

(b) if so, the broad features of the recommendations made; and

(c) if not, when the Committee is expected to submit its final report?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): (a) Not yet, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Committee is likely to take some time more to submit its report.

Loan to River Steam Navigation Company

*108. **Shri Inderjit Gupta:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state:

(a) whether a fresh loan of Rs. 60 lakhs has been granted to the River Steam Navigation Company Limited;

(b) whether it is a fact that the previous loan of Rs. 2 crores has been spent by the Company to the extent of only Rs. 40 lakhs;

(c) the grounds for the latest loan; and

(d) the steps Government have taken to investigate into the Company's financial position?

The Minister of Transport (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) to (d). A statement containing the required information is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

Government have agreed to grant a loan of Rs. 60 lakhs to Messrs. Rivers Steam Navigation Co. Limited in the following instalments to help them to tide over their current financial difficulties:—

Rs. 25 lakhs on	25-5-64
Rs. 20 lakhs on	21-6-64
Rs. 15 lakhs on	1-7-64

The first instalment of the loan has already been sanctioned.

2. Out of the loan of Rs. 2 crores, which Government separately agreed

to advance the Company for the rehabilitation of their obsolete fleet, a total sum of Rs. 44,05,261 has so far been availed of.

3. The decision to advance these loans was taken after consideration of the Company's financial position.

Panchayati Raj

*109. { **Shrimati Savitri Nigam:**
Shri P. R. Chakraverti:

Will the Minister of Community Development and Cooperation be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have set up a consultative council on Panchayati Raj to review the problem and progress of Panchayati Raj;

(b) if so, the composition of the Council; and

(c) the sub-committees, if any, set up by the council to deal with specific aspect of the subject?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation (Shri B. S. Murthy):

(a) Yes.

(b) A statement on the composition of the Council is laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-2909/64].

(c) The Council is empowered to set up Committees, as may be required, for the efficient discharge of its functions. This matter is likely to be considered by the Council during its first meeting.

Import of Foodgrains

*110. **Shri S. N. Chaturvedi:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state the arrangements being made for the import of foodgrains on the expiry of the P.L. 480 agreement with U.S.A.?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): Government are

considering the further extension of the present P. L. 480 agreement and informal approaches have already been made to the U. S. Government. It is proposed to make a formal approach shortly.

Railway Passes

*111. **Shri Ramanathan Chettiar:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to fix any quota in the principal mail/express trains for 1st Class Pass-holders travelling on Privilege Passes with a view to relieve more space for the travelling public which is finding it extremely difficult to procure accommodation during the rush period in the summer;

(b) whether the Railway Board have issued any such orders that while reserving accommodation preference should be given to the travelling public who purchase tickets over the railway Pass-holder; and

(c) if not, whether the Railway Board intend to issue such instructions to meet the rising traffic demands from the general public?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Railways (Shri S. V. Ramawamy): (a) Yes, Sir. Instructions to this effect have already been issued.

(b) There is a general warning printed on the reverse of all cheque passes that privilege Pass-holders should give preference at the starting station to ticket-holders of the same class when there is difficulty in accommodating passengers in trains.

(c) Does not arise.

Indian Coastal Shipping

*112. **Shri Mohammad Elias:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India's coastal shipping tonnage has declined recently;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken to increase the coastal tonnage?

The Minister of Transport (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

Rise in Prices of Foodgrains

*113. **Shri Jashvant Mehta:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that after the formation of wheat zones recently there is abnormal rise in the prices of wheat, rice, pulses and millets in deficit States of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan;

(b) whether Government have assessed the rise in deficit States and if so, what are the findings; and

(c) the steps Government have taken to hold the price line in deficit States?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. M. Thomas): (a) and (b). Wheat prices are reported to have recorded a fall in Rajasthan after the formation of wheat zones; there has, however, been some rise in the prices of wheat in Maharashtra and Gujarat. There has been some rise in the prices of gram also in all the three States. Rice and other Kharif cereals are showing the usual seasonal rise.

(c) The more important of the steps taken to keep foodgrain prices in check are as follows:—

(i) Licensing control on wholesale dealers is being tightened up and made more effective;

(ii) Distribution of foodgrains through fair prices shops has been stepped up; and

(iii) Forward trading in foodgrains is completely banned, and selective control on bank advances against stocks of foodgrains is being suitably ad-