Price that pierces people

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Precisely, it’s a tough time that cripples the commoners. You may find it hard to believe unless you suspend disbelief. Onion reaches your kitchen only if you pay Rs 85 per kg. Potato is available. But it is sold not below Rs 35 per kg. We have yet to speak of other essential goods of dearer prices. Tomato is no longer tasty if you refuse to pay Rs 90 per kg. That’s the reality in the market these days. Those having pockets overflowing with money have nothing to be worried. But the commoners are bound to bear the brunt.

But who will save the common people? In political circle, the signal is disquieting hardly six months before the Lok Sabha polls. The spiraling price line simply suggests the UPA government's failure to firmly deal with the situation. The Opposition has squarely nothing to be celebrated the UPA failure on price front. The NDA government has nothing exemplary during its regime to deal with galloping price line. Inflation rate continues its upward trend riding piggyback on the soaring price of food articles during the last 6 months.

But in Assam, the picture is different. The price line seems to have reached a disappointing height. The government has no dearth of excuse. Strangely, the government often refuses to even admit the soaring prices of these commodities. West Bengal has stopped supplying potato to Assam citing scarcity at source. Even it is averse to allow the trucks carrying potato to the neighbouring north eastern region in view of the impending crisis.

Even after being caught in this crisis, Dispur has yet to devise a mechanism to help the state bail of it. Apart from West Bengal, Assam procures Potato from UP. The ministers in the helm of affairs speak of measures to flood the market with potato and onion. But there seems to be no respite from the rising prices. The blackmarketeers and hoarders are believed to have exploited the situation. Till now, the food and civil supply department remains a mute spectator. But why? What forces the heavily manned department to remain mute? It can neither rein in the price line nor bust the blackmarkeeters.

To speak of the prices of vegetables, the reason is different. Those growing beans and brinjals, cabbage and cauliflower, ring gaurds and bitter gaurds have not been able to reap rich harvest even after rising vegetable prices. The reason is the middle men who procures their products at water price at source and sell at an exorbitant rate in the markets of Guwahati. This is their business that leaves the growers upset with price while depriving the commoners of the procuring green vegetables in reasonable prices. But this story is not unknown to the people in power.

Can’ they help these growers bring their products directly to the market? Obviously, they can. But never they try to give these people any relief. As a result, vegetable production starts declining to result in more price rise. The government has hardly any mechanism that can neither benefit the vegetable growers nor the common buyers. The real picture would be a crystal if one visit the char areas in Mongoldoi and Nagaon not to speak of Dhubri.

Dispur of late, has realized large scale onion cultivation only after the state experienced the grim reality. Now it has prepared a blueprint to deal with the impending onion crisis in the next year. But it has yet to concentrate another blueprint to boost potato cultivation. Where is the way out?

But still the planning commission report suggests a sharp fall in the number of BPL(Below poverty line) to 101.27 lakh in 2011-12 from 116.4 lakh in 2009-2010. The country’s plan panel puts Assam in 12th place in terms of highest number of people living below the poverty line.

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