

Profits of Assam Oil Company

Mr. Speaker: Now, Question No. 543.

Shri Amjad Ali: May I suggest that. No. 562 also may be taken up along with this?

Dr. Ram Subhag Singh: Q. No. 578 also may be taken up along with this.

Shri Amjad Ali: Q. No. 562 can be taken up along with this, because the profits are derived out of the pumping out of oil.

Shri K. D. Malaviya: I do not think Q. No. 562 has any relation to Q. No. 543. But if you desire, I can answer it also.

Mr. Speaker: Then, he need not answer that question now.

*543. **Shri Warrior:** Will the Minister of Steel, Mines and Fuel be pleased to lay a statement on the Table showing:

(a) the gross and net profits earned by the Assam Oil Company inside Indian Union during the years 1954, 1955 and 1956;

(b) the percentage of profits in relation to the capital invested by the Company; and

(c) the share of the profits remitted overseas during these years by the company?

The Minister of Mines and Oil (Shri K. D. Malaviya): (a) and (b). A statement giving the information so far available, based on the figures furnished by the Assam Oil Company, is laid on the Table of Lok Sabha. [See Appendix III, annexure No. 52].

(c) The details of remittances made overseas by the Company out of the profits are not separately available. A reference is, however, invited to Statement I laid on the Table of the Sabha in reply to part (b) of Starred Question No. 328 by Shri T. C. Narayanankutty Menon, answered in Lok

Sabha on the 24th May, 1957, which gives the information at present available to the Government regarding gross remittances made abroad by the Assam Oil Company during the years 1955 and 1956.

Shri Warrior: May I know whether there is any specific reason why Government could not get the figures for 1956 from the Assam Oil Company?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: Under section 220 of the Companies Act, private companies, including foreign companies, are required to file their balance-sheets with the Registrar of Joint-stock Companies in India. According to this, we have received the balance-sheets for 1954-55, but we have not yet received the balance-sheets for 1956, and we hope to get them from the Assam Oil Co.

Shri Warrior: May I know whether Government have asked for the 1956 balance-sheets from them?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: Yes, we shall get them from the Assam Oil Co.

Shri Narayanankutty Menon: It has been reported in the press recently that an agreement has been arrived at between the Assam Oil Co., and the Government of India. May I know whether any term has been incorporated in that agreement to regulate the profits of this company while selling the oil manufactured by them?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: The negotiations that are going on at present between the Assam Oil Co., and the Government of India are in relation to the exploitation of crude oil at Naharkatiya and some other oil-fields. But this question relates to the profits that might have accrued in the balance-sheets of the Assam Oil Co., for the exploitation of the Digboi oil-fields. The two things are quite separate.

Shri Basumatari: May I know whether it is a fact that the price of oil is higher in the State of Assam than

in the rest of India? If so, what is the reason therefor?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: The prices of the finished products in Assam are undoubtedly somewhat higher than what they are in the rest of the country.

Shri Ranga: Why?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: The reasons are that the *per capita* consumption in Assam is less than it is elsewhere, and the transport costs are said to be higher there.

Shrimati Tarkeshwari Sinha: May I know if it is a fact that the Assam Oil Company increased the price of petrol by one anna before the budget announcement? If so, how far were they justified in raising the price of petrol on the plea of the Suez crisis when the Suez crisis did not affect us as our oil is coming from Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries? When the Suez crisis has affected the oil supply in U.K. and other countries of Europe, what is the reason for their squeezing money from the Indian people?

Shri K. D. Malaviya: I am afraid the question has not much of a bearing on the present question. But I might state that an increase of sales price was asked for by the Bombay refineries, and as a result, a one-anna increase was allowed. I need not go into the causes of it just now; I will take another opportunity to deal with it.

Some Hon. Members: No, no.

Shri Sinhasan Singh: We have not followed the reply of the hon. Minister.

Shrimati Manjula Debi: Are Government aware that the State of Assam is deprived of its share of Rs. 2 lakhs if assessment of the income of the Assam Oil Company is made in Calcutta instead of at Dibrugarh, and that the AOC is the biggest income-tax paying organisation in Assam, three-fourths of the income-tax of Rs. 4 crores realised in Assam being provided by the AOC in Assam so far and that

Mr. Speaker: How many questions? The hon. Minister is not called upon to answer about income-tax.

Shri K. D. Malaviya: This supplementary has no bearing on the original question.

Seizure of Gold and Jewellery

***544. Shrimati Ila Palchoudhury:** Will the Minister of Finance be pleased to state:

(a) the total amount and value of unauthorised gold and jewellery seized by the customs authorities at air and sea ports of India from incoming and out-going persons during the year 1956 as compared to 1955;

(b) whether any such gold and/or jewellery was returned to any persons from whom it was seized; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

The Deputy Minister of Finance (Shri B. R. Bhagat): (a) The total amount and value of unauthorised gold and jewellery seized by the customs authorities at air and sea ports of India was 94,468 tolas valued at Rs. 93,58,246 during 1956 and 48,252 tolas valued at Rs. 46,71,763 during 1955.

(b) and (c). Yes, Sir. In some cases gold and jewellery was returned to the persons from whom it was seized for the following reasons:—

(i) When after investigations it was found that no offence was established.

(ii) When the adjudicating officer was satisfied that the circumstances of the case did not justify outright confiscation. In such cases release was subject to fulfilment of certain conditions such as payment of duty, payment of fine, re-export to the country from which the gold or jewellery was imported etc.