

PRESS RELEASE

April 15, 2016

Randeep Singh Surjewala, Incharge Communications, AICC and Vijay Inder Singla, Spokesperson AICC have issued the following statement to the press today:-

“India’s sovereign bank-RBI, has red flagged a Rs.12,000 crore ‘Foodgrains Scandal’ directing all banks involved in lending Punjab government’s ‘Food Borrowing Procurement Programme’ to provide for potential losses as foodgrains that are supposed to have been bought have vanished from godowns.

News reports also suggest that alarmed by it, India’s lead bank-SBI has called a meeting of all the bankers on 18th April, 2016 to discuss the alarming situation with some experts putting the figure of missing foodgrains even at Rs.20,000 crore.

There can’t be worst news for a State, which is ‘Food Bowl of India’ providing 114 lakh ton of wheat annually to central pool alone. It would put a serious question mark on capacity of Punjab’s Akali Dal-BJP government to procure the current wheat crop which has already arrived in mandis as country’s sovereign bank-RBI and lead bank-SBI are putting a question mark qua siphoning off the procured foodgrains. Once the bank credit dries up, can a debt ridden Akali- Dal-BJP government, which has bankrupted Punjab on account of gross financial mismanagement, procure foodgrains is itself under a cloud?

All this is happening as Food and Agriculture Ministries of Government of India, FCI and Punjab government continue to maintain a conspiratorial silence.

Mystery of missing foodgrains worth thousands of crore rupees may be viewed in light of Punjab’s CAG report for different periods upto 2013-14, which brings out the following:-

(i) State government agencies i.e. PSWC (Punjab State Warehousing Corporation), PAFC (Punjab Agro Food Corporation), PUNGRAIN (Punjab Grain Procurement Corporation) and PUNSUP (Punjab State Civil Supplies Corporation) had given copies of registration numbers of vehicles used for transportation of foodgrains procured by them to CAG.

Out of these, 3319 trucks/commercial vehicles were selected by CAG for random checking pertaining to 39 grain markets.

Out of 3319 trucks/commercial vehicles so selected, CAG could not trace 3232 trucks/commercial vehicles at all i.e. 97.38%.

Out of 87 trucks/commercial vehicles that could be traced, 15 turned out to be registration numbers of scooters/motor cycles/cars etc.

Does it indicate a link of missing foodgrains? Were the foodgrains not procured at all or were they never transported to government godowns although payment was made?

(ii)(a) Out of 16 district offices of Punjab’s four State government agencies mentioned above, seven district offices of these

agencies involving 751 grain markets did not supply data (years 2009-10 to 2013-14) relating to number of trucks/commercial vehicles used for transportation of foodgrains.

(b) Remaining 7 districts offices out of 16 also provided incomplete vehicle registration numbers of 41,033 vehicles relating to 146 grain markets (Year 2009-10 to 2013-14).

Was this a clever ploy to put a lid over the possible scam and block the CAG in not examining the leakages?

(iii) CAG report also noted that Punjab government had to reconcile an amount of Rs.42,000 crore for development of 'Food Sector' with Government of India.

This definitely raises a question as to how much is the total amount presently?

(iv) Out of 667 personnel on the 'Agreed List' of officers with 'doubtful integrity' in 2001, 340 officers (54%) belonged to Punjab region alone. Contrary to instructions, 299 officers were deployed on sensitive duties and 199 officers continued on the same posting for five years.

Why was this done is the obvious question to ask?

(v) How much is the sub-standard paddy and wheat procured by State government agencies in last 10 years i.e. 2007-08 to 2014-15? For example, CAG has noted that only in the years 1997-98 and 2000-01, loss on account of procuring sub-standard paddy worth 2.91 lakh MT was Rs.260.05 crore? How much is the total loss caused on account thereof and who will bear the loss?

PM, Shri Narendra Modi; FM, Shri Arun Jaitley; Agriculture Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh and Punjab CM, S. Prakash Singh Badal need to come clean and place all facts in public domain and answer to people of Punjab:-

1. What is the total quantity and value of foodgrains that is missing from Punjab's godowns? Whether is it worth Rs.12,000 crore or Rs.20,000 crore or more? What is the quantity and loss on account of purchase of sub-standard paddy/wheat between 2007-08 uptill today?

2. Where has the money gone? Who is responsible for theft?

3. How much money has been taken on account of development of 'Food Sector' by Punjab government from Central government? Is it Rs.42,000 crore or more or less? How will this amount be paid back?

4. Does it require an enquiry by a sitting judge with a comprehensive court monitored audit by CAG of the entire procurement of foodgrains in Punjab from 2007-08 till today?"