

those persons arrested were passengers with fake tickets or whether they were persons who were party to the conspiracy of selling those tickets.

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: They were innocent passengers. The real culprits also have been apprehended; the clerk and others are there.

Prices of Rubber

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S.N.Q. 28. **Shri Buta Singh:**
Shri P. K. Deo:
Shri Gulshan:
Shri P. K. Ghosh:

Will the Minister of Commerce be pleased to state:

(a) the minimum statutory prices per ton of the natural rubber, and the prices being actually charged from the consumers by the Rubber Planters;

(b) whether the prices actually being charged from the consumers are higher than the minimum statutory prices and if so, the impact which the charging of the exorbitant prices is having on the rubber industry as well as in the country and whether this has, in any way, affected our exports and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action, if any, taken by Government to stop this exploitation on the part of the Planters?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Commerce (Shri Shafi Qureshi):

(a) to (c). A statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b). The statutory control of prices of natural rubber has been abolished from 16th December 1963. However, the minimum price for Grade I rubber was retained at Rs. 3230 per tonne. The present market price at Kottayam is about Rs. 6500 per tonne. It has been estimated that an increase of Rs. 100 per tonne in the price of natural rubber will in-

crease the cost of tyres by about 0.5%. Prices of other goods will be similarly affected in varying degree depending on the proportion of rubber used in their manufacture.

The rise in prices of raw rubber has had no adverse effect on exports. The total value of exports of rubber goods increased to Rs. 2.19 crores in 1965-66 from Rs. 1.68 crores in 1964-65 and Rs. 90 lakhs in 1963-64.

(c) (i) For the licensing period April 1965—March, 1966, arrangements have been made for importing a total quantity of 12700 tonnes of rubber.

(ii) It is proposed to allow immediately import of 7500 tonnes of natural rubber for the first six months of 1966-67 and an equal quantity during the second half of the year.

(iii) The rubber tyre manufacturing industry, which accounts for about two-thirds of all rubber consumed in the country, has been included among the priority industries entitled to the benefit of the liberalised import policy announced following devaluation.

The above measures will bring down the prices of indigenous rubber to reasonable levels.

Shri Buta Singh: I want to know what is the lag between home production and home consumption of rubber in this country.

The Minister of Commerce (Shri Manubhai Shah): 17,000 tonnes.

Shri Buta Singh: What steps are being taken by the Government to bridge this lag?

Shri Manubhai Shah: 10,000 tonnes are expected to be imported in the next three months and another licence for 15,000 tonnes is being issued.

Shri Buta Singh: What special incentives are being given to the local producers?

Shri Shafi Qureshi: There will be a payment of a replanting subsidy at the rate of Rs. 1000/- per acre. There will be grant of loans at the rate of Rs. 750/- per acre to small growers to increase their acreage. Maintenance loans at the rate of Rs. 475/- per acre are sanctioned to small growers. The Rubber Board is rendering technical assistance to the Plantation Corporation of Kerala set up by the Government of Kerala. The Rubber Board is maintaining regional nurseries which will provide help to the new planters. At the instance of the Rubber Board, the Agricultural Refinance Corporation has agreed to advance loans through the Scheduled Banks at the rate of Rs. 2,100 to estates and Rs. 1,600 to individuals for new-plantation of rubber. The Rubber Board is exploring the possibilities of utilisation of new areas for rubber cultivation. An additional area of 85,000 acres will be brought under rubber in the Fourth Plan.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: I find from the statement that while the minimum price of rubber is Rs. 3230 per tonne, the actual market price is Rs. 6500 per tonne. I want to know, in view of this tremendous gap between the two, what is the practical significance or real significance at all in keeping this artificial minimum price which has no bearing on the actual market conditions.

Shri Manubhai Shah: It is protection to the growers as a support price. There is no ceiling price for natural rubber. But the mechanism of import or filling in the gap between the local demand and the local supply is keeping the price intact.

Shri Indrajit Gupta: Minimum price.

Shri Manubhai Shah: The minimum price is to see that at no time the planter or grower of rubber gets a price less than that.

Shrimati Ramdulari Sinha: What was the basis on which the statutory

price of rubber was fixed and what percentage of return is ensured to the manufacturers on their investment?

Shri Manubhai Shah: There are two parts of the question. One is the grower of the natural rubber and the other, as the hon. lady Member says, the manufacturer of rubber products. . . .

Shrimati Ramdulari Sinha: What is the percentage of return?

Shri Manubhai Shah: The percentage of return to the planter should be 10 to 12 per cent to be fair, and the same to the manufacturer also.

Shri S. Kandappan: May I know whether there is any proposal with Government to encourage rubber plantations in the Andamans and whether any action has been initiated on that, and if so, the total acreage that is going to be covered?

Shri Shafi Qureshi: The Department of Rehabilitation are finalising a project for rubber plantation in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which will provide employment to about 2000 people and will bring under cultivation about 6000 acres of land.

Shrimati Renuka Ray: From the statement it appears that the only possible step that Government are visualising to bring down the exorbitant price of rubber is the liberalisation of imports. In view of the devaluation, may I know what the price of the imported rubber would be and how much higher it would be after devaluation and whether that will have a sufficient impact on the bringing down of the price of indigenous rubber?

Shri Manubhai Shah: The landed cost of rubber at the Indian port is about Rs. 4500 a tonne. So, we do believe that the difference between the landed cost of imported rubber and the local price is such that reasonably the local price can be brought down.

Shri P. Venkatasubbaiah: May I know whether apart from a few selected places where rubber is grown, Government are contemplating to make a survey to find out the potentialities for growing rubber in other parts of the country so that we may not have to spend more foreign exchange on imports?

Shri Shafi Qureshi: The Fourth Plan proposals for development of rubber envisage the bringing in of an additional area of 85,000 acres under rubber as shown below:—

Kerala—50,000 acres
Mysore—10,000 acres
Madras—5,000 acres
Assam & Tripura—5,000 acres
The Andaman & Nicobar Islands—
15,000 acres.

Shri Ranga: What about Andhra Pradesh? What about the Arakku valley?

Shri Shafi Qureshi: If land is available, and the State Government make it available to us, we shall look into it.

Shri Vasudevan Nair: Large numbers of people have taken to rubber cultivation in the rubber-growing States like my State of Kerala, for instance, because they thought that this cultivation would really benefit them and they would get reasonable prices. May I know whether now there is a trend of thinking among governmental circles that they should bring down the prices and there should be a slump in the price of natural rubber and for that purpose largescale imports are necessary, and if so, whether Government will assure the indigenous cultivator of a reasonable and fair price?

Shri Manubhai Shah: That was exactly the point which I was trying to explain in answer to a previous supplementary question. The floor price is a price which is for the protection of the planters.

Shri Ranga: It is too low.

Shri Manubhai Shah: If the prices are so high as they are now, I am sure the hon. Member will agree that we should bring it down to a reasonable level.

Shri Maniyangadan: In view of the abnormal increase in the cost of production of natural rubber from what it was at the time the minimum price was fixed and also the fact that a vast majority of the producers are small holders owning only a few acres of land, will Government revise the minimum price so as to assure the agriculturists of a reasonable price?

Shri Manubhai Shah: That situation has not arisen, during the last several years. I must congratulate the natural planters of this country that within three years the production has gone up from 37,000 tonnes to about 50,000 tonnes.

Mr. Speaker: Next question.

Shri Joachim Alva: May I ask one question?

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I have passed on to the next question.

Shri Joachim Alva: The Opposition gets away every time with the opportunity; we must also have a chance to put some relevant questions. It is but fair that you should please look at this side also.

Mr. Speaker: SNQ No. 29. Shri Madhu Limaye.

श्री मधु लिमये : शार्ट नोटिस प्रश्न सं०
29.

श्री सिद्धेश्वर प्रसाद : इस प्रश्न के बारे में मेरा एक व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है इस प्रश्न के खण्ड (घ) में लिखा है —

"if so, the legal position in the matter?"

प्रश्न पूछने के बारे में जो नियम है —
नियम सं० 41 (बी) — उसमें लिखा हुआ है कि —

"it shall not ask for an expression of opinion or the solution of an abstract legal question...."

यदि ओपीनियन पूछी जाती है, तो इस प्रश्न को कैसे स्वीकार किया गया ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ओपीनियन नहीं, फेक्ट्स पूछे गये हैं ।

Restrictions on Members of Parliament

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- S.N.Q. 29. Shri Madhu Limaye:
Shri S. M. Banerjee:
Shri A. K. Gopalan:
Shrimati Renu
Chakaravartty:
Shri Umanath:
Shri Mohammed Koya:
Shri Maurya:
Shri Sarjoo Pandey:
Shri Daji:
Shri Tridib Kumar
Chaudhuri:
Shri Bagri:
Shri S. Kandappan:
Shri Indrajit Gupta:
Shri Narasimha Reddy:
Shri Surendranath
Dwivedi:
Dr. Ranen Sen:
Shri Kolla Venkaiah:
Shri Ram Sewak Yadav:
Shri Imbichibava:
Shri J. B. Singh:
Smt. Vimla Devi:
Shri Kishen Pattnayak:

Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the blatant manner in which the police are shadowing Shri A. K. Gopalan and other Members of Parliament, censoring their letters and tapping their telephones;

(b) if so, the legal position in the matter;

(c) whether it is permissible to carry this shadowing/censoring/taping

to the point of frightening away people or constituents from meeting and associating with the said Members of Parliament and creating obstruction, hindrance or impediment in the performance by them of their parliamentary duties; and

(d) if not the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government?

The Minister of Home Affairs (Shri Nanda): (a) to (d). I have had detailed inquiries made in this connection from the concerned authorities and am in a position to say that allegations of harassment to Members or their visitors, tapping of telephones or shadowing are totally incorrect. There are legal provisions in the Indian Post Office Act empowering the Central and State Governments to intercept, detain or in any other manner dispose of postal articles in the interests of public safety or tranquility. In all cases of action under section 26 of the Indian Postal Act, the procedure followed ensures expeditious clearance of mail for delivery, and this is normally done within two-three hours.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I rise on a point of order.

अध्यक्ष महोदय : उन्हें क्वेश्चन पूछने दीजिये ।

श्री मधु लिमये : मंत्री जी का जवाब बिलकुल सुनाई नहीं दिया । मैं उसे बिलकुल नहीं समझ पाया । अच्छा होगा अगर फिर से उसे पढ़ दिया जाये ।

श्री मौर्य : मेरी समझ में भी वह नहीं आया ।

Shri Nanda: I will read the statement again.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I rise on a point of order.

अध्यक्ष महोदय : अभी चलने दीजिये ।

श्री सं० मो० बनर्जी : जी नहीं, प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर सुन लीजिये ।