachar and by all the Subdivisional Officers? Had Government enough time to go through the report submitted by the Superintendent of Purchases to the Supply Secretary on the 27th September? I would like to refer to Memo- No 1034C., dated the 6th September submitted by Mr. M. Khurshid, the Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet, to the Supply Secretary. After narrating the various types of wickedness practised by the Syndicate, the Deputy Commissioner states, "This has been a constant headache with the administrative authorities. Either it should be scrapped altogether or very drastic action should be taken against them." May I know from the Hon'ble Prime Minister what became of the report of this most trusted Officer?

But what is the use of multiplying the tale? Evidently Government was determined to allow a free hand to the Agencies to strangulate the agricultural economy of the country. This supreme callousness on the part of Government is unprecedented in the History of Provincial Autonomy.

I know that the time at my disposal is short, but still I will take the liberty of reading to the House a Resolution adopted at a public meeting at Habiganj under the Presidency of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, M.L.A., the President of the Assam Provincial Muslim League, on the 27th October 1944.

"Resolution No. 3:

The Government purchasing agent, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate have totally failed to purchase the huge quantities of surplus paddy lying in the hands of poor producers. They are offering much lower prices than the rate fixed by Government. They systematically refuse to receive paddy brought in the godowns by the growers and keep them waiting for days together on false pretext and they also make delay in payment in almost all cases. They purchase paddy at the higher weight than the weight fixed by the Government. The next harvest will begin shortly. Unless the producers can dispose of this surplus paddy immediately they will not be able to bear the cost of harvesting and meet the daily necessary expenses, nor will they find space for storing the coming crops. All these have created a chaotic and serious situation in the country.

The meeting of the Working Committee of the Muslim League, Habiganj, held on 25th August, 1944, passed certain Resolutions regarding purchase of paddy and rice by the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate and copies of these Resolutions

were sent to Government, but it is a matter of great regret that no steps have yet been taken in the said matter.

This meeting therefore urges upon the Government of Assam to cancel the agency of Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate at once and purchase the surplus paddy immediately through Government Servants.

This meeting further urges upon the Government of Assam to appoint a Committee of Enquiry consisting of official and non-official members to enquire into and report about the actions of the Government Agents with regard to loss and creation of obstacles to the poor producers in disposing their paddy so that Government may take steps against them."

At my request, the Hon'ble Prime Minister, in spite of his indifferen health, undertook a strenuous tour in the interior of the Sunamganj and the North Sylhet Subdivisions. He addressed two mammoth mass gatherings at Derai and Fenchuganj. Was he not convinced of the genuineness of the charges?

I submit, Sir, that public confidence in Government is at the lowest web at the present moment. Wild rumours are afloat. The sooner this confidence is restored, the better for Government as well as for the public. The Government policy has also undermined the people's morale and surely it is not conducive to our war efforts.

The situation is far too critical to brook any delay. The agriculturists have been presented with an unprecedented crisis. They do not know what to do with their marketable surplus. In Sunamganj alone even now 15 lakhs maunds of paddy are waiting for sale. *Aman*, *Sali* and *Buro*—over 50 lakhs maunds—are available in the district of Sylhet. The cultivators cannot even sell their paddy at Rs. 3 per maund. The price is too disproportionate to procure other necessities of life. Here again Government have failed to implement the recommendations of the Gregory Committee. They have not been able to place at the disposal of the cultivators, necessary quantity of essential commodities and consumer goods.

The present food-grains policy of Government have torpedoed the laudable movement of "Grow More Food Campaign." It has hit the entire movement at the very source. As a matter of fact, the cultivators under pressure of circumstances are curtailing their existing acreage under the plough. When they cannot hope to procure a pair of bullocks even for Rs. 300 how can they hope to cultivate their usual quota? This shall have no doubt a deterrent effect on the normal life of the country.

A last word on the question of movement. I wonder, Sir, why this Government depended upon the Government of Bengal for the movement of the stocks. The Government of Bengal was only taking a small portion of our surplus. Could not the Government of Assam plan in advance for the grains movement, which is, in importance, only second to the troops movement?

Finally, I would like to know the financial arrangement that Government had with the Agents. In every centre lakhs of rupees were lying for months in arrears and this caused immense hardships.

Sir, once again I would like to put forward a few suggestions for the consideration of the Hon'ble Prime Minister and I hope these will have better luck this time.

(1) A floor price should be fixed immediately. For *Aman* paddy it should not be less than Rs. 7-8-0 per maund and for *Buro* not less than Rs 6-8-0, per maund. There should not be a difference of more than Re. 1 between *Aman* and *Buro*.

(2) The ceiling price should not be more than two rupees in excess of the floor price.

(3) All agreements with non-official agencies should at once be cancelled and procurement made through official agency. For this purpose an efficient Food Department with adequate staff should be established. The expenditure may be met from the Import cess receipts. Until this department is established, purchases should be made through the existing responsible officers of Government. The license may be forthwith cancelled under sub-clause (b) of clause 12 of the Agreement.

(4) Purchases should be made, as far as possible, at the cultivators' door and they should be assured of correct weight and full price fixed by Government.

(5) More godown space should be provided for storage.

(6) Regular and speedy movement should be assured, by river, rail and road.

(7) Private licenses should be allowed to operate in specified areas and inter-district trade restored. Such licenses should be given to *bonafide* dealers. If possible the Tea Industry may be allowed to make their own purchases.

(8) The 50 per cent. of the price of marketable stock in hand should be advanced to the cultivators as *Dadar*. The purchased stock should be removed as early as possible, possibly within the month of March.

(9) An Advisory Board should be set up in every Subdivision to check the purchase operation.

(10) Purchases should be made in surplus as well as in deficit areas. There should be procurement centre within a radius of 5 miles in a surplus area and within a radius of 10 miles in a deficit area.

With these submissions, Sir, I commend my Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That this Assembly is of opinion that the food-grains procurement policy of the Government of Assam be taken into consideration".

There are seven Amendments tabled by seven hon. Members. I will ask the hon. Members simply to read out their Amendments and after they have finished, I will ask them to make their speeches.

*Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Would it be possible for you to adopt the same procedure as you did on the debate on consumer goods, in regard to these Amendments?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I shall certainly do it. I have already instructed office in that behalf and as soon as it is ready, the hon. Members will be supplied with copies.

Khan Sahib Maulavi Dewan Muhammad Ahabab Chaudhuri to move his Amendment.

Khan Sahib Maulavi Dewan MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: I beg, Sir, to move:—

"That the 'inverted commas and the full stop' after the word 'consideration' be replaced by a 'comma' and the following words be added at the end of the Motion:— 'and that all the Government Agencies in the Surma Valley for procurement of paddy and rice be cancelled and the ban on free trade be withdrawn.'"

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Maulavi Mabarak Ali to move his Amendment.

Maulavi MABARAK ALI: I beg, Sir, to move:—

"That after the word 'consideration' at the end of the Motion, the following be added:—

'and an Enquiry Committee consisting of officials and non-officials be constituted to enquire into the working of the Government purchasing agencies'."

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhuri to move his Amendment.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: I beg, Sir, to move:—

"That after the word 'consideration' at the end of the Motion, the following be added:—

'and the procurement Agencies in the Province specially in Surma Valley be given all facilities for procurement'."

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy to move his Amendment.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: I am not going to move my first Amendment* but will move the second one. I beg, Sir, to move:—

*Speech not corrected.

*Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy to move:—

(Notice received at 3-58 p.m. on 11th November 1944.)

That after the word "consideration" at the end of the motion, the following be added:—

"and immediate steps be taken by Government to purchase all marketable surplus of *Boro* and *Amon* paddy in the Surma Valley at proper prices and weights and a committee of officials and non-officials be constituted to enquire into the highhandedness of the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate committee in the purchase of paddy and rice from the cultivators of the Surma Valley."

“That the ‘inverted commas’ and the ‘full stop’ after the word ‘consideration’ be omitted and a ‘comma’ be inserted and the following be added :—

‘and that the following measures be immediately adopted for procurement of paddy and rice in the Surma Valley :—

(1) All Government agencies and licensees for procurement of rice and paddy on behalf of Government in the Surma Valley be cancelled and an Enquiry Committee be constituted with officials and non-officials to enquire into the allegations made against the said agencies and particularly against the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate and to recommend to Government the necessary measures to be taken against them.

(2) To arrange forthwith purchase of the entire marketable surplus of paddy and rice in the Surma Valley directly from the producers through Government machinery following the methods mentioned below :—

(i) Bottom price of rice and paddy be fixed at the present scheduled rate fixed by the Government and also fix a reasonable maximum price ;

(ii) Government machinery be directed to purchase paddy and rice from the producers in co-operation with the Food-Committees, Co-operative Societies and Producers’ Committees ;

(iii) Purchasing centres be increased and more godowns be arranged all throughout the surplus areas, so that they may be within the easy reach of the producers. In *Buro* areas Government may arrange the granaries of producers till 31st March 1945, as godowns and further arrange extra available houses of persons who may spare them for the godown purpose, in consultation with the aforesaid people’s committees. In *Amon* and *Sail* areas Government shall arrange extra available houses of persons who may spare them in consultation with the committees mentioned above and utilise them as godowns ;

(iv) In case Government purchase paddy and rice and stock them in the granaries of the producers themselves, at least 50 per cent. of the prices are to be paid to the sellers immediately and the rest to be paid with the clearance of godowns ;

(v) Winter tracks be constructed in areas away from rivers or railway centres and carts, motor trucks, horses and mules be used for transport of rice and paddy from these areas ;

(3) Government licences be issued to the Co-operative Societies and honest traders under the recommendation of Food Committees in deficit areas for purchase of rice and paddy from surplus areas within the Valley.

(4) A portion of stock procured by Government be retained as a reserve against possible deficits in the Surma and the Assam Valleys”.

The Hon’ble the SPEAKER : Babu Rabindra Nath Aditya to move his Amendment.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : I beg, Sir, to move :—

“That the ‘inverted commas and the full stop’ after the word ‘consideration’ be replaced by a ‘comma’ and the following words be added at the end of the Motion :—

‘and that (a) The present system of procurement of rice and paddy be discontinued, (b) Normal trade channels be restored as far as possible subject to such control and supervision by the Government as may be deemed necessary from time to time, (c) The marketable surplus in rice and paddy be purchased forthwith by the Government on condition of its being warehoused by the sellers at Government expense, (d) Minimum and maximum price of these commodities be fixed from time to time with reference to their delivery at approved stations to be opened for the purpose and the price chart be duly published to make it reach the rural areas in the Province, (e) An Enquiry Committee be set up with a view to investigating into the complaints of malpractices against some of the existing procurement agencies and suggesting ways and means for better procurement on examination of the defects of the present system, and (f) The cess now levied on food grains procured from other Provinces be reduced by 50 per cent. in order to put them on to the market at a lower price.”

*Mr. A. WHITTAKER: May I know whether Mr. Aditya's Amendment refers largely to the condition in the Surma Valley and also to the whole Province?

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: It refers to the entire Province of Assam.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan to move his Amendment.

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN: স্পীকার মহোদয়, মৌলভী আব্দুল হামিদ খান চৌধুরী যে প্রস্তাব উপস্থাপন করিয়াছেন তাহাতে আমি নিম্ন লিখিত সংশোধনী প্রস্তাব আনয়ন করিতে চাই।

প্রস্তাবের শেষে নিম্নলিখিত কথাগুলি সংযোগ করা হউক :—

(১) সুল্লা উপত্যকায় ধান চাউল খরিদের জন্য যে সকল সরকারী এজেন্সী রহিয়াছে তাহা নাকচ করা হউক।

(২) বর্তমান এজেন্টগণ যে সকল অন্যায় অত্যাচার করিয়াছেন সে সবক্কে অনুসন্ধান করিবার জন্য একটা কমিটী নিযুক্ত করা হউক।

(৩) সরাসরি ভাবে গভর্নমেন্ট কর্তৃক চাউল ও ধান্য খরিদ করা হউক।

(৪) কৃষকের হাতে যে উদ্ধৃত বোরো ধান্য রহিয়াছে তাহা খরিদ করা হউক এবং কৃষকের গোলায় রাখিয়া তাহার মূল্য বাবদ কৃষককে অগ্রিম শতকরা ৫০ দাদন দেওয়া হউক।

(৫) উদ্ধৃত আমন, শাইল ও আউশ ধান্য খরিদ করিয়া তাহা সরকারের গুদাম জাত করা হউক।

(৬) ধান্য ও চাউলের সর্ব নিম্ন মূল্য ধার্য করা হউক।

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The English translation of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan's Amendment, is as follows:—

“That the ‘inverted commas and the full stop’ after the word ‘consideration’ be replaced by a ‘comma’ and the following words be added at the end of the Motion:—

‘and that (1) the present Agencies appointed by Government in the Surma Valley for procurement of rice and paddy be cancelled,

(2) a Committee of Enquiry be appointed to enquire into the alleged malpractices of the present purchasing Agencies in the Surma Valley,

(3) the purchase of rice and paddy in the Surma Valley be made through direct Government Agency,

(4) arrangements be immediately made for purchase of entire surplus stock of Buro paddy, stock them at the granaries of the sellers by paying at least 50 per cent. of the price immediately,

(5) surplus Amon, Sali and Aus paddy be purchased immediately by the Government and store them in Government godowns, and

(6) minimum price be fixed for the sale of rice and paddy”.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Members have just read out their Amendments. Without reading out those Amendments over again, I simply say that the Amendments are duly placed before the House.

The debate is now to begin.

Maulavi MABARAK ALI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the present procurement policy of Government has led to the inauguration of a policy which our Hon'ble Ministers will themselves condemn when they have recovered from the present excitement and have resumed the even tenor of their minds. The critical situation that has arisen owing to the disproportionate fall of the price of paddy and Government's indifference thereto, demands a thorough discussion of the matter in this House. Ninety per cent. of the population of the Surma Valley are agriculturists. Paddy is their only source of income. By selling paddy they procure all the necessaries of their lives. So when the price of all other commodities is going high by leaps and bounds the fall of the price of paddy must tell heavily upon the agriculturists. This fall of price has carried with it all possible evils. To add to their difficulties, they cannot sell their surplus stock for want of purchasers although they have to dispose of their old stock before the next harvest to make room for new stock. The price of rice and paddy has so disproportionately gone down that, this year, the cost of harvesting will be much higher than the price of the harvest itself. Sir, it is certainly a grave question to be

looked into as to why the price of paddy only, has fallen down. The Government banned the export of paddy and appointed two Syndicates, consisting of some businessmen, some hon. Members of this House and some Benamdars—the Hon'ble Ministers best know, who these Benamdars represent, as the recognised agents of Government to purchase paddy at rates fixed by Government from time to time. When and how Government came to decide granting of a monopoly right of purchasing paddy to a particular group of people, this House did not know. This House was never consulted. This fact was never given out. The Government could take the House into confidence in all other matters and even in petty matters like granting increment of scale to its servants but in an important matter like this, which involves the destinies of the millions of agriculturists, and a great economic problem too, Government did not consider it a fit case to consult this House or to take its advice. Possibly they did not do it for their own interest. It is an open secret now that some of the Hon'ble Ministers are interested in these Syndicates. So they could not take this House into confidence nor they could take its advice. The last November Session of the Assembly having been just over, some of the Ministers in collaboration with those Members and some of their favourite businessmen could form overnight two partnership business firms, known as (1) the Surma Valley Food Grain Syndicate and the other (2) the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Sandicate, which were at once appointed Government Agents. No tenders were invited for this purpose. Sir, why this strict secrecy was maintained for such an important and vital matter? What was the hurry for which Government could not afford to invite tenders for that? What did compel Government to take a decision on such an important matter behind this House? Certainly, it was their own interest which prevented them to consult this House, and compelled them to maintain a strict secrecy over the matter. Sir, monopoly business has always been discouraged. When granting of a monopoly is essentially necessary, extreme caution for safeguarding the interest of the public and arrangement for strict supervision are required. Government can say that they fixed the rate at which paddy had to be purchased but did they care to enquire at what rate the so-called Government Agents were purchasing paddy? The Government Agents never purchased the paddy at the rates fixed by Government. Numerous complaints were made to Government but Government never cared to enquire into them. Sir, I have mentioned before that the export of paddy was prohibited. The poor agriculturists are to sell their paddy to the Government Agents, I mean these Syndicates—who are making the best use of their position as monopoly purchasers for paddy and rice of the Province and to make illegal profits and are dictating the price which is much lower than that fixed by Government to the agriculturists. The agriculturists, too having no other purchasers, are compelled to sell their paddy to them, however low that rate may be. They again refused to purchase *Aus* paddy at all on the plea that Government do not require it. If it is true, what arrangement Government have made for the sale of *Aus* paddy? Due to this disproportionate fall of the price of paddy, the poor agriculturists are on the very verge of ruin.

A considerable portion of every week's Gazette is occupied with the tour programmes of the Hon'ble Ministers to the interior. Has any of them cared to know what these Syndicates are doing? Do they ever desire to come in touch with the condition of the poor agriculturists, notwithstanding innumerable complaints? They have perhaps no time to see what profits their *brothers of the same joint family* are making—some are possibly out to inspect their newly purchased tea gardens worth some lakhs.

Sir, there may be Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Assistant Secretary and many other Supply Officers in the Supply Department. But can any effective supervision be expected from them when some of the hon. Members of this House and some of the Hon'ble Members of the Cabinet are interested in the matter? As a matter of fact, what did we find at Karimganj? The Assistant Secretary of the Supply Department had been there and was seen moving here and there in the car of one of the Agents of Government. This Agent is of course an hon. Member of this House

and the Assistant Secretary for Supply was also invited to his house to a dinner. This is one of the many instances how supervision was exercised over the business of the Syndicates. So, Sir, the price of the paddy has not naturally come down. Had it been natural, the price of all other commodities would have also gone down. This fall of the price of paddy has been rather forced by the circumstances, I have related above. Sir, the present Food Procurement Policy of Government itself is responsible for this disproportionate fall of the price of paddy and this policy may be characterised as an inhuman policy and by following that policy the Government of Assam stand convicted of gross and criminal injustice before the bar of the civilised world. This wrong is to be expiated; this injustice is to be remedied before this Government can seek for a loyal co-operation from the people. And hence, Sir, for the reasons stated above, there should be a thorough and sifting enquiry into the matter and immediate steps should be taken to save the poor agriculturists from ruin.

With these few words, Sir, I command my Amendment for the acceptance of the House.

Khan Sahib Maulavi DEWAN MUHAMMAD AHBAB CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am glad to find that my hon. Friend, Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury, has come forward with a comprehensive food grain Motion, for discussion on the floor of the House. I also gave notice of a similar Motion which ran thus: "That the critical situation arising out of the paddy and rice procurement policy of Government be taken into consideration".

Now I shall be failing in my duty if I do not offer my thanks to Government for allowing the Motion of Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury to be placed before the House. Thus we have got an opportunity to ventilate the grievances of the producers and the poor cultivators, whom I have the honour and privilege to represent here.

I may humbly recall it to the memory of the hon. Members of this House that during the last Budget Session of the Assembly many of my hon. Friends criticised the actions of the agents of the Syndicate and made the atmosphere of the House very hot. But I kept "*chup*" over this serious matter with which is involved the very life and death question of our agriculturists who may be called the real backbones of our country and true soldiers of our Home Front. They are the real supply agents of our soldiers who are fighting in the Eastern Front for the defence of India.

My intention, Sir, was to allow a further opportunity to the Syndicate to mend their ways and means. I sincerely believed, Sir, that after so much castigation on the floor of the Assembly my hon. Friends who are Members of the Assembly as well as the partners of the Syndicate, would exert their influence and get all the grievances of the cultivators promptly redressed. But it appears that I hoped against hope. Even after the Assembly Session was over, I found that the Syndicates were out to perpetuate their game and the poor agriculturists were receiving rough and shocking treatment in their hands. Here is an appeal issued by the agriculturists of the Surma Valley which runs thus:—

“তাহারা ধান চাউল কিনিবার একচেটিয়া এজেন্ট নিযুক্ত হইয়াছিলেন,—তাহারা এই ধানের একটা ছোট অংশও কিনিতে পারেন নাই। কান্তিক মাস শেষ হইতে চলিল। জল দ্রুত সরিয়া যাইতেছে। এত ধান বিক্রয় হওয়ার আশা কোথায়? কৃত্রিম কন্ট্রোলের জোরে গবর্ণমেন্ট খরিদ বিক্রয় বন্ধ করিয়া দিয়াছেন। এই মজুদ ধানের একটা বন্দোবস্ত করা কি তাহাদের উচিত ছিল না? এই অবস্থার আশু প্রতিকার না হইলে কৃষকের সমূহ সর্বনাশ হইবে।

গবর্ণ মেন্টের নিয়োজিত এজেন্টগণের অত্যাচারে কৃষকগণ সর্ব স্বান্ত হইয়াছে। বিরাসী দশআনা হইতে আরম্ভ করিয়া নববই তোলার ওজনে তাহারা ধান কিনিয়াছেন। নানা মিথ্যা অজুহাতে তাহারা কৃষককে হয়রান করিয়াছেন। ধান চাউলের জন্য সরকার যে সামান্য মূল্য ধার্য্য করিয়াছেন—তাহারও একটা মোটা অংশ এজেন্ট ও তাহাদের চেলাদের পেটে গিয়াছে। শুনিতে পাই, বিগত জানুয়ারী ও ফেব্রুয়ারী মাসে সিণ্ডিকেট গবর্ণ মেন্টের নিকট হইতে ১৭ টাকা হইতে ২১ টাকা পর্য্যন্ত

চাউলের দাম আদায় করিয়াছেন কিন্তু কৃষককে ১২৯ টাকা দাম দেওয়াও তাহারা আবশ্যিক বিবেচনা করেন নাই। বোর ধানের জন্য কৃষক গড়-পরতা চারি টাকা ও চাউলের জন্য যাড়ে নয় টাকা দাম পাইয়াছে। এইভাবে কৃষকের মেহনতের ধন অপরে অপহরণ করিয়াছে। আমরা আপনার নিকট এই অন্যান্য লুণ্ঠন ও অত্যাচারের বিচার প্রার্থনা করিতেছি।”

So, Sir, just after attending the last Budget Session, when I returned to my constituency, I was seriously taken to task and accused by my masters, I mean the members of my constituency, for the criminal neglect of my duty in the last Session. I received many letters, and hundreds of poor cultivators met me and asked me to place their demands before Government. As a sample, I may be allowed to read a portion of the letter which criticised my action as a Member of the Legislative Assembly which I hope, Sir; is quite relevant to the present Motion.

“মৌলভী দেওয়ান মোহম্মদ আহবাব চৌধুরী সাহেব, M.L.A.

জনাব দেওয়ান সাহেব,

গত এক বৎসর যাবৎ আমরা কৃষকেরা ধান বিক্রী করিতে না পারিয়া আমাদের প্রাণ কণ্ঠাগত হইয়াছে। সরকারী দর ৭৮০ মণ হইলেও আমরা আমান ধান মণ প্রতি ৩ টাকা দরেও বিক্রী করিতে পারিতেছি না। একটি গরুর মূল্য ১৫০ এবং একজন চাকরের মাসিক বেতন ৩০।৩৫ টাকা সুতরাং আমরা অন্যান্য জিনিষ পত্রের বদ্ধিত মূল্যের সহিত প্রতিযোগিতা করিতে না পারিয়া অত্যন্ত ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হইয়াছি ও হইতেছি এবং শতকরা প্রায় ৫০ জন কৃষিজীবী হাল চাষ ছাড়িয়া দিয়াছে তদজন্য সরকার বাহাদুরের ‘অধিক শস্য ফলাও’ আন্দোলনও ব্যর্থ হইয়াছে তার উপর খাড়ার ষার ন্যায় আপনারা M.L.A. সাহেবেরা গভর্ণমেন্ট হইতে ধান চাউলের একচেটিয়া বন্দোবস্ত আনিয়া আমাদের নাক মুখ বন্ধ করিয়া আমাদের সর্বনাশের কারণ হইয়া দাড়াইয়াছেন। আমরা কি জিজ্ঞাসা করিতে পারি আমাদের রক্তশোষণ করিয়া ও মুখের প্রাস কাড়িয়া আমাদের এম্বারগিরীর সুযোগ গ্রহণ করিয়া ধান চাউলের কারবার করিবার জন্যই কি আমরা আপনাদিগকে এম্বারগিরীতে পার্টিয়াছিলাম? আপনারা আজ আমাদের আমানতদার ও প্রতিনিধি হইয়া আমাদের সর্বনাশ সাধন করিতেছেন। জানিয়া রাখুন আপনারা হিসাব নিকাশের দিন শীঘ্রই আসিতেছে। যাহারা আমাদের রক্তশোষণ অর্থে জমি বাড়ী খরিদ, দালান কোঠা তৈয়ার, ব্যবসায়ের খাতা স্কীত করিতেছেন—আমাদের সর্বনাশের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাহাদেরও সর্বনাশ হইবে।

জনাব দেওয়ান সাহেব, আপনাকে একজন ধানিক ও পরহেজগার ব্যক্তি বলিয়া জানি কিন্তু আপনি নিজে সামিল না থাকিলেও আপনি গত বাজেট সভায় চুপ থাকিয়া আপনার সহকর্মীগণকে আমাদের রক্তশোষণ করিতে সাহায্য করিয়াছেন ও করিতেছেন। আমরা জানিতে চাই যে ইহাই কি আপনার ধানিকতা ও পরহেজগারী?

বর্তমানে ধান চাউল রপ্তানী বন্ধ থাকার নিষেধ আজ্ঞা ভাঙ্গিয়া বাহাতে পূর্বের ন্যায় free trade প্রচলন আজ্ঞা জারী হয় তাহা এম্বারগিরী সভায় আন্দোলন ও প্রাণপণ চেষ্টা করিয়া আসাম গভর্ণমেন্ট বাহাতে এই আজ্ঞা প্রদান করেন তাহার সুবিধা করিতে মজি হয়। আদাব আরজ। ইতি। ২৯।১০।৪৪ইং। থানা—ছাতক।

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|
| ১। সেখ ইয়াছিন। | ৭। মশরক আলি। | ১৩। হাঙ্গুর বাপ। |
| ২। সেখ সরাফত। | ৮। আছমত। | ১৪। সেখ হজল। |
| ৩। আরমান আলি। | ৯। ইলিয়াছুদ্দিন। | ১৫। সেখ আজই। |
| ৪। কাউয়ার বাপ। | ১০। হাঙ্গিম উল্লা। | ১৬। কুটুমিয়া। |
| ৫। ফয়াজ আলি। | ১১। ছুইয়া আলি। | |
| ৬। রফিক উল্লা। | ১২। মুছলিম আলি খাঁ। | |

Sir, I plead guilty to the charge. It shall not be out of place to mention here that the majority of the hon. Members including myself have been elected by their constituencies, 99 per cent. of whom are cultivators. We must remember, we go if our producers go. I like to convey it—through this Assembly—to the country at large, the

we stand by them and shall get their demands and grievances redressed by Government. Some of the agents of the Syndicates are my best friends. But I must confess that my allegiance to my constituency is greater than my personal relationship with my friends. I must be true to my salt and must pay my allegiance to the suffering peasants, who have sent me here as their *Amanatdar* to defend their cause.

Sir, the food procurement policy has become the burning topic, nay the only topic in the Surma Valley. It has created a deadlock and has broken the economic backbone of our society. I find here, Sir, that comrade Karuna Sindhu Roy, Mr. Lakshe-svar Barooah, Mr. Mahichandra Bora, Maulavi Mabarack Ali and Maulavi Muzaraff Ali Laskar gave notices of several Adjournment Motions and wanted to discuss the food situation of the country. Thus it will reveal to the House how serious the situation is. Besides this, I may also mention here that the critical food situation in the country has attracted serious attention of the Provincial Muslim League and has been included in its programme. In a meeting of the Assam Provincial Muslim League Council—a Resolution was passed unanimously and mandate was given to us that the license of the Syndicates be cancelled and ban on inter-district trade be withdrawn. With these few words, I again urge upon Government that the license of the Syndicates be cancelled.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Will it not be better if the Hon'ble Minister first stated the attitude of Government with regard to this Motion?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: My plan is to allow all the hon. Members who have moved Amendments to finish their speeches and then to call upon the Hon'ble Premier to give his first reply.

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, গত ৯ই নভেম্বর তারিখে শিলংএ আসাম প্রাদেশিক মুসলীম লীগ কাউন্সিলের যে সভা হইয়াছিল তাহাতে আসামের বিভিন্ন জিলা হইতে ১৫০ জন প্রতিনিধি উপস্থিত হইয়া Surma Valley র ধান চাউলের Agents দের সম্বন্ধে অনেকেই এই পুকার মন্তব্য করিয়াছেন যে বৃটিশ গভর্ণমেন্টের—পুখম হইতে অদ্যাবধি—জমিদারী জুলুম, মহাজনী জুলুম ইত্যাদি বত পুকার জুলুম হউক না কেন বর্তমানে Surma Valley র ধান চাউলের Agent দের অত্যাচার ও জুলুমের সম্বন্ধে সে সবেৰ কোনই তুলনা হয় না। হাঁড় ভাঙ্গা পরিশ্রম করিয়া দরিদ্র কৃষকেরা যে ফসল উৎপাদন করিয়াছে সেই ফসল ঘরে খাকা সম্বন্ধে—বিক্রয় করিতে না পারায় অর্থাভাবে তাহাদের সোহের দুলাল ছেলে পিলেরা বিনা চিকিৎসায় মারা যাইতেছে—অর্থাভাবে তাহাদের চিকিৎসা হইতেছেনা। মানুষ মরিয়া গেলে কফন, দফন করিবার জন্য টাকার নিতান্ত দরকার কিন্তু এই টাকা কৃষকদের হাতে নাই। তাহাদের ঘরে যথেষ্ট ধান চাউল আছে কিন্তু বিক্রয় করিতে পারিতেছে না। লাশ ঘরে পরিয়া খাকা সম্বন্ধে অর্থাভাবে দফন, কফন করিবার ব্যবস্থা করিতে পারিতেছে না। কৃষকেরা গভর্ণমেন্টের Agent দের নিকট ধান চাউল নিয়া গেলে হয় কিনিতে চায় না, নাহয় বলে গুদানের অভাব, নাহয় উপযুক্ত মূল্য দিতে চায়না। এই Agent দের নিকট ধান চাউল বিক্রয় করিতে গিয়া কৃষকদের অনেক দিন বসিয়া থাকিতে হয়; পরে অতি কমমূল্যে উহা বিক্রয় করিতে হয়। উপযুক্ত মূল্যে ধান চাউল বিক্রয় করিতে না পারিয়া কৃষকেরা মরিতে বসিয়াছে। আমার বন্ধুগণের মধ্যে অনেকে বলিয়া থাকেন যে আমাদের কয়েকজন Assembly র মেম্বাররা এই কাজে লিপ্ত থাকায় আমরা দীর্ঘাবশতঃ দেশের বিভিন্ন স্থানে তাহাদের বিরুদ্ধে নানা রকম আন্দোলন সৃষ্টি করিতেছি। আমি মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রীকে অনুরোধ করিতেছি যে তিনি যেন এই হাউসের প্রত্যেক পার্টি হইতে সুদক্ষ মেম্বারদের ও গভর্ণমেন্টের উপযুক্ত অফিসারদের লইয়া একটা কমিশন নিযুক্ত করেন এবং তদন্ত করিয়া আমার কথার সত্যতা প্রমাণ নেন। আমি সুরমা ভ্যালীতে হবিগঞ্জ, সুনামগঞ্জ, করিমগঞ্জ, সিলেট, হাইলাকান্দি, শিলচর ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন এলাকায় ঘুরিয়া সেইসব জায়গার অবস্থা দেখিয়া ও লোকের কাছে শুনিয়াই আমি এইসব অভিযোগ করিতেছি। হিন্দু, মুসলমান, ট্রাইবেল, খৃষ্টান—বিভিন্ন ধর্ম্মা-বলানি কৃষক, ব্যবসায়ী, উকীল, মোক্তার, ডাক্তার পুত্রতির নিকট হইতে সমস্ত ব্যাপার জানিয়াই এইসব অভিযোগ করিতেছি—আমি অতি রঞ্জিত কিছুই বলিতেছি না। আমি কমিশন দ্বারা তদন্ত করাইতে চাই—যে এইসব অত্যাচার হইয়াছে কিনা এবং কিভাবে হইয়াছে এবং Agent দের জুলুমের জন্য কৃষকদের কত টাকার ক্ষতি হইয়াছে। এই বৎসর যদি গভর্ণমেন্ট এই কৃষকদের রক্ষা না করেন তা হইলে সমস্ত আসামে, বাংলায় যে অবস্থা দেখা দিয়াছিল, সেই অবস্থা দেখা দিবে

কিনা এই বিষয়ে আমি আসাম মুসলিম লীগের পক্ষ থেকে মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রীর দৃষ্টি বার বার আকর্ষণ করিয়াছি। গত সেপ্টেম্বর মাসে আমি আসামের প্রধান বাহাদুরের নিকট উপস্থিত হইয়া দীর্ঘসময় ব্যাপি আলোচনা করিয়া আসামের প্রজাদের দুঃখ মোচন করিতে বার বার তাহার দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করিয়া বলিয়াছি যে বর্তমানে কৃষকদের দরকারী জিনিষের দাম ১০ হইতে ২০ গুন বেশী হইয়াছে। যে লাঙ্গলের কাল পূর্বে ১০ আনার কিনিতে পাওয়া যাইত তাহার দাম এখন ১০ পাচশিকা হইয়াছে। চামের গরুর দর ১০ টাকা হইতে ১৫০ টাকা দাড়াইয়াছে। যে সব মজুর দিনে ১০ আনা পাইত আজ তাহারা ৩।৪ টাকা পাইতেছে। কৃষকদের পরামর্শ দেওয়া হইয়াছিল—Grow more food—করিতে হইবে। এই পরামর্শ অনুযায়ী তাহারা অধিক ফসল জন্মাইয়াছে এখন সেই ফসলের উপযুক্ত মূল্য না পাইয়া বিক্রয় করিতে পারিতেছে না। এইভাবে অত্যাচার করিয়া যদি কৃষকদের ধ্বংস করা হয় তাহা হইলে কি করিয়া তাহাদের নিজেদের জীবন রক্ষা করিবে এবং অন্যান্য সম্প্রদায় তাহারা তাহাদের উপর নির্ভর করে তাহাদের রক্ষা করিবে কি করিয়া এই যে আনাদের ঘাড়ের উপর জাপানী দস্যুর আক্রমণ তাহারা রোধ করিবে। আমি এই গুরুতর সমস্যার প্রতি এই House এর দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করিতেছি। গত দুই বৎসর হাঁড়ভাঙ্গা পরিশ্রম করিয়া তাহাদের সমস্ত সম্বল ব্যয় করিয়া এই কৃষকেরা পতিত জমি ভাঙ্গিয়া আবাদ করিয়া যে ফসল জন্মাইয়াছে সেই ফসল লইয়া ছিনি-মিনি করিবার অধিকার গবর্নমেন্ট বা কাহারও নাই। এখন গুনা যায় যে কৃষকদের কাছে ৫০ লক্ষ মণ ধান মজুত আছে এবং উপযুক্ত মূল্য না পাইয়া তাহা বিক্রয় করিতে পারিতেছে না। এই অবস্থায় কৃষকেরা কি করিয়া বাচিবে? এক বিঘা জমিতে হাঁড়ভাঙ্গা পরিশ্রম করিয়াও ৫০ টাকা ব্যয়ে ৬৭ মণ ধান কৃষকেরা পায়, সেই ধান যদি মাত্র ৪ টাকা মণে বিক্রয় করিতে হয় তবে কৃষকেরা বিঘা পিছু ২৮ টাকা পাইবে। ইহাতে কি আজকালকার দিনে চলিতে পারে? যদি মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রী মনে করিয়া থাকেন যে কয়েকজন মেম্বারকে সন্তুষ্ট করিলেই তাহার মন্ত্রীত্ব থাকিবে তাহা হইলে তিনি অত্যন্ত ভুল করিতেছেন। কয়েকজন মেম্বারকে লক্ষপতি করিলেই তাহার মন্ত্রীত্ব বজায় থাকিতে পারে না। তাহাকে আমি সাবধান করিয়া দিতেছি যে জনসাধারণের সাহায্য ছাড়া তাহার মন্ত্রীত্ব রক্ষা করা কোন মেম্বারের পক্ষে সম্ভব নয়। আমি দীর্ঘকাল দেখিয়াছি যে মেম্বাররা সর্বদায়ই তাহাকে ভ্রমকি দেন—মেম্বারদের আঙ্গীতদের চাকরী না দিলে তাহারা মন্ত্রীত্ব ভ্রমকিতে ভয় না পান। আমি মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রীকে অনুরোধ করিতেছি যে, তিনি যেন এইসব ভ্রমকিতে ভয় না পান। তিনি জনসাধারণের স্বার্থ রক্ষার জন্য যদি বদ্ধপরিকর হন তবে আসামের ১ কোটি ১২ লক্ষ লোক তাহার পিছনে আছে—তাহারা তাহাকে সকল প্রকারে সাহায্য করিবে— তাহার Ministry কে শরীরের রক্ত দিয়া রক্ষা করিবে। মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রীর এই ধারণা ভুল যে, কয়েকজন মেম্বারকে সন্তুষ্ট না রাখিলে তাহার এই Ministry থাকিবে না। তাহারা এই মেম্বারদের জন্ম দিয়াছে আসামের সেই ১ কোটি ১২ লক্ষ লোককে যদি তিনি রক্ষা করেন তাহা হইলেই তাহার Ministry টিকিতে পারে। আসামের কৃষকেরা শুধু আসাম রক্ষা করিতে নয় সমস্ত ভারতবর্ষকে তাহারা রক্ষা করিতে চায়—তাহারা মুদ্রা সাহায্য করিতে চায় এবং দেশবাসীকে রক্ষা করিতে চায় কিন্তু যদি তাহাদের এইভাবে মরিতে হয় তবে তাহারা কি করিতে পারে। আমার বন্ধুর আবদুর রহমান আমাকে বলিয়াছেন—“আমাকে বলিলে কি হইবে গবর্নমেন্টকে বলুন—গবর্নমেন্ট অনেক মানুষকে ফড়িয়া নিযুক্ত করিয়াছেন এবং তাহারাই এইসব অন্যায্য করিতেছে, আপনারা আমাদের বিরুদ্ধে মিথ্যা অভিযোগ করিতেছেন”। আমি শুধু মেম্বারদের বলি না—Agent, ফড়িয়া ইত্যাদি সকলেই কৃষকদের উপর অত্যাচার করিতেছে। আমি মন্ত্রীদের বলি যে, তাঁরা যেন এই মোশনের পক্ষে ভোট দেন। আমি মাননীয় প্রধান মন্ত্রীকে বলিতেছি যে তিনি Derai ইত্যাদি জায়গার সভায় যে প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়াছেন তাহা যেন তিনি রক্ষা করেন। আমি আশা করি যে তিনি আসামের ১ কোটি ১২ লক্ষ—হিন্দু-মুসলমান, ক্রাইবেল, খৃষ্টান সকল সম্প্রদায়ের এই সম্মিলিত দাবী রক্ষা করিবেন এবং এই মোশনের পক্ষে ভোট দিয়া একটা ইতিহাস সৃষ্টি করিবেন—এই আমার appeal এবং এই মন্তব্য প্রকাশ করিয়া আমার সংশোধন প্রস্তাবের পক্ষে দাবী জানাইতেছি।

[Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, M.L.A., spoke in Bengali in support of his Amendment.]

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government procurement policy and measures have created an appalling situation in the Surma Valley. Practically the whole of the surplus, lying with the producers, is still lying unsold. In many areas there are absolutely no arrangements for procurements. The machinations of Government Purchasing Agents have reduced the price of paddy by Re. 1-8 to Rs. 2-8 per maund less than the Government rate generally throughout the entire rural area. The reduction in the price of rice is also in the same proportion.

In Patharkandi and Durlavcherra areas in Sylhet, prices of rice and paddy have been further reduced by Rs. 6-6 and Rs. 3-4 per maund respectively ; while in Joypur area in Cachar *Aus* and *winter-paddy* are both being sold at the same price of Rs. 2 per maund, which means a reduction of Rs. 3-4 per maund in the price of *Aus* paddy and Rs. 5-4 per maund in the price of *winter paddy*.

The misery in the *Buro* and *winter-paddy* areas, equally defies description. Water has subsided in the *Buro* areas while the surplus and those stocks which were frozen but not purchased by Government last year are lying undisposed with the producers. In the *winter-paddy* areas, harvesting operations have commenced already. But the producers still lie saddled with the last year's surplus in their godowns, which must be cleared, to make room for the incoming stock.

In the *Buro* areas the season for cultivating the next *Buro* crop is due to commence immediately, while the producers are at their wit's end as to where to find funds for cultivation expenses—when wages of agricultural labourers generally stands at Rs.2 per diem and the value of agricultural implements and cattle has risen by 800 per cent. In the *winter-paddy* areas as producers know not how to meet the harvesting expenses which have increased sixfold for thrashing being the gravest problem.

The producer is riddled with the abnormal rise in the cost of living. There is no adequate and regular rural supply of essential commodities at controlled rates.

The want of harmony between the Supply and Co-operative Departments has been mainly responsible for the establishment of only a handful of Consumers' Co-operative Stores in this vast area. An increase in the number of Co-operative Stores is not only covertly discouraged by the Government Officers concerned but the existing ones stand in the predicament of being throttled by a systematic bungling, especially uncertainty and reduction in providing supplies. Compared to the Co-operative Stores, the Government control shops are found to be accorded far more preferential treatment by the Supply Department.

The people of rural areas, thus being exploited by blackmarketeers and profiteers are very much eager to organise Co-operative Stores, but even by making petitions after petitions to Government they cannot bring the Inspectors to their villages to give the first start. Their urge is so great that they are victimised by cheats who befool them by false personification. I shall place before the House an unfortunate but nefarious incident which took place in village Rajapur under Police station Jamalganj. An unknown person posing himself as a Co-operative Inspector formed a so-called Co-operative Stores Committee in the village and took Rs.35-9-3 pies as the price of controlled goods to be supplied to them. Their need for getting things at lower rate is so great that they overlooked all the impossibilities which occurred in their mind, after his departure. Of course, he gave them a receipt and here is the receipt.

“অদ্য আমি ২৫ নং মার্কেলের রাজাপুর গ্রামের শ্রীকৃষ্ণচরণ দাস ও শ্রীরঙ্গাচরণ দাস ঠৌর খুলিবার আদেশে ৩৫১/৩ (পয়ত্রিশ টাকা নয় আনা তিন পাই) বুঝিয়া পাইয়া অত্র রসিদ দিলাম।

(Illegible)
25-7-44”

Last year when they could sell their paddy at higher rates, they did not hesitate to buy a jackfruit at Rs. 9 and this year, to get things at lower rate, they pay in advance to unknown persons, even not thinking that they may be cheated. Why is it so? Because they have no other alternative but to get essential commodities at the lowest possible rates when their prices of paddy and rice are going lower and lower for the non-purchase by Government agents and licensees.

The vagaries in the supply of salt, kerosene and cloth through the Government Controlled Shops, which are grossly inadequate in number, matters are of standing disgrace, while the quantity actually supplied is generally more an apology in the name of supply.

The real picture is that the producer is completely at the mercy of the blackmarketeer for essential supply. Even in the highly exceptional circumstances when he can secure supply at controlled rate, in return for a maund of paddy which fetches him Rs.2-8-0 only, he can at best have one seer of mustard oil, 1 seer of salt and ½ seer of kerosene.

The rates charged for essential commodities supplied by Government have been fixed high in comparison with that at which these are actually purchased which is obviously indicative of some profiteering on the part of the Government while the quality is inferior to that available in the market. Sugar purchased by the Government at Rs.11-2-6 per maund, delivery free to destination, is resold at Rs.18 per maund to the controlled shops or the Co-operative Stores. The Government rates and quality are, by themselves, factors of great hardship to the producers.

Last but not the least, come the problems of medical aid to the ailing, payment of money-lenders' dues, landlords' rent and Government revenue.

With plenty of rice and paddy in stock the producers have no cash though they must provide for all these items of expenditure in their budget.

The Government suspended procurement temporarily after only 3 to 4 lacs of maunds of rice had been purchased by the Government Agents up to the middle of October last. Though Government have again issued instructions for resumption of purchase, the Government agents are not purchasing on the plea that there is no space in the godowns.

The producers are being driven desperate in consequence. In their frantic drives to secure hold on some cash, many are being helplessly victimised by profiteers, hoarders and smugglers; while others are thinking in terms of removal of ban on exports outside the Province.

The forecast of paddy outturn in the Province holds out the picture of a decrease in the normal outturn by at least 25 per cent. There has been a considerable reduction in the normal area under paddy. In the Districts of Kamrup and Nowgong, reputed to be the granery of the Assam Valley, 66 per cent. of the normal outturn can at most be expected. The position is the same so far the prospect of outturn in the *winter-paddy* areas of Surma Valley is concerned. Even the Government crop forecast which can be taken to furnish an optimistic view, fixes the probable outturn at 83 per cent. of the normal. It is particularly in view of position of crop outturn that the Gauhati Bar Association has adopted a resolution for conservation of all paddy produced in the Assam Valley districts for local consumption, and for building a reserve to meet the crop deficit.

We find that the Government policy of procurement itself leaves room for malpractices that may render the very object of procurement a nullity. An analysis of the policy and measures reveals the undermentioned loopholes for malpractices:—

(1) The Government Agents have, for practical purposes, been placed in sole charge of procurement in the respective zones placed within their jurisdiction. They hold the position of monopolists and at the same time the most important key position in the Government procurement policy which they can contrive to abuse;

(2) The co-operation of the people's organisations, a factor that could have best eliminated malpractices, have been by passed.

(3) No minimum price for rice and paddy has been fixed by Government. So the rates can be reduced at pleasure by putting the producer at a disadvantageous position. This can be easily done as there can possibly be no other competitor in the market.

(4) The terms of contract between the Government Agents and the Government have not been declared or given publicity to. This enables the Government Agents and the men employed by them to put all the blame on the Government for ineffective procurement for purposes of their own nefarious ends.

(5) The purchasing centres fixed are very few in number. The godown arrangements fall grossly short of actual requirements. The arrangements for removal of stocks from these godowns are still more inadequate, irregular and ineffective.

It is noted with the gravest concern that actual malpractices in procurement have led to the exploitation of producers, which is borne out by the following facts:

With the Government Agents in the centre, a network of organisations devised to loot the stores of the producers has been set on foot. This organisation has enveloped people from all strata of society. Touts, petty commissioned agents, traders and money-lenders, village elders and leaders, petty and high landlords—all are more or less represented in this unholy combination.

In the different stages intervening between the transfer of the stock from the producers to the Government godowns, there exists a tier of three to four middlemen whose gains are derived from the amount or proceeds which rightly belongs to the producers only. The result is that the producers are getting Rs.3-4-0 to Rs.1-8-0 less for every maund of paddy or its equivalent in rice.

There is no end of contrivances resorted to for reducing price. The most useful one is refusal to purchase on the grounds that (i) Government have stopped purchase for the present, (ii) no funds have been sent by the Government for purchase, (iii) there is no space in the godowns as the Government have made no proper arrangements for removal of paddy from godowns, and have provided no additional accommodation either.

The other heads on which the prices are reduced are expenses incurred on account of establishment maintained at the purchasing centres and machinery set up for purchasing.

Then again, payments for paddy purchased are not even made in all cases, though vouchers for payment made are taken on the plea that payment would follow after the bill is sanctioned by the Government. Up to the Pujahs transactions of this nature of a total value of more than a lac of rupees at Sachna centre, two lacs of rupees in the *Buro* areas of Habiganj, and half a lac at Chhatak besides the other purchasing centres have taken place.

I shall now narrate some stories how the cultivators are cheated in rates in Sunamganj and Habiganj *Buro* areas by the Eastern Bengal and Assam Syndicate. Now when they carry paddy to the purchasing centres, cultivators are refused on the plea of having no Golas, no money, no bags. But being compelled by long waiting for which much money and time had to be wasted, which could have been utilised for more urgent and important works relating to cultivation, they either sell their paddy at very low rates, that is at Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per maund though in September and October, the rate was Rs. 6 and Rs.5-4-0 per maund respectively or go away without money leaving the paddy with the Syndicate, and receiving a chit as receipt.

I shall cite one instance of one whose name is Arjad Ali Chaudhury. He is present here in the Gallery. He applied to the Secretary, Habiganj Kishan Sabha as follows (In Bengali) :—

“মহাশয়,

গত ৩১১১৮৮ ইং তারিখে বিকাল অনুমান ৫।।০ ঘটিকার সময় আমি নবিগঞ্জ বাজারের সরকারী ধান্য খরিদার ডাঃ নিম্বাবুর রহমানের নিকট আমার বিক্রীত ধান্যের মূল্য ও তাহার রসিদ দাবী করি। তিনি রসিদ দিতে অস্বীকার করায় আমি তাকে রসিদ না দিবার কারণ জিজ্ঞাসা করি। ইহাতে তিনি অত্যন্ত চটিয়া আমাকে নানা প্রকার অকথ্য গালি দিতে থাকেন। গালি দেওয়া তাহার অত্যন্ত অন্যায় হইতেছে বলিয়া আমি প্রতিবাদ জানাই। তিন তখন তাহার ভাই ওফরানকে আমাকে মারার জন্য হুকুম দেন। তাহার ভাই তৎক্ষণাৎ একটি রুল নিয়া আমাকে মারিতে উদ্যত হয় এবং তাহার ঘরের কিছু দূরে আমার ডান চোখের উপরে ভীষণ আঘাত করে। আঘাত অত্যন্ত গুরুতর হইয়াছে। সঙ্গে ডাক্তারের সার্টিফিকেটের নকল দিলাম। ইতিপূর্বে ডাঃ নিম্বাবুর রহমানের সহিত আমার ব্যক্তিগত কোন স্বার্থ নিয়া বাগড়া বিবাদ ছিল না। সরকারী ধান্য খরিদার হিসাবে তিনি নবিগঞ্জে ধান্য খরিদ করিতে আরম্ভ করিলে আমি কৃষকদের স্বার্থ রক্ষার্থে নিম্ন কার্যগুলি করি। সম্ভবতঃ ইহাই তাহার বিরক্তির কারণ :—

১। ধান্য খরিদ করার জন্য সরকার কি দর ঘোষণা করিয়াছেন তাহা জানার জন্য আমি এই অঞ্চলের কৃষকদের সহিত আলোচনা করি এবং উক্ত উদ্দেশ্যে সিলেট ডি, সির নিকট টেলিগ্রাম করি।

২। ধান্য খরিদে নবিগঞ্জে যে দূনীতি চলিতেছে তাহার প্রতিকারের জন্য সরকারের নিকট একটি গণ দরখাস্ত প্রেরণ করি, উক্ত দরখাস্তে বিভিন্ন গ্রামের প্রায় এক হাজার কৃষকের দস্তখত সংগ্রহ করি।

৩। উক্ত দূনীতির প্রতিকারের জন্য শিলংয়ে প্রতিনিধি দল পাঠাইবার জন্য বিভিন্ন গ্রামের কৃষকদের সহিত আলোচনা করি ও চাঁদা সংগ্রহ করি।

৪। লীগ তদন্ত কমিটির নিকট এই অঞ্চলের কৃষকগণ যাহাতে তাহাদের বিক্রীত ধানের দর ও লান্চনার কথা জানায় এবং কোন গ্রামে এখনও কত ধান বিক্রীর বাকী আছে তাহার হিসাব দাখিল করে তাহার প্রচার করি।

এই অঞ্চলের কৃষকদের স্বার্থ রক্ষার্থে ও আমার নিজ স্বার্থে মহাশয় সমীপে আমার নিবেদন। ইহার প্রতিকারের ব্যবস্থা করিয়া কৃষক সমাজকে নিশ্চিত বিপদের হাত হইতে রক্ষা করুণ।

ইতি।

আরজাদ চৌধুরী,
চরণীও কৃষক সমিতির সভ্য।”

I like to cite another instance of a cultivator who comes from Sunamganj. He took some paddy to the Sachna centre. He had to wait there for a long time and at last he had to leave his paddy without getting the money. He simply got a small chit signed by one Nani.

In the matter of weight, 82 to 95 tolas are taken in some places for every standard seer of 80 tolas. For wastage due to handling and diminution of weight by atmospheric effect in the godowns, one seer extra per maund is openly taken in certain centres. To crown all, comes the trickery in manipulation of the indigenous scale which accounts for an excess of a quantity up to 10 seers per maund. These are going on more or less at every centre, but Sachna appears to have assumed a prominence in this achievement.

In the matter of scale: I shall read out the telegram sent to me by Babu Rasik Nandy, Ex-M. L. C., of the previous Reform:—

“Hakola, Karunasindhu Roy, Member, Assembly, Shillong, Following instruction of Superintendent, Purchase, Sylhet Srishdeb and twelve producers offered paddy to Nayapara centre of Syndicate in Madhabpur thana. Agent persistent refusing latter purchase because producers pointed out incorrectness of scale. They are kept waiting for four days nights with paddy still Agent adamant. Move proper authority for redress. And now most purchases made from single food-grain licensee. Very few from producer”.

Now I am reading his letter in Bengali.

“সেহাং ঠেকায় পড়িয়া: আপনার নিকট ও শ্রীযুত কামিনী কুমার যেন মহাশয়ের নিকট যে আরজেন্ট টেলী করিয়াছি তাহা পাইয়া দরিদ্র প্রজাগণের উপকারার্থে যাহা করা আবশ্যিক তাহা আশা করি করিয়াছেন। সিঙিক্‌টের লোকজন যাহাতে তাহাদের ধান্য খরিদ করিতে বাধ্য হয় তাহার ব্যবস্থা করিবেন। সিঙিক্‌টের লোকগুলি দরিদ্র কৃষকদের উপর কিরূপ অত্যাচার উৎপীড়ন করিতেছেন তাহা ভুক্তভোগী ভিন্ন অন্যে বুঝিবেনা। তাই অধিকাংশ মিরশাদার শ্রেণীর লোক তাহাদের বিশেষ কোন অভাব নাই তাহাদের গোলার ৮০০১,০০০১,৫০০ হাজার মন ধান্য বিক্রি করিবার চেষ্টা করেনা। সিঙিক্‌টের লোকজন ডিপুটী কমিশনার এমন কি মন্ত্রী মহাশয়দের ও তুরাক্ক রাখেনা বলিয়া সাধারণে প্রচার করে—তাহাদের যাহা খুসি তাহাই করিবে—তাহাদের কোনই অপরাধ হইবেনা। দরিদ্র কৃষকগণ শ্রীহটের ডিপুটী কমিশনার সাহেবের নিকট ও সিভিল সাপ্লাই অফিসারের নিকট নিজেরা দরখাস্ত করিয়া যে দরখাস্ত দিয়াছে তাহার এক খণ্ড নকল আপনার নিকট পাঠাইলাম। ঐ দরখাস্ত অনুযায়ী কাজ হয় কিনা অনুগ্রহ পূর্বক তৎপ্রতি দৃষ্টি রাখিয়া যাহা বিহিত উচিত মনে করেন তাহাই করিবেন। আপনারা এখানে আসিলে তাহাদের অত্যাচারের আরো অনেক সাক্ষী প্রমাণ পাইবেন ও অনেক বিষয় জানিতে পারিবেন। ওজনের গুণগোলের বিষয় যাহা আমাদের নওয়াপাড়া সেন্টারে হইয়াছে তাহা এবং টেলীগামের মর্ল এসেম্বলীতে move করিবার জন্য আপনাকে আমার সনির্বন্ধ অনুরোধ জানাইতেছি।

—Rasiklal Nandy Majumdar.”

The fact that the Government rates are being lowered every month, gives the Government Agents a further scope for wrongful gains. A quantity far in excess of that actually purchased can be shown in the account, and the deficit made up by actual purchases in the following month. This can enable the Agents to enjoy the benefit of higher prices in the preceding month for the quantity actually purchased in the following month for which a lower rate is fixed.

Adjournment

The Assembly then adjourned for lunch till 2 P.M.

(After lunch)

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: How long will the hon. Member take? I hope he will finish within 5 minutes.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: Yes, Sir, I will finish soon.

Sir, the Government Agents have specially resorted to harnessing the old Government license-holders for perfection of their machinery and scheme of exploitation of the producers. These licensees are not bound to purchase at any fixed rate and hence are not restricted from purchasing at any reduced price by the terms of their licenses. While the terms of the contract with the Government enjoin the Government Agents to purchase at a fixed rate, this difference between the two categories of purchasers introduced to operate in the market, obviously as a white wash to the dirty role of the Government Agents, itself provided the loophole for squeezing the peasants. Here I shall cite an instance. There is an old licensee named Pushparaj Lalwani, a millionaire. When I met hon. Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury, I narrated to him, how this millionaire was making purchases at lower rates and was making huge profits. The office of the Syndicate is situated on one side of the river and that of this purchasing agent is on the other side of the river. Sir, Government Agents have secret understandings among themselves and they are cheating the poor cultivators by not giving them the actual price. I, therefore, request the Government to appoint an Enquiry Committee consisting of officials and non-officials and to take immediate action according to the recommendations of that committee.

My next point is this that Government should purchase directly all the paddy which is now lying in the producers' godowns at the proclaimed maximum rates fixed by the Government, *viz.*, paddy at Rs.6-8-0 and rice at Rs.7-8-0.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, food-grains procurement is probably the most complicated machinery yet handled by the Government. The magnitude of the problem, the question of setting up of a new trade structure in place of one hardened by the experience of a century must puzzle even the master minds which used to work in different grooves. Government servants ripened in the administration through ordersheets and calling bells have all on a sudden been drafted to intricacies of trades where ordersheets cannot penetrate. So we notice the pathetic scene of our high grade officers running to the industrial and commercial centres coaxing and cajoling those very traders for a sympathetic deal who in normal times used to *salaam* these officers with their visiting cards for favour of patronising their goods. A change from budgetary accounts to commercial and costing account is difficult indeed to adjust. The lure of cheap gain tempts the publicman in position to change over to the contracts and supply. But trade refuses to accept the overnight convert. There come in the tragedy and travails.

Sir, when passions run high, reason retires; where there is much heat, there is less light. So, it will be our efforts to take an impersonal view of the food situation and to analyse it in its right perspective. We are not here to blame any individual so much as the policy adopted by the Government in the process of procurement. Under given circumstances any man unless he is a saint or a fool might lend himself to malpractices for which the gates were so wide open. So long as profit motive is the guiding factor in our social relations, you cannot justifiably condemn any body for putting the amount he likes if your cheque is blank.

Sir, the other day the Hon'ble Food Member of the Government of India rightly observed in his speech on the opening of the All-India Food Conference that the problem was not merely one of allocating and distributing surplus, but that it would remain insoluble without efficient procurement and efficient distribution in every part of India.

"Nothing" he said "must be left undone to ensure that we are making available to the public every ounce of food that we can produce." He is probably yet to know that even in one part of a front line Province like Assam a huge stock of food-grains is going to be lost for failure of the procurement machinery to handle it.

The Food Member further indicated in the same speech of his, "definite intention to associate public opinions" with this work and he proposed to set up at the Centre, to quote his words—"The third point is that it is my definite intention to associate public opinion with our work. With this object in view I propose to set up at the Centre, in an advisory capacity, a body representative of all important elements. I consider the advice and collaboration of non-officials to be absolutely necessary in our task and I trust that it would prove possible for me to enlist the co-operation of all sections of my countrymen." But here in Assam no co-operation from the public was invited—rather it was avoided as far as practicable. When we approach the Subdivisional Officer or the District Officer with the complaint about their procurement policy, they evade their responsibility on the allegation that they are not in the know of things regarding the procurement policy of Government and say that there is no connection between the Subdivisional and District authority with the procurement policy of Government. So, one section of the Government agency or Government machinery has been refused all relationship with the procurement policy. About the association of public co-operation, the less said, the better. As has been rightly observed by one of the hon. Members, these agencies which involved the most vital question of the day, were distributed only just after the Session of the Assembly was over.

Sir, when the Government are so anxious to consult the wishes of this House in small matters like increase of pay of some Sub-Deputy Collectors, is it not more desirable that in this important matter Government should take the opinion of this House? We are allowed only the privilege of *post-mortem* examination. In the procurement of consumer goods or in the procurement of food-grains we are never given the option to say anything before the policy is adumbrated. But although food is now an All-India question, Assam Government betrays no anxiety to associate public opinion with it as desired by the Central Government.

Sir, if there is, during the war, no room for private trade in food grains, then the Government has no right to refuse to buy all marketable surplus. But in the Surma Valley the last *Aus* crop is not being taken by the Government nor are they willing to open any outlet for the export of the surplus of the *Aus* paddy. What is the sense in this policy of obstruction?

Sir, the disparity in the price of rice between the two Valleys of the same Province ranges from Rs.4 to Rs.7. Inefficiency of procurement and distribution is writ large on this wide gap. Government would set up as the sheet anchor of their defence, transport difficulties. But I may humbly point out that where private trade has been allowed to function, the variation in the price level in different places is not so sharp, the availability of the stock not so difficult notwithstanding its heavier handicaps in transport facilities. Where Government fail, the trade succeeds. This is a good pointer to the Government.

With regard to my Amendment, I owe some explanations for some of the clauses, as some of my hon. Friends complained that many Amendments looked very complicated. As for example, in (b) I have stated that "Normal trade channels be restored as far as possible subject to such control and supervision by the Government as may be deemed necessary from time to time".

My idea is that in the present circumstances, there should be a synthesis between competition and control. Competition will play its part within the gap between maximum and minimum prices. I emphasize the necessity of utilising the normal trade channel, because trade people have got their special technique of storage and buying. Otherwise, wherever any new agencies are created, they take the help of middle men only. They have no direct relation with the growers. Therefore, a large number of intermediary links are created and the difference of price between what is paid by Government and what is received by the growers becomes very wide.

As regards (c)—The marketable surplus in rice and paddy be purchased forthwith by the Government on condition of its being warehoused by the sellers at Government expense—this is one of my suggestions. There is a plea that there is want of godowns. In that case, godowns of some of the big cultivators might be utilised for the purpose and that the stock of the small growers might be taken

delivery of by the Government. The big growers' stock might be kept in their own godowns subject to certain restrictions, if necessary. If our present law is not adequate to deal with the situation, even an Ordinance might be passed providing safeguards for storing paddy at the godowns of big cultivators or growers. If that is done and a certain percentage of the value is given at once, *i.e.*, if 50 per cent. of the value of the commodities be paid at once and the balance be paid as soon as arrangement for delivery is made, then I think there will be some relief to the cultivators and they would somehow or other be able to make arrangement to keep the commodities in their own custody pending delivery by the Government.

Then, Sir, minimum and maximum price of these commodities be fixed from time to time with reference to their delivery at approved stations to be opened for the purpose and the price chart be duly published to make it reach the rural areas in the Province.

Sir, there was a clamour for fixing of the minimum price for a long time. If I remember aright, Mr. Whittaker put it in a very nice expression when he said that "if the price structure had its ceiling, it must have its floor as well through which cultivators might not fall". It seems that in the absence of floor of the price structure the cultivators are slipping below all hopes of recovery. This is why it is high time that Government should be bold enough to declare their minimum price at which the food-grains are to be purchased. Sir, much has been said about it by different Members of this House and I need not dilate upon it again. Only I should like to say that in the absence of this minimum price the agents were given a long rope to purchase commodities at any price they liked and that is why this catastrophe has arisen. Had there been a minimum price perhaps the agony of the cultivators might have been reduced to minimum.

My next demand is for an Enquiry Committee. Sir, such an Enquiry Committee, if appointed, will examine the complaints thoroughly and find out defects of the present system and the recommendation of such an Enquiry Committee might help us to guide ourselves in our future transactions. We could also shape our policy in the light of the suggestions of the Committee. I am not vindictive so much as to get a guidance.

Then comes the question about cess. With regard to the question of cess I do not confine it only to the cases of paddy and rice, but for other goods also that are imported from outside. Government have not as yet let us know what is the amount of cess they have levied on the goods that they are selling to the public. But my information is—of course I am subject to correction—that it is 10 per cent. in value. The volume of trade handled by Government certainly makes room for reducing this cess. Some one reported—I am not quite sure—that there is a huge surplus in the hands of Government on account of this cess. Sir, Government is not here for making profits. Since they are handling all the trades themselves, I think, their rate of cess ought to be revised so that the goods might be made available to the public at a much cheaper rate.

Sir, we are told that wherever Government lay their hands they leave the mark of inefficiency, for example, *atta* and flour. These two items that are available to the public are almost rotten mostly due to defective storage and delayed release for sale. I am given to understand that there is a confidential Circular to the effect that the Health Officers should not be allowed to examine the quality of Government stores of these stuffs. I am not quite sure whether this is correct, but if such things were stored by the private dealers then certainly all the rigours of law would have at once been applied. But because the stuffs belong to Government, perhaps they have the benefit of the legal presumption that Government stocks are good unless the contrary is proved for which they won't give a chance. This is why my submission before this House is that no difference of treatment be made in respect of Government stuffs and the private trader's stuffs and that the cess be reduced to a considerable extent.

Sir, with these words, I would commend my Amendments for the consideration and acceptance of the House.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am entirely at one with my hon. Friends when they criticise the policy of procurement and the system of operation.

I am one of the partners of the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate (*hear, hear*) and therefore I stand to speak on behalf of myself and the Syndicate.

At the end of the last November Session, when the agency was going to certain outsiders, we protested and after that it came to us. (*hear, hear*). We were appointed agents for procurement and it is regrettable to say that we could not work a policy for a week even. If Government passed an order to work in one way and we began to work, then another order went quite opposite to the previous one. This put us into difficulties in procurement. Besides this, we could not get adequate space to store the procured commodity. It is well known to the hon. Members of this House that in our villages and village markets, houses for storage were not built either by Government or by private persons. So, we had to take small houses mostly from businessmen and in some cases from cultivators in the villages. When these houses were filled up to the capacity, Government failed to arrange transport of those stocks. Only after the month of June or July some quantity could be transported to Bengal by boats. That also, was very small in quantity. The contractor of the Bengal Government failed to place adequate number of boats in our procurement centres and therefore the commodity that we procured remained in our stock and this was responsible to a certain extent for our failure to purchase the entire surplus of the District. We wired to Government too frequently and informed them that the *buro* rice was inferior in quality and it was liable to be damaged and so Government should make immediate arrangements to remove the stock. I received a telegram on the 8th of November, while I was leaving Sunamganj for Shillong that arrangements were being made for the movement of the existing stock but up till now no such arrangement is made. If this stock could be moved from our godowns we could at least collect some 2 lakhs of maunds by this time. There is, Sir, a dispute, as I read from the report of the Supply Secretary, between the boat contractor of Bengal and the Bengal Government and perhaps for this dispute, the boat contractor could not or did not place boats regularly at our centres. We were informed by Government that from the 1st of November, some quantity would be taken delivery of by the Bengal Government from Tahirpur and Madhyanager centres and from the 5th November, from Derai, Baushi and Patheria centres and from the 7th November, from Sunamganj and Sachna centres. But the House will be surprised to hear that on the appointed dates not a single boat was placed by the contractor at these centres and therefore not a single grain could be transported to Bengal. This is one difficulty.

Another difficulty is regarding the storage. Our houses are mostly *kutchha* as *pucca* houses are not available in mofussil centres. So, if the rice and paddy were left unmoved in such houses, there was apprehension of damage. We informed Government about all these difficulties, but I am sorry to let the House know that Government hardly enquired of it or found out the way in which the difficulty could be removed. During the Puja vacation, the Supply office, Treasury and Banks—all were closed. Therefore, we did not get the required money from the Government and in most of the centres we could not make regular payments. When the Hon'ble Premier paid a visit to Sunamganj, only last month, he enquired of me why in some centres payments were not promptly made. I brought these facts to his notice and he was convinced and he told me that these difficulties would be removed as soon as he would reach Shillong. I am glad, after he reached Shillong, we got some money and paid to the cultivators.

Now about the malpractices in connection with procurement that have been much talked of, I think, I can emphatically state here that this is absolutely baseless. My hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari was asked to lend his co-operation and see that proper price was paid to the cultivators by our suppliers but owing to reasons which I do not like to disclose, he did not extend his hand. Dewan Ahab Chaudhury who read such a lengthy essay here, was perhaps (I think he will not deny) requested to take charge of the Dwara Bazar centre and make payments to the cultivators himself. He

first of all agreed and I was very glad that a responsible man like the Khan Sahib would co-operate in this matter and make maximum payments to the cultivators. But just after the day of Id-ul-fitr the Khan Sahib informed me that due to his ill health he was not in a position to co-operate with me. I sought their co-operation but they denied it and today they are coming with all sorts of allegations.

Babu KAMINI KUMAR SEN: On a point of information. May I know what were the terms on which that co-operation was sought?

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Perhaps it would be better if the Khan Sahib himself tells that.

Mr. A. WHITTAKER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, is it in order for the hon. Mover to traverse the whole field of every Motion? I think, he is restricted to speak only on his own Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: No, he can do it. Numerous allegations have been made against the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate, of which he is a partner, and he has a right to give his reply to all those allegations.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: Of course it would be better to ask the Khan Sahib, but as he himself does not disclose, I am not going to disclose them before the House. Sir, it is a fact that many complaints were made to Government that in some of the centres our employees were taking recourse to malpractices. As a result of this, Government had these matters enquired into by the Supply Superintendent. The Supply Superintendent, after enquiry, passed an order that the Syndicate shall not make any purchase through any license-holder because the latter was profiteering. Now, it is clear, as a result of the Supply Superintendent's enquiry, that profits were being made by the licensees who were not within our control. These licenses were granted by the Government, and the licensees were working independently. In the terms that were given to these licensees, there was, as far as I remember, one sentence to the effect that they could make purchases at the bazar rates, and as they were not allowed any commission they were allowed to make any profit they could. According to these terms, these licensees were making purchases everywhere in my Subdivision. In Sunamganj, there were some 60 such licensees. Besides them, Sir, there were some special licensees—10 to 12 in Sunamganj and 10 in Habiganj—who were operating independently. They were not our nominees, but were the nominees of the Deputy Commissioner. So, the charge that we were given a monopoly of business in the Surma Valley is entirely baseless, because Government appointed some 20 licensees on equal terms with us, and hundreds of other licensees who would make purchase at sufficient profit. Now, Sir, whoever makes any purchase that goes in the name of the Syndicate. My hon. Friend, Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury referred to a case in Sunamganj. The Special Officer for Rice Control caught the man who was making purchases for the Syndicate at 90 tolas for a seer. I may tell the House that that man was an inhabitant of the village in which Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury lives, and he purchased only two or three maunds of rice for his home consumption. He was not our purchaser, nor our employee, nor our supplier. The Rice Control Officer warned him.....

Maulavi ABDUL BARI CHAUDHURY: The case is still *sub judice*.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: But he is not our man. Sir, these sorts of allegations were brought to the notice of the Sub-Divisional Officer, and some seven persons were prosecuted by the Supply Sub Inspector of Sunamganj. Warrants were issued against those persons; out of these seven persons six were not our employees. The case was tried, and all the accused were honourably acquitted, as no case could be made out against them. So, Sir, I say that whoever makes purchases it goes in the name of the Syndicate.

Sir, in Chhatak, in a meeting, which was presided over by Khan Sahib Maulavi Dewan Muhamad Abbab Chaudhury, some four persons were produced to give evidence to the effect that they sold rice to the Syndicate at the Chhatak centre at Rs. 10 per mound, while the price was Rs. 11/4. While the meeting was going on, it was found on enquiry that no rice was purchased in the Chhatak centre by the Syndicate

at all, but they sold rice to some other persons. But, Sir, all these allegations went in the name of the Syndicate who did not purchase any rice at Chhatrak.

Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy has mentioned a case of Sachna centre. There are two purchasing points at Sachna, one is managed by a member of the great Communist Party.....

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY : Who is he ?

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : That man is well known to him.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY ; He is not even a member of the Congress.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : If that gentleman was a member of their group, then it was up to Karuna Babu to bring him to book. But that was not brought to my notice.

In another point, Sir, one license-holder supplied us rice. He was not within our control. So, if he purchased paddy or rice at a lower rate than the Government rate we are not responsible for this. He is responsible to the Deputy Commissioner direct, and it is the Deputy Commissioner who can take action against him.

Sir, I will now give two instances to show how things are concocted. One man of Derai named Tarikulla submitted a petition to the Supply Superintendent that he had a stock of 3,000 maunds of rice, but the Syndicate were not taking delivery of that rice. The Supply Superintendent at once passed an order and directed me to take delivery of his rice, and pay the price according to the scheduled rate. The man went to me with the order, and on enquiry I found that he had only 25 maunds of rice, and that he wanted to purchase the remaining quantity. But the allegations went against us that we were not purchasing his stock.

I give another instance from Balaganj. Some members of the great Communist Party applied to the Supply Superintendent that they had a considerable quantity of paddy which they wanted to sell to the Syndicate, but the latter were not purchasing the stock.

However, at the instance of the Supply Superintendent, the Syndicate took delivery of the paddy but the Supply Superintendent after enquiry came to know that the stock did not belong to them. They purchased the stock at a lower rate and sold it to the Syndicate at a higher rate, thereby making a very good margin. He then ordered the Syndicate that the Syndicate should not make payment of the price of this stock. These gentlemen, so-called cultivators, served with a pleader's notice to the Syndicate that they should forthwith make payment, otherwise they would seek redress in a competent law court. The Syndicate have forwarded a copy of this to the Supply Superintendent and perhaps, the matter will be decided in a law court. This is the way how everything goes in the name of the Syndicate and stories are fabricated in the name of the Syndicate. The Syndicate are ready and had been ready always to make payment of the price at the maximum rate. They paid actually but the row was created by those who could not fill up their pockets. Some were making large profits through *benami* licenses although they were loudest in bringing the complaints against the Syndicate. Perhaps, Mr. Karuna Sindhu Roy would not deny that he took some persons to me to appoint them as purchasing agents.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY : Whom ?

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY : Dharendra Kumar Roy and your own nephew. Only a fortnight ago, I asked Karuna Babu to lend his co-operation to me and find out godowns in localities where sufficient storage was available, but he did not render me any help. I was ready to make payment through him but he was not ready to render any help to me and by this to the cultivators. He brought some complaints about Tahirpur that there was a huge surplus. I also know this because I am also a man of Tahirpur. I wired to Sir Muhammad and the Supply Secretary that lakhs of maunds of *buro* and *amon* paddy were available but could not be purchased for want of space in the godowns. I asked Karuna Babu to help me in finding out some godowns in the villages. (Voices—Draw Commission?)

At every step I sought the help of my Friends, but I am sorry that they never rendered any help. Now if any person did any wrong in our name in the interior villages where I myself or any officer of the Syndicate was not present, perhaps, I cannot stand guilty.

About Pusparaj Lalwani, Karuna Babu has referred that this merchant was making purchases at lower rate at Sachna. That gentleman is a licensee. He got the right to purchase from the Deputy Commissioner. He is not under my control and cannot be guided by me. He supplied rice to Sylhet, sometimes he supplied rice to us also. He has got a license for 6,000 maunds of rice and paddy and if we purchased from this licensee when Government allowed us to purchase from him—was it our fault? Government gave them licenses that they may purchase at any rate, thereby making whatever profit they could but their purchase is going on in our name. The Supply Superintendent is right when he says that these licensees are making huge profits and therefore the Syndicate should not make any purchase from these licensees. It is the result of enquiry. I am sure, the House will fully realise that when the Supply Superintendent passed orders, he was certainly convinced of the situation created by the purchase of these licensees as they were not paying even the minimum rate to the cultivators, and therefore, he asked us to make purchases directly from the cultivators.

Perhaps, I have given some facts to the hon. Members for forming an idea about how we are working. If necessary, after the first speech of the Hon'ble Premier, my hon. Friend, Mr. Abdur Rahman will speak

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It would be better if the Hon'ble Premier will give his first reply.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: I want to speak, Sir, as I am also one of the victims.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The hon. Member will certainly be given an opportunity to speak. After the Government view is placed before the House, the debate will continue and the Hon'ble Premier will get again time to give his final reply.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: May I point out, Sir, that Surendra Kumar Purkayastha is not a Communist and was never a Communist. All other statements he made are false.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir. While listening to the debate, I was reminded of a note which my professor gave while explaining certain poem of Keats in 1904. He used to say: "Man is a creature of unsatisfied desires and always pines for what is not."

My hon Friend, Mr. Abdul Bari, during the course of his speech reminded the House of the history of procurement. I will follow his example and preface my remarks by saying that this system of procurement of rice and paddy, in the Province and other food-grains from outside by Government Agents, first came into existence sometime in September 1942. Messrs. Steel Brothers were appointed as the firm to procure on behalf of Government as much rice and paddy that were available in the Province. At that time, the representatives of the district of Sylhet raised such a hue and cry on the allegation that the district is a deficit one, that the Government was compelled to exclude the district of Sylhet from the operation of the procurement agents, namely Steel Brothers. They started operation from September 1942 in the Assam Valley and in the district of Cachar. Later on, if the hon. Members will kindly go through the previous proceedings of the debate in this House, they will find it stated that the surplus of Cachar was needed to feed the hungry mouths of Sylhet and therefore no rice and paddy should be procured by Steel Brothers from that district as well. Due to the expression of this view which is nothing but the opinion of a Section of the House, Government asked Messrs. Steel Brothers to withdraw their operation from Cachar district. I am very much pleased to find that those advocates of the theory of Sylhet being a deficit district, those critics of my humble self that I

was an optimist, that I spoke without any statistics, are now coming before the same Legislature and the same Government, and stating that Sylhet is overflowing with a surplus and that surplus is not a small quantity : in the district of Sylhet alone is half a crore maunds of rice and paddy. Sir, in 1942-43 there was a very acute shortage of rice and paddy in the neighbouring districts of Bengal. The price there rose very high and in order to preserve a stock of rice for the Province of Assam, the Assam Government, in consultation with the Central Government, imposed a ban on export of rice and paddy from the Province of Assam to Bengal. When condition of Bengal became very grave and there were cases of death due to starvation, Government of India raised the ban and started free trade in the Eastern zone, that is, between the Provinces of Orissa, Bihar, Bengal and Assam. During this period very large quantity of food-grain passed out of Assam and particularly from the Surma Valley into Bengal without in the least relieving the acute situation in that Province. After this experiment was performed by the Government of India to which we had lodged a very strong and dignified protest which went unheeded, Government of India thought it fit to withdraw this theory of free trade and allowed the Provincial Government to re-impose the ban on export. At this time, the Central Government asked the Provincial Government of Assam to come to the aid of Bengal and give them 10 lakhs maunds of rice. We had no procurement agency in the Surma Valley at the time. Therefore, Government asked their District Officers—Deputy Commissioners, and Subdivisional Officers—to procure the necessary quantity of paddy and rice to be sent to the needy Province of Bengal. I will be compelled to place before the House the criticisms that were levelled in the November Session of 1943, about this arrangement, that is ; procurement of a limited quantity of rice and paddy through Government agency. I need read only typical portions of that criticism against the agency of Government being set up to procure rice and paddy from the cultivators. My hon. Friend Mr. Abdur Rahman, *vide* page 829 of the Volume II, No. 9 of November Session 1943, spoke thus:—

“Let me tell you how Government this time secured paddy from the cultivators. This is a very revealing feature of the thing that all poor cultivators were subjected to tortures in the name of securing paddy. I have been told that the biggest merchant in my district was let loose. Not a single maund of paddy was seized from their houses whereas the poor cultivators who did not possess more than 100, 80 or 70 maunds were subjected to various tortures. There were hundreds of complaints and I can prove from Government record that these poor people were subjected to tortures and their paddy was seized. These poor people entreated the officer not to seize their little quantity of paddy which they badly needed for the maintenance of their own family members and for the expenses of cultivation which was coming next, but the officer would not hear them. The Sub-Deputy Collector or other officer deputed for the purpose of securing paddy did not care to go to the villages and see for himself what quantity of paddy remained in the granaries of the villagers. He stayed in the Dak Bungalow or some other place and asked the villagers to meet him there. If any of the cultivators say that he had only 25 maunds as against 100 maunds arbitrarily estimated by the officer, the latter would say “all right, let us come to compromise and let me have from you say 30 or 40 maunds”. This sort of action on the part of the officers had given rise to many complaints and as a matter of fact many people came to complain before the Subdivisional Officer alleging the tortures they were subjected to in the hands of the officer. Sir, that is the state of affairs which was going on in my part of the Province. But strangely enough Government have not taken a single maund of paddy from those who could well afford to part with large quantity of paddy. These officers as I have said did not care to go and ascertain for themselves what quantity of paddy was available in each family. They simply acted on the report of the village Chowkidars or other touts and prepared a list of persons from whom such and such

quantity of paddy would be seized. In this way these poor people were made to part with all that they had. But in the case of big people these officers would not dare to ask what quantity of paddy they had in their stock. They would go to their houses, have a cup of tea and come back by giving a *salaam*. Sir, this is the manner in which the officials secured paddy in subdivisions."

My Friend Mr. Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury, whose speech is reported at page 810 of the same volume, spoke thus: "We find from the reports of the Government agents that while the agents were purchasing at the rate of Rs. 18 or Rs. 19 per maund in Cachar and Assam Valley districts, all the officers of Government in the District of Sylhet were purchasing paddy at Rs. 10 per maund which was much less than the rate fixed by Government. It would have been fair for Government to pay at least at the controlled rate to the cultivators of the District of Sylhet. We brought this matter to the notice of Government but we are sorry that Government did not take any action in this direction. We heard of many cases of high-handedness on the part of the officers appointed in connection with the Rice Control by Government. There are some cases instituted in courts but I don't know whether Government have taken any action departmentally or what action they propose to take. One very sad occurrence took place in Markuli. Some of the officers tortured a Bengal trader in such a manner that the man died on the spot".

Sir, when I heard complaints of this nature from the accredited representatives of the people, I decided that rice and paddy should not be procured through Government agency. In the picturesque terms of our critics, we had let loose the *বকর* to be the *উকক* and when this is the case, there is absolutely no way out for the poor cultivators to get redress. When orders came from the Government of India that according to the Gregory Report—which has been cited by some hon. Friends—India is counted agriculturally as one unit and that the surplus in one Province is to go to feed deficit areas and hungry people of other Provinces and when intensive procurement was ordered by Government of India, I was compelled not to spare the district of Sylhet from the operation of procurement. In spite of the protestation of the leaders, I was faced with the difficulty of selecting an agency with whom to trust this procurement business. If again I try to use Government officials, I will hear the same complaints as I heard from the hon. Members in November 1943. I was considering if I should ask Messrs. Steel Brothers to start their business in Cachar and also in Sylhet. At that time, some of the hon. Members approached me saying, 'we who are the representatives of the people will feel greater interest in the benefit of the people, why give business to some outsiders who will care more for their commission than to the best advantage of the people'. I thought that those people who were loudest in their protests against a procurement agency of Government servants should be given a chance of procurement so that they may confer the greatest benefit to the peasantry. I do not know whether I was misled in making my choice for a non-official agency and experimenting with Members of the Legislative Assembly as guardians of public prosperity. I consulted my Secretary, Mr. Marar, who was an experienced Deputy Commissioner and had been in charge of the Sylhet district. He informed me that in Karimganj Subdivision, Khan Bahadur Abdul Majid Chaudhury and his family had been dealing very largely in rice and paddy for nearly a century. I also knew that the Chakravarty zemindar family of Hailakandi, had been dealing in rice and paddy and trading with Bengal for a long time. We thought, the people who are in the trade and who are responsible to public opinion will be the best persons to procure rice and paddy. The Surma Valley was divided into two parts; Cachar and Karimganj Subdivision was one part and procurement in this area was given to a partnership started by these two previous rice traders. In the other part, namely, the four subdivisions of Sylhet, we thought that those Members of the Legislative Assembly, who have shown such solicitude for the peasantry will be the best custodians of the interests of the people as well as the Government. I asked them to form a Company and produce sufficient bank guarantee so that I could advance money to them because they will be dealing not in thousands but in tens of lakhs of Government money and they then formed into a Syndicate. The Syndicate produced a bank guarantee of

10 lakhs of rupees. They also put in Rs. 50,000 which was demanded by the Government as security for performing the duties of the agency which Government was going to entrust to them. Sir, this is the genesis of circumstances in which the Syndicates came to function. I repudiate the statement made by one hon. Member whose very breath of life is to talk in hyperboles that it is with the idea of securing support from these gentlemen that I patronised them by giving them this contract. What patronage a brother of Srijut Hirendra Chakravarty could give me when Srijut Hirendra Chakravarty is my colleague and everyone knows that Khan Bahadur Abdul Majid has been the staunchest supporter of Government not only here but in his own Subdivision is reputed to be the most loyal zemindar. Did I give them the contract in order to get their support which I already had?

As regards Maulavi Abdur Rahman, he is the chief Whip of the Party I have the honour to lead. So long as he remains in the Party, it goes without saying that I have his support. Therefore, with regard to all the insinuations, I can boldly say that they were actuated with the best of motives in framing these two Syndicates with our people in the Surma Valley. I do not here defend the Syndicates if they have committed any malpractices. They are quite competent to protect themselves, but I have got to give the exposition of the procurement policy of Government. It has just now been stated by my hon. Friend Maulavi Muhammad Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury that the Government, although entrusting them with the task of procurement, did not provide them the facilities of storage that were required by them. He is perfectly correct in that statement. We searched high and low—I am confining my remarks only to the Surma Valley, for luckily and curiously there is no complaint from the Assam Valley.....

(Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee: Up till now.)

We searched high and low to provide godowns or storage space for our agents and the maximum that we could provide are as follows:—

To Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company, we could provide 480,000 maunds. This includes godowns engaged on hire requisitioned by Government.

To the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate—operating in the four subdivisions of Sylhet—157,900 maunds.

To the Surma Valley Food-Grains Syndicate—1,18,600 maunds.

If hon. Members of the House will only see the quantity procured by them, they cannot but come to the conclusion that the storage space provided is much too inadequate. The procurement of Messrs. Steel Brothers and Company was 111,905 tons in rice (one ton is equivalent to 27 maunds) and 38,058 tons of paddy. So, this procurement agency who procured on behalf of Government about 150,000 tons—it will be in the neighbourhood of 40 lakhs maunds—were provided 480,000 maunds godown space. The Surma Valley Food-Grains Syndicate who procured about 20,000 tons or about 5½ lakhs of maunds, got only 118,600 maunds space. It may be remembered, Sir, that in the Surma Valley there was not only the difficulty of godown space but there was also the extreme difficulty about movements. The rice and paddy that had been procured by us from these agencies were to be supplied to the Government of India for a Defence Force stationed in a part of the country far away from Sylhet, and to the Tea Industry, the major portion of which is in the Assam Valley and to the Essential Services like the Petroleum Industry and the Coal Industry.

The movement is controlled not by the Government of Assam but by a body situated in Calcutta which goes by the name of the Regional Priorities Committee. Some time about the beginning of this financial year another panel was set up over this Regional Priorities Committee who has the final say on movements by road and river; it has also its headquarters in Calcutta. We approached these bodies unsuccessfully to allow us transport for some of the rice and paddy which were procured by our agents in the Surma Valley to other parts of the Province and also to send some outside the Province. We were ordered by the Government of India to give this year 5 lakhs maunds of rice to Bengal. We asked the Bengal Government to arrange for their own transport. They too could not induce these two bodies to allow transport of rice and paddy from Assam to Bengal either by steamer or rail. They were compelled to arrange

a system of transport by country boats. A retired District Judge Mr. Abul Muzaffar Ahmad and Mr. Poddar, a big merchant of Dacca—arranged a country boat service for carriage of rice and paddy from Assam for Bengal Government. Mr. Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury has already told you that this country boat traffic could not remove even one lakh maunds of rice and paddy from Sunamganj and Habiganj through which these boats ply. We have wired to the Government of Bengal but to no effect.

I mentioned to the House the other day that we were pressing upon the Government of India that in order to remove the stress amongst the cultivators of Surma Valley, who were suffering from a very low price of their agricultural produce, and in order to meet the apprehended deficit in the Assam Valley, these food-grains be transported over the hill section of the Bengal and Assam Railway. But the Regional Priority Committee vehemently protested and in order to forestall the Assam Government, they sent their protest to the Central Government a week ahead of the representation of the Assam Government. They had, however, the courtesy to send us a copy of the letter which they were sending to the Government of India against the proposal of the Assam Government. In our letter to the Government of India, we had very insistently demanded that in the interest of supply of definite demand from the Defence Department, in the interest of the greater war effort, and in the interest of a much needed relief to the cultivators of the Surma Valley, the Government of India must avail upon the Railway Authorities to allow transport on this line. We have asserted that the American Army, who wanted 7,500 tons of rice, is being supplied with the same from the Surma Valley and that 18 waggons a day are being carried over this route to Upper Assam from the Surma Valley from the latter part of October. This will show that the procurement policy, if it has failed in its cent. per cent. success has not proved a failure due to placid complacency of the Assam Government or their total neglect of the interest of the Surma Valley peasantry. We are fighting to relieve a very difficult situation ; we have approached the proper authorities and failing to get relief, we have approached the highest authority in the land, namely, the Government of India.

My hon. Friend Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury has taken the lead from the very first in this matter, *viz.*, trying to expose according to him, the malpractices of a particular Syndicate and agent of the Government. He sent me a very strongly worded letter early this year making an allegation against two of my Hon'ble Colleagues having interest in this Syndicate. I informed him that one Minister by reason of his being in the joint family of one of the partners is interested. As regards the other Hon'ble Minister, I made personal enquiries and that Hon'ble Minister denied any connection whatsoever with any procurement agency. When I replied to Mr. Abdul Bari Chaudhury the results of my enquiry, he sought my permission to allow him to send a copy of that letter to His Excellency the Governor which I readily granted. If there was any partiality in me for the agency, I could have requested him—I do not know how far he would have acceded to my request—not to send that letter to His Excellency the Governor, but I readily granted his request and he did send his protest letter to His Excellency the Governor. Ever since he had been writing to me about various malpractices of the Syndicate, everyone of his complaint I have sent to the Deputy Commissioner for being enquired into by himself personally or by the Subdivisional Officers concerned. I do not know how he got hold of a report of the Deputy Commissioner, a portion of which he has quoted. Well, if he has got it by fair means, that is, the Deputy Commissioner handed over to him a copy on account of these complaints coming from him, it is quite all right, but if he, following the example of some Members of this House, surreptitiously procured some confidential document, it would not befit a man of his position to utilise such a document before the House.

Mr. Karuna Sindhu Roy, or I should call him Comrade Karuna, being a leader of the Communist Party, has been indefatigable in this respect and on various occasions, he brought complaints to my personal notice by letters and often times to my great chagrin by leading very well attended deputations. At least, six deputations I have received from him during the last six months, all unfortunately directed to only one angle. His plea is:—"Well, these people are carrying on malpractices, why not give the entire charge of procurement and

distribution to my party, the Communist Party. We have 'People's committees' in every village and we will procure the rice and paddy and distribute them." I had to tell him that his presumption was wrong. There are more people in the Province of Assam than the small community of communists to be entrusted with this procurement scheme. I advised him to join with the Congress party or the Muslim League party and to form a real people's party—and not merely Communist party—and then we will have what is popularly known as "Ram Raj" to take over the entire procurement charge of the Province and start "Dharmagolas" in every surplus areas.

Sir, I was asked to go to Sunamganj and to go into the interior of the Subdivision to find out complaints of the people whether they are real or fabricated. Though I was keeping an indifferent health, I went along with two of my Hon'ble Ministers to Derai, a very interior place. We heard what the people had to say and even though my stay at Sunamganj was for a very short period, comrade Karuna Sindhu Roy with 24 members appeared on a deputation. As I was walking to the Town Hall from the Circuit House to participate in another function and as I had no time to hear his deputation, I asked him to walk the road up to the door of the Town Hall along with his deputation and lay their grievances. He readily accompanied me and in that position I was questioned on all sides about Government's policy; the market and control price of paddy, etc. I tried to enlighten the simple unsophisticated villagers about the real situation, in their vernacular. Some of them were frank enough to say that they were receiving the proper price from the Syndicate, while others complained of over-weight, as has been alleged, sometimes of 5 tolas and sometimes of 2 tolas or more, per seer and I enquired whether Mr Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury was present when less payments were made, but they denied that he was present on those occasions. I was not in a position to ascertain exactly through whom payments were made, whether through the employees of the Syndicate or somebody else like licensees. But the people insisted that they had large quantities of surplus paddy which Government should somehow or other manage to take. Even if the Syndicate took it, they had no objection to that, but what they wanted was to be relieved of the stock. When I went to Derai, which is some 35 miles from Sunamganj, where I presided over a public meeting, there I heard whatever the speakers of that very large gathering had to say, long before this Motion and the Amendments have been proposed. It is very nearly a month before the date on which these Motions were tabled, in that open meeting I stated that I wanted to know from the cultivators what was the surplus from Sunamganj, for I had a scheme for buying all the surplus paddy from the cultivators and taking charge of it. Though the topography of Sunamganj is neither earth nor water at this time of the year and as there is neither boat communication nor land transport, I told that Government would advance a part of the price to the cultivators and keep this rice and paddy in the cultivators' godowns, trusting that they would take care of them like their own portion. I find, after one month, Mr. Aditya making the same suggestion. I was also asked in the other conference which I addressed at Fenchuganj what would be the amount of advance that would be paid by Government. Sir, without consulting the Secretary of the Supply Department and my colleagues, without taking the permission of the Finance Department, I told the conference where my hon. Friends Khan Bahadur Mufizur Rahman and Maulavi Abdul Bari Chaudhury were present, that my proposal to Government would be to advance $\frac{1}{3}$ of the price of the paddy and rice that Government would be taking direct from the cultivator. The result of my public announcement is that to-day they are pitching their demand to an advance of 50 per cent. Sir, I will make no secret when I say that in our party meeting we came to a compromise and I told my hon. Friends that my recommendation to Government will be 40 per cent. advance. Then again, Sir, we can wait for taking delivery of rice and paddy from the cultivators in the *buro* growing area right up to April and May, for *buro* harvest will not be in till then. But in those parts where the principal cultivation is *amon*

and *sail*, the next harvest will be very soon in and the cultivators should be relieved of their surplus immediately. Government had programmed to build fifteen big godowns all over the Province—five in the Surma Valley and ten in the Assam Valley. Now I find that the demand for godown space in the Surma Valley is greater and I will see if more can be constructed in the Surma Valley. I have now asked for six in the Surma Valley. I am expediting the construction of these godowns, but it is not in the hands of the Supply Department. Each of these godowns will cost somewhere about 2 to 3 lakhs of rupees and they have got to be built by the Public Works Department. But the materials necessary in many cases have arrived inside the Province and I hope within the next two or three months these godowns will be ready. But, I believe, the cultivators in the affected areas cannot wait till then. Therefore, I told the Fenchuganj audience that I would request the great Tea Industry to come to our help as they have been doing in various other occasions. I told them that I would request the Tea Industry to lend some of their godowns for keeping our purchased stock till we have our own godowns. My Friend Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee will be able to bear testimony to this fact that we discussed about helping us with godown space with the representatives of the Tea Industry in the Economic Advisory Board only last Wednesday and the Tea Industry are willing to help us and are prepared even to construct *kutch*a godowns or short term policy and rent us theirs if we can assure early removal of stocks. I think as the tea gardens have got enormous bamboo and thatch supply within their grants, they can easily construct such godowns. I have asked the Secretary to write to them officially. I do not know whether the letter would be received by the Secretary here or by the Chairman of the Assam Branch, Indian Tea Association, but the letter is being issued.

Therefore, it is quite clear that long before the Adjournment Motions or the Amendments had been tabled, I have already taken necessary steps to relieve the Surma Valley cultivators of the surplus stock by direct purchase by Government and advance them sufficient sale price. If I had not received on the first day of this Session, notices of as many as seven Adjournment Motions, I think orders, on the lines that I have now placed before the House, would have been issued. I had to wait till I heard the "public opinion" in the House before issuing any orders.

Sir, I have got to deal with only one more part of the discussions in this debate. Various hon. Members of the House have alleged certain malpractices by the Syndicates. Some related "stories"; I underline the word "stories", though they were in the same breath converted into instances and facts. Any way, some may be facts, some may be stories, but there is the undoubted fact that as many as seven Members have alleged some kind of malpractices by the Government procuring agencies. I am not defending them, but I feel that in fairness to these agents, I should explain to the House the system of procurement. Long before these Syndicates came into existence, Government had issued licenses to certain traders to deal in rice and paddy. Any one who wanted to trade in more than 20 maunds had to take a license. When prices soared very high, and in some places of Bengal and Assam the price of rice had gone up to Rs.35 per maund, the Government of India issued instructions to the Provincial Governments not to increase the number of licenses or import new licensees, for the greater the number of procurers, the greater is the competition and there will be further price inflation. We had to obey orders, but when the present rice-procuring agencies were instituted and we heard complaints that they were squeezing people into selling at a lesser price, the Deputy Commissioners were asked to keep an watch upon the procedure adopted by either the agents themselves or by their people. The Deputy Commissioners advised that we should bring in limited competition with these agencies, and therefore the Deputy Commissioners suggested that some known dealers of rice and paddy and some zemindars who collected rice and paddy in their own estates and used to sell should be given special licenses, and as has been mentioned by my hon. Friend, Maulavi Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury, some special licenses—about ten to fifteen in each Subdivision, were issued by the Deputy Commissioners. The maximum quantity of rice and paddy which could be dealt with by these special licensees ranged from 6,000 maunds to 15,000 maunds. It was the intention of Government to put in a

third party between the people and the so-called monopolists. There is absolutely no monopoly given to the rice procurers—the trade is open to everyone. Only we asked those Syndicates to procure rice and paddy on behalf of the Government. Some of my hon. Friends have suggested that pre-war normal trade channels should be reopened. Here, Sir, we are putting ourselves against the Government of India's orders. The Government of India have definitely ordered that there will be ban on export of rice and paddy from Assam, and this must be strictly enforced. Therefore we cannot take recourse to normal trade channels. Moreover, Sir, would it have afforded any relief to our peasantry? If we are to go by newspaper reports, the prices of rice and paddy in Bengal are lower than those in Assam. There will be no market, and so no flow of rice and paddy from Assam to Bengal. But even if our peasantry took the suicidal course of sending their commodity outside the Province, I am afraid that not only Government but hon. Members as representatives of the people, should intervene and prevent them from taking such a course. If the available surplus, which is luckily present in the Province at the time, is drained out of the Province and God forbid, we do not get a good *buro* crop this year, then what will happen? There will be an acute shortage in the Province. We must not allow, whatever be the cost, this to happen in our Province. We should profit by the experience of Bengal last year. The Assam Government are trying their best to see that such a catastrophe does not befall the Province of Assam. In this matter, I want your full co-operation, and full co-operation means maximum procurement at this time.

Sir, I have been requested by means of these Amendments to scrap the present procurement agency immediately—to-day—although their term of agreement runs to the end of the calendar year, *i.e.*, 31st December. After five weeks, the agreement with them automatically lapses. I will take some time to perfect my agency of procurement through Government officers. Therefore, my sincere request to those hon. Members who have tabled their Amendments is not to compel Government to change the crew of boat in mid-stream. We are right in the middle of procurement. It is the cultivators who are shouting for procurement, you are all insisting that Government must come to the rescue of the people. If at this stage, I scrap the present agency, then the small procurement these agencies are doing will be stopped to the great detriment of the people for whom the hon. Members are making this representation.

Then, Sir, I come to the Committee of Enquiry. Some hon. Members have left it at "the Committee of Enquiry." I am prepared to accept such a motion if the selection of personnel of the Committee of Enquiry is left to Government. My Friend, the learned Maulana, the President of the Muslim League, appealed to me fervently that I should lead this Committee of Enquiry, but he insisted that it should be a Committee of officials and non-officials. That would mean a roving commission going from place to place. If a commission at this stage goes from subdivision to subdivision to find out whether the Eastern Bengal and Assam Commercial Syndicate charged a certain price in the month of January, 1944, when we are approaching January, 1945, then what will happen? The Government officers whom I would utilise for the greater procurement of rice and paddy from the peasants, to their great relief, shall have to divide their time in coming before this committee to give evidence and to purchase of the surplus stock. It will be for the House to judge whether this will be for the benefit of the cultivators. But if the House think that since there have been so many allegations there should be an enquiry, although I am not convinced what will be the scope and ultimate result of the enquiry, I am prepared to concede to "public opinion," as recommended by Mr. Aditya who quoted the Hon'ble Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava, I will be guided by the opinion of the House in this matter. I think, Sir, I have made the position of Government, sufficiently clear and.....

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: What about fixing a minimum price?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The position of Government in this matter, I have made perfectly clear. I am very pleased to find that without consulting my hon. Friends, I took certain line of actions, which they are recommending that these are the very lines on which relief should be provided to people.

Now, my Friend suggests that a bottom price should be fixed for rice and paddy. This matter was discussed on the floor of the House on various occasions. I remember to have given an assurance that if the price of rice, the normal winter rice, ever comes below Rs. 10, I will at once fix a bottom rate. I have since been thinking over this matter. If Government fix a bottom price, could the people be assured that they will get this price? Now, Government have fixed a price for the rice procuring agencies; although my Friend says that it is not published, we have done our best in giving wide publicity through the Supply Department, through the Deputy Commissioners and the Publicity Department and I know these procuring agencies have issued hundreds of notices regarding the price that has been fixed by Government.

Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY: In columns of newspapers also.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: In spite of this wide publicity, I am now hearing complaints of various dodges of middlemen to reduce the price and the poor peasants have been compelled to sell at a lower price. If I can place Government officials of the highest integrity to sell at a lower price, will there be any guarantee that people will get the bottom price? For every seller does not come to the centre. Then again, it is common experience that whenever a minimum price is fixed for a commodity, the minimum becomes maximum for the seller. If I now fix a minimum price and make purchases through the rice purchasing agents—I have this from my personal experience, whenever there is any good activity of the buying agents there is immediately an increase of a few annas in the price—the seller will not get the increased prices. So, whether it will not be better to leave to trade economics to function itself, rather than try to fix a minimum which unfortunately will stick to be the maximum, is a question not easy to determine. If my hon Friends convince me that a bottom price will assure the cultivator of getting at least that price and they will be satisfied, I will obey the public opinion.

Lastly, I have to speak as regards the last item of my Friend Mr. Rabindra Nath Aditya as regards a cess. The cess was originally imposed with the idea of reimbursing the tax-payer, in other words, their agents, the Government from incidental loss of commodities, loss due to shrinkage, wastage and to recoup the interest of the capital that has been borrowed. In the Appropriation Report, my hon. Friends must have read that from the operations of this food-grain policy of Government a sum of ten lakhs of rupees has accrued as balance. The balance sheet for 1943-44 is in preparation. We do not know whether there will be any surplus. The Government of India who originally objected to the levying of this cess, ultimately allowed it, but ordered us not to credit the balance to the general exchequer. Therefore, as mentioned by my Hon'ble Colleague, the Finance Minister, the surplus has been put in suspense account. If there is any surplus in any year of operation, it will be kept in the suspense account, which under the direction of the Government of India, we have to spend either in relieving the distress of the people by reducing the cost prices or improving the production of those commodities in the Province. We have got only one year's experience before us. Let us get another year's experience and if we find that there is in fact another accumulation then I will take the House into confidence and see how best this surplus of the cess fund can be utilised. I would request Mr. Aditya not to press this part of his Amendment this time. Let him see the Appropriation Accounts of next year and find whether there is any huge surplus.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Is it the desire of the House that the debate should continue late this evening? But I find that we have little business for tomorrow. Of course, tomorrow is a Government business day, but after the Government business is finished we may take up this debate. If hon. Members desire, we will sit for half an hour more today and proceed with the business tomorrow so that we can get ample time to allow the hon. Members to speak. The debate will continue upto 4-30 P.M. to-day.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I must congratulate my hon. Friend, Mr. Abdul Bari Chaudhury, who has been able to give us the opportunity of discussing this most vital problem of the day. Sir, I

gave notice of a Motion for discussing the economic situation of the Province, but the Hon'ble Prime Minister refused to give his consent, and I was very much disappointed that we would not be able to discuss this urgent matter of greatest public importance in our deliberations in this august Assembly. Though the Hon'ble Prime Minister refused his consent in my case he has given the same in the case of Mr. Abdul Bari Chaudhury and hence, while I am thanking the Hon'ble Prime Minister, I am heartily congratulating Mr. Abdul Bari Chaudhury for being fortunate enough to get the consent of the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Sir, I do not understand why this preferential treatment. However, let me come to the point at issue.

Sir, I begin with an appeal to the Hon'ble Premier. That—that the suggestions for improvement of the present critical situation prevailing in the country which I shall advance in the course of my speech should be taken in a good spirit and as constructive ones, and not as destructive ones because they will be advanced from this side of the House. The Government should consider most seriously that the present evils which have arisen are the most awful in the economic situation and are eating into the very vitals of the Province. They are, therefore, to take note that those who support Government blindly and do not point out their defects and drawbacks are not their real supporters or friends; they are rather their enemies. One, who points out the defects and gives them the opportunity of mending them, is a real friend and a real supporter. Sir, there is no strong public opinion in this Province; so the so-called supporters are leading the Ministry to such a depth that it would be impossible for them to rise up, unless they take immediate steps to tackle the present problem seriously, by keeping aloof from their so-called supporters. Had there been any strong public opinion, the situation would not have come to such a pass. What is the harm in accepting the suggestions of a Member who does not sit behind the Ministry? There is no shame in it. It should not be considered at any time and by any one that wisdom is the monopoly of the administrative authority concerned. If any suggestion is really a good one, it does not matter from which quarter it comes; it should be accepted and given effect to without any hesitation. Those who are unbiassedly and carefully observing the actions of this Government will rather praise them for their sportsman-like spirit if suggestions of the honest critics of Government are not brushed aside and are given effect to for the good of the people.

Now, Sir, I shall take up the question of procurement. The other day, the Hon'ble the Prime Minister said that the prices of rice and paddy are fixed commensurate with the prices of other commodities which the cultivators are to buy; but, Sir, is it really the fact? What are the prices of rice and paddy at present? Are not they low and very much disproportionate in comparison with the prices of other daily necessities of life? Certainly, Sir, they are. I do not advise Government to increase the prices of rice and paddy, but I appeal to them to take steps so that the prices of other necessary articles of daily use may be brought down, so as to be within the reach of one and all.

There might be sufficient money in the hands of a few contractors, profiteers and blackmarketeers, but the condition of the general people, I mean the peasants, is most unsatisfactory, appalling and alarming. The other day, my hon. Friend, Maulavi Abdul Aziz, said that people had money in their hands and that they wanted to build houses; so Government should indent house materials—such as iron joists, rods, cement, corrugated iron, etc., in large quantities from outside. Sir, my Friend wanted to impress as if milk and honey are flowing in big streams in this Province. Government should not take advantage of these loose remarks, especially when they are in the know of the real situation. First, they must give their whole-hearted attention to the improvement in the stock position of the daily necessities of life, and then they may give their attention to secondary and luxury articles.

Corruption is rampant, and it is being allowed to extend to such an extent—absolutely unchecked—that after some days nobody, however honest he may be, will be spared. The present administration is responsible for the demoralisation of the whole Province. Profiteers are flourishing at large, hoarders are getting protection, blackmarketing has

become the order of the day. It seems to me that very soon every man and everything will be termed as 'war quality'—what 'war quality' means is certainly well known to all the hon. Members present here by this time. Sir, the way in which agreements are made, contracts are given, new posts are created, arouses suspicion in the minds of the people. The Government should take up a bold stand and must check all these corruption, blackmarketing, profiteering, etc., without a moment's delay.

I next come, Sir, to the question of appointment of purchasing agencies on behalf of the Government of Assam. I can at once say that I have nothing personal against Messrs. Shaw Wallace and Company, Messrs. Steel Brothers, Mr. Abdur Rahman, Mr. Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury, Mr. Naziruddin Ahmed, Khan Bahadur Abdul Majid, Hon'ble Mr. Hirendra Chandra Chakravarty, Hon'ble Khan Sahib Mudabbir Hussain Chaudhury, Messrs. Assam Supply Agency and other distributing agencies in the Surma Valley and in the Assam Valley. It is not a personal issue; it is a question of principle. It was nothing short of a scandal that the Ministry should have appointed a few Members of this hon. House as the sole agents, and what is more, that they have advanced several crores of rupees to them. It is a mockery and a cruel and heartless mockery. We are sitting here as the Assam Legislative Assembly, trying to decide the fate of the Province. Schemes are presented before us in a hole and corner fashion. The Government entrust work without any written agreement. I make this statement and let Government contradict it if they dare to. No security has been taken from any agent of the Province. Who are the profiteers—I should ask. What is the policy of the present Government of Assam in giving protection to favoured profiteers, and in allowing them to prosper and thrive on the miseries of the people of the Province? I would appeal to the supporters of the present Government to consider the situation dispassionately and not to treat this as a party question. It is not a question of Muslim League or Congress or this party or that party. May I ask in all seriousness how is the purchasing work going on now in the Surma Valley? Has not the Hon'ble Prime Minister heard all about the scandal during his recent tour and also received deputations and copies of resolutions charging the agencies of their criminal and treacherous activities? Does he not feel ashamed of himself for such an action of his? I do not know whether he did it purposely to bring down some hon. Members of the House to contempt by giving them this tempted offer; or was it a *bonafide* move? I believe it was a *bonafide* one. Be that as it may, the move has been condemned by one and all, and some of the hon. Members, who were once esteemed high, have been doomed for ever. The present state is a case of impeachment for all the Ministers and some Members. The patriots came here to give sweet apple to the people, but what is the result? They have become worms in the sweet apples as the English saying goes—

'War Profiteers are the worms in the sweet apple of patriotism'. Alas!

This is what the Hon'ble Prime Minister said in his speech at Derai and other places, "বক্ষক হইয়া যে ভক্ষক হয় তার মত মহা পাপী আর নাই"। Now I ask in all seriousness who is responsible for creating these বক্ষক-ভক্ষক? It is Sir Muhammad. The false utterances of some of the contractors—who are Members of this House tried to create suspicion in the minds of the people, which was also expressed in a largely attended public meeting by no less a person than Khan Bahadur A. Rahim, B.L., Member, Legislative Council and Public Prosecutor of Sylhet. If any responsible Member interested in the agency says, "what could anybody do to me, the Premier is with me," naturally, this kind of loose and false remarks would create suspicion in the minds of the illiterate common folk specially, if the grievances are not removed, rather allowed to continue in full swing.

When there was a move to raise the price of corn during poet Byron's time, he remarked as follows:—

'To what are all these country patriots born,
To haunt and vote and raise the price of corn'.

Had the great poet been living to-day, I am certain, he would have surely said as follows :

'To what are these country patriots born,

To haunt and vote and *lower* the price of corn,'

and would have added another line—'Causing miseries to the people born and unborn.'

Sir, as the Hon'ble Premier has already quoted the relevant portions of Messrs A. Rahman and M. H. Chaudhury's speeches I do not like to take the time of the House by quoting them over again. Their boss has condemned them and that rightly.

Sir, I am thankful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his sportsman-like spirit in which he gave the reply to the charges made against him by my hon. Friend Mr. Maqbul Hussain Chaudhury. Sir, I don't remember whether Mr. Chaudhury mentioned about the public and confidential rates; probably not, but I should mention that the prices published in the Gazette are not the prices that are sent to the agents by confidential letters where the prices are fixed at a rate, say Re. 1/- or Rs. 1-8-0 lower than the prices published in the Gazette. I hope, the Hon'ble Prime Minister will enlighten us on this point as well. Sir, be that as it may, the move has been condemned by and all; the difference of prices are most condemned in those subdivisions where the Members of the Legislative Assembly are purchasing, namely, Sunamganj, Habiganj and Maulavibazar areas. Leave it in the hands of those who are businessmen by profession and are the people of the land and not to the Members of the Assembly or Council. If the Ministry want to help and favour some particular Members, do it, but ask them to vacate their seats. Is it not a scandal of the first magnitude that at this perilous time crores of rupees of public money are to be handed over to these firms, partners of which are pillars of the Party to which Sir Muhammad belongs? Not only that, the report is that some of the Ministers have their *beramdars* in these agencies, being represented by their brothers or nephews or some other relations.

Sir, if you refer to page 34, Chapter I of May's Parliamentary Practice, you will find that there is a convention, which is supported by law, that no Member of the House of Commons who is a Government contractor has the right to vote or even has the right to continue as a Member of the House of Commons. Now, Sir, Mr. Whittaker and his group are well known for their knowledge of constitutional practice and conventions in their own country. Will they now admit that having regard to this very salutary principle, the Member contractors should cease to be Members of the Assam Legislative Assembly? Will they move in the matter? Have they got the courage?

Now, let me come to the Grow More Food Campaign. What are the constructive proposals of Government? Food will not grow on papers, and mere propaganda is an eye-wash. What about supply of good seeds of high yielding varieties? What about manure and agricultural implements? What about irrigation (canals and bunds) and what about cattle? There has been an extraordinary loss of cattle. Cattle purchase for military requirements has also proceeded on an enormous scale. Again, has the Ministry considered the dangerous consequences to public health due to malnutrition and due to spread of diseases and epidemics in the Province? So far as the main problem is concerned, there must be a full and complete control over prices and supply. There are three ways of doing it—(1) Government may make all purchases—of course not through agencies composed of Members of the Legislature or relations of Ministers, (2) traders may purchase, and (3) both Government and traders may purchase. It is the Government's coming to the market that has created this position and which has upset the situation completely. The situation will never be overcome unless Government take full control. The traders cannot be given unfettered jurisdiction, because it means doubling the profits and unfair and inequitable distribution. It is Government who can take full control of supplies, prices and distribution leading to rationing. Unless they take precaution immediately, they will make the people starve. The supplies of imported commodities are few and far between and irregular beyond description. Rationing has been introduced in some urban areas, but the few articles rationed are also not supplied regularly;

the quantity varies very often. Now, what about the people of the rural areas? People are prepared to suffer and sacrifice provided justice and equity govern the principle of supply and distribution affecting all classes of people in all the areas. Exploitation is going on unchecked during the last five years for the so-called purposes of the war with the result that the war has become a very profitable business to a large number of people, the interests of the common people have been ruthlessly sacrificed and they have today almost reached death's door. We have come here today to save our own people and country and save them from the hands of organised exploiters and adventurers. My appeal to you all is this. Today everyone knows that the ultimate responsibility for this state of affairs rests on the British Administrators in India. They wanted first to provide for the troops; they wanted to cater more for those who are directly concerned in war efforts than for those who are indirectly connected with war efforts, forgetting altogether their great responsibility to the people of the country who must be fed and kept alive. We, in Assam, are in the border of the Eastern Zone. How will this war be won? If Assam is famished, if Assam is ruined, can the war be won? Will peace and morale ever remain intact? Is it Assam's fault that we are suffering like this? Whose fault it is that Burma fell? Whose fault it is that Malaya fell? Whose fault it is that Singapore fell? Certainly, it was not the fault of Assam. Whose fault it is that there are not in existence proper transport facilities for carrying the supplies of the necessaries of life to the people of Assam. Certainly not our fault. If after 150 years of British Rule and association with India, Assam is going to suffer like this for the scarcity of daily necessaries of life, it is a great pity indeed so far as the obligations of the Government of India are concerned. You just look into the figures so far as the wheat quota, the sugar quota, the salt quota are concerned. They are simply ridiculous. The transport quota is so scandalous that hon. Members of the House should rise to a man. There should be a Government, strong and representative, whom the India Government or the British Government or the real masters of the Assam Government will not be able to flout. A message should be sent to the Prime Minister in England that in view of the serious position that threatens Assam, it is disastrous to the interests of the Allied Powers themselves not to supply necessary food-stuffs to Assam. It would be regarded as a war measure and there should be no more tinkering with it. If the higher authorities fail, the Ministry should abandon all responsibility and come out of office. Let us all combine and put forward our demands on behalf of the people of Assam, irrespective of race, community or colour and stand by that in this hour of supreme crisis.

Sir, I feel that there are moments in the life history of a nation when silence is criminal. Sir, the preferential treatment shown to some of the companies has become the topic of the day and people want to cite it as a conclusive proof that the entire policy behind this Government has been inspired not by any lofty motive, not by any idealism, not by any vision, not by any imagination, not by any appreciation of the real difficulties that face us at the present moment, but purely by political and party considerations. Sir, I am sure that a man of Sir Muhammad's talent would realise it, but it is a pity, he will realise it a little too late that he has committed the greatest blunder in his life in showering blessings upon his confreres. Sir, I am speaking on the subject before us in a detached way. In this connection, may I also appeal to the Members of the European group who are making great sacrifices to save their Empire, I want to make it sufficiently clear that not only I do not stand in their way, but that they have our unstinted co-operation in the prosecution of the war efforts, provided they only support us in our attempt to save our people who are on the verge of ruin and destruction. After all, whatever may be their assurance that they are fighting to make the world safe for democracy, liberty and freedom, it has absolutely no meaning for us as our only purpose is to save our people, to relieve the distress of the suffering humanity and to rescue them from the jaws of death.

Sir, I had a talk only yesterday with a supporter of this Government; without imputing any political consideration in the discussion, I asked him—'How are you

going to save the people from their present awful plight of miseries?" He said: "God alone knows, God alone can save." Sir, I appeal to God, I pray to God that He might make it possible for better sense to dawn on the masters that be on the land. It reminds me of the immortal sentence of Wordsworth—"Much has moved my heart to think what man has made of man" It is not God, it is man, who by his anti-social activities, selfishness and unsympathetic attitude,—an attitude impervious to reason, impervious to the frantic appeal from the people of Assam, impervious to their sufferings, unsympathetic to the cries and agonies of the people, has complicated the situation and poisoned the whole atmosphere. We are not free people, we are emasculated, we are helpless. One political cataclism after another, one shock after another, one degrading measure after another, repression after repression and have laid us low, practically sucked us dry economically, bled us white completely and dragged us down from the height of glory to the depth of degradation and humiliation. If we could have taken the law into our own hands, these millions of people would have risen in revolt and would have made it impossible for any Government that exists on the land to ignore their sufferings and ride rough-shod over their feelings. In spite of this, it will not be possible for any one to stifle the flow of time, the groans and sobs of suffering humanity. It is no more useful to take shelter under the subterfuge of declaring from the house top that there is no shortage of essential commodities in the Province. The people should be allowed to know the real position. Otherwise, Government's position will be like that of the cowherd in the story of the "Cowherd and the Wolf." It is not that this Government should enjoy the confidence of the majority of the Members of this House, but it is the confidence of the people of the Province that really counts, and the Government should enjoy that confidence.

Sir, I do not like to take any more time of the House by giving a list of the necessary articles that we are in need of, because it is well known to all concerned, and I hope that all these items should get equal preference. Let Government remember that necessity first, luxury next. Food-stuffs, clothes, kerosene oil, coal, fuel, paper—all are necessary things which this Government should try their level best to procure, and they should not give any scope for any criticism challenging the honesty of the Government.

Sir, a popular Government should be above all criticisms, specially when there is a man like Sir Muhammad—a man of high culture, strong determination, cool, calculative and of amiable disposition, intelligent, and experienced administrator—at the top of the administration. He should shake off the advice of his so-called advisers and should unhesitatingly use his master skill in all the cases wherever it will be necessary, irrespective of persons and position. It pains me to hear that the good name—and really so—of Sir Muhammad should be marred with black spots. To keep his good name unblemished to be written in the history, he should henceforth proceed unbiassedly without caring for the result and free from fear and frown. Sir, he is at the zenith of his glory, but I am afraid, it is going to be trampled down. Now, it is up to him to preserve his good name unstinted. Sir, it is very difficult to acquire it; it takes years to earn it, but it is very easy to lose it. A few hours—nay a few minutes are enough to destroy it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Order, order. The hon. Member should stop now.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I shall take only five minutes more. Sir, the other day, the Hon'ble the Prime Minister said that the Excise Commissioner had been selected to take over the charge of supply and distribution of the consumer goods in the Province because he had leisure. Sir, when this point was raised in the Retrenchment and Resources Committee and recommendation was made to the effect of amalgamating two posts, Government did not care to give effect to the said recommendation. They say things and interpret them according to the suitability of their convenience.

In this connection, I like to mention that I do not grudge new appointments so long as they are necessary for the better administration of the Province, but if the appointments are made on any other consideration, I shall certainly oppose for all time to come.

Now, Sir, I shall conclude my speech after giving a few definite and constructive suggestions :

(i) The handling of the food situation should forthwith be taken out of the arena of party politics and should be completely entrusted to a central food council representative of all major political parties and a few experts on production, transport, nutrition and distribution ;

(ii) Attempt should be made to procure by negotiation with respective Governments sufficient quantities of food-stuffs which we are in need of from other Provinces, and to obtain necessary permit and quota from the Central Government by convincing them of the real state of affairs prevailing in the Province ;

(iii) More vigorous measures should be adopted to promote Grow More Food Campaign by—(a) supplying fresh quantities of good seeds for all the varieties and classes of food-stuffs, (b) adequate facilities of irrigation, (c) cheap manure, (d) encouragement of fodder crop, (e) suitable advances to the cultivators for enabling them to undertake intensive cultivation, (f) guarantees of minimum prices for food-grains produced by the agriculturists of Assam and (g) improving the cattle wealth of the Province by all possible means ;

(iv) Efficient men should be appointed and trusted with works ;

(v) Wastage of food-stuffs due to negligence and ignorance of the employees of the Government should be stopped and severely dealt with ;

(vi) Supply of stock must be ensured and sufficiently before controlling and rationing a commodity ;

(d) How many recommendations, if any, have been received by Government from the Public Service Commission and when ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

1. (a)—Yes.

(b)—15th August, 1944.

(c)—Government did not ask for any specific number of nominations.

(d)—One. It was received on 16th September, 1944.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : How many recommendations are usually sent by the Public Service Commission ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : Generally, we ask for three recommendations for one post.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Does the Hon'ble Minister realise that by giving only one recommendation the Public Service Commission becomes virtually the appointing authority, fettering the discretion of the Government, in the matter of appointments ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : Yes, I think it is.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : In that view of what has been said, will the Hon'ble Minister be pleased to refer the matter back to the Public Service Commission for giving at least three recommendations ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : Yes, the matter may be considered.

*Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : May I know from the Hon'ble Minister why the post was not advertised ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN : There was no necessity for it because there are already three in the cadre of Assistant Inspectress of Schools.

†The Questioner being absent, Babu Rabindra Nath Aditya put the Question on authorisation.

*Speech not corrected.

(vii) Maintenance of proper accounts of the procurement and supply departments should be rigorously observed so that ugly rumours may not be heard of in future ;

(viii) Adequate transport facilities should be given to the civil population. Assam Transport should be run in a proper and decent way. It is really regrettable that out of 580 vehicles only 200 vehicles are running. Special care should be taken in keeping proper accounts. Military personnel should not be employed at the cost and sacrifice of the people of the Province in this organisation ; and

(ix) Bengal Government should be asked to take immediate delivery of their paddy and rice.

Lastly, Sir, I would again request the Hon'ble Prime Minister that because some suggestions have come or will be coming from this side of the House, he should not brush them aside ; but in a sportsman-like spirit, as he has shown in the cases of two of his own party Members, he should take the suggestions advanced from this side of the House fully and unbiassedly into consideration.

With these words Sir, I resume my seat.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : This debate will continue tomorrow after conclusion of Government Bills. No further Private Members' Business will be taken up tomorrow.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A.M. on Thursday, the 21st November, 1944.

SHILLONG :

The 10th January 1945.

A. K. BARUA,

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.

Shillong : Printed and published by the Superintendent, Assam Government Press (Gazette) No 357+19-17-1-1945.

and they should not give any scope for any criticism challenging the honesty of the Government.

Sir, a popular Government should be above all criticisms, specially when there is a man like Sir Muhammad—a man of high culture, strong determination, cool, calculative and of amiable disposition, intelligent, and experienced administrator—at the top of the administration. He should shake off the advice of his so-called advisers and should unhesitatingly use his master skill in all the cases wherever it will be necessary, irrespective of persons and position. It pains me to hear that the good name—and really so—of Sir Muhammad should be marred with black spots. To keep his good name unblemished to be written in the history, he should henceforth proceed unbiassedly without caring for the result and free from fear and frown. Sir, he is at the zenith of his glory, but I am afraid, it is going to be trampled down. Now, it is up to him to preserve his good name unstinted. Sir, it is very difficult to acquire it ; it takes years to earn it, but it is very easy to lose it. A few hours—nay a few minutes are enough to destroy it.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Order, order. The hon. Member should stop now.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Sir, I shall take only five minutes more. Sir, the other day, the Hon'ble the Prime Minister said that the Excise Commissioner had been selected to take over the charge of supply and distribution of the consumer goods in the Province because he had leisure. Sir, when this point was raised in the Retrenchment and Resources Committee and recommendation was made to the effect of amalgamating two posts, Government did not care to give effect to the said recommendation. They say things and interpret them according to the suitability of their convenience.

