

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, September 3, 1963/Bhadra
12, 1885 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the
Clock.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Import of Rice from Madagascar

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- *446. { Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad:
Shri Yashpal Singh:
Shri Warrior:
Shri Vasudevan Nair:
Shri M. N. Swamy:
Shri P. K. Ghosh:
Shri Kapur Singh:
Shri Raghunath Singh:
Shri Ram Ratan Gupta:

Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Economy, Commerce and Trade Minister of Madagascar on his recent visit to India expressed that his country was in a position to export rice to India; and

(b) if so, whether the possibility of importing rice from Madagascar has been examined?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Shinde): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On examination it was found that the price of Madagascar rice was considerably higher than prices in other countries from where we are importing rice.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: Could we have an idea of the difference between the price of this rice which is reported as being high and the

price of rice which we are taking from other countries?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): It is considerably higher. The price quoted for the ordinary price of Madagascar with about 25 to 40 per cent broken was about £47 to £50 per ton. The price of the rice that we get from other countries is much lower. I do not think that my hon. friend will press me to quote the other prices. I have got them here with me, but it may not be advisable to disclose them.

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: May I know whether Government have made any request to the Madagascar Government for reduction in the price and to make suitable arrangements by which we can have this rice at a lesser price?

Shri A. M. Thomas: That question does not arise. After all, they are in a position to supply us only 50,000 tons per year. On an average, we are importing about 2 lakh tons. So, they are not in a position to meet all our requirements. There were further talks also, but there was not any definite negotiation as such. The Ambassador at Tananarive just conveyed a desire in 1962, and when we examined it we found it to be not worth the while. When the Minister for National Economy of the Madagascar Government was here, he discussed it with the Planning Commission, and the Planning Commission also asked us to explore the possibilities, and we found that it was not worth-while.

श्री यशपाल सिंह : यह बार्टर बेसिस पर होगा या फारन एक्सचेंज "के पेनेट के बेसिस पर ?

Shri Shinde: That stage has not come so far. That stage can come only if negotiations start.

श्री कछवाय : इस में कुछ शर्त भी हैं, यदि हां तो कौनसी शर्तें हैं ?

Mr. Speaker: Are there any conditions attached to this?

Shri Shinde: Actually, no negotiations are proceeding. Only there was a formal offer or suggestion, and that was only examined by us

Shrimati Savitri Nigam: May I know whether the rice was very expensive or was of inferior quality, or whether they wanted some foreign exchange payment and they were not ready to take rupee payment? What was the actual reason for refusing such a good offer?

Shri A. M. Thomas: I have already given the reasons in the main answer, and in my answer to the supplementary question asked by Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad also, I mentioned the reason. The reason was the high price of the rice.

Shri P. K. Ghosh: In view of the great scarcity of rice, do Government intend to import rice at a higher price?

Shri A. M. Thomas: Now, the Ministry of International Trade is proposing to enter into a trade agreement with Madagascar, and if that is concluded, perhaps, rice also may find a place there, and if it is worth the while for us to import rice from Madagascar, we shall consider it at that stage.

India Star Lines

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*447 { **Shri Yashpal Singh:**
Shri Rameshwar Tantia:
Shri Bishanchander Seth:
Shrimati Renuka Barkataki:
Shri Basumatari:

Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have now permitted the India Star Lines Shipping Company to operate on the India-U.K. route;

(b) if so, the terms under which the company will be operating;

(c) the present strength of the fleet of the company; and

(d) whether the company have acquired the rights for operation for the coastal trade also?

The Minister of Transport (Shri Raj Bhadur): (a) to (d). A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b). In October 1962, the Government of India issued a sanction permitting the proposed India Star Lines to operate tramp vessels in the India-U.K./Continent trade using initially foreign chartered vessels provided they paid the charter hire of the vessels from their own foreign exchange assets and did not apply for membership of the India-U.K./continent Conference. The sanction could not, however, be utilised because the company was not prepared to use its own foreign exchange assets for paying the charter hire. Subsequently, when the company was actually registered under the name of Star Ship Private Ltd. it was found that the percentage of Indian Directors was only 66-2/3 per cent instead of 75 per cent. Government accordingly informed the Company that before any further proposal from them could be considered, they should raise the percentage of Indian Directors to 75 and also acquire at least one ship and register it under the Indian flag. In June 1963, the Company informed the Government that they would acquire at least one vessel with their own foreign exchange resources for registration as Indian ship and then make further proposals to the Government of India. But since then the Company has neither acquired any vessels nor submitted any fresh proposals to the Government of India.

(c) Nil.

(d) No, Sir.

श्री यशपाल सिंह : फ्रेट रेट्स को रेग्युलेट करने का हक सरकार ने क्या अपने हाथ में रखा है या उन्हीं को सौंप दिया है ?