

(b) Yes.

(c) Yes

Shri U. M. Trivedi: Is the Government going to amend it in view of the answer to (c)?

Shri Alagesan: No, Sir. This has been done with a view to provide greater convenience to the passengers travelling by the longer route, and we do not propose to have it reduced.

Shri U. M. Trivedi: Perhaps the hon. Minister has not understood my question. If the answer to (c) is in the affirmative, if you are not going to charge more for passengers from Delhi to Calcutta, why should you charge passengers from Delhi to Ahmedabad if they travel by the longer route? They do it not of their own accord.

Shri Alagesan: There is difference between the two cases. With regard to Delhi-Calcutta, there is heavy congestion of passengers traffic, and it is to the benefit of the Railways from the point of view of operation, to carry them in two different routes, and therefore, we charge the same fare for the longer route as for the shorter route. As far as Delhi-Ahmedabad is concerned, it has been done not for any operational convenience of the Railways, but to meet the wishes of the public, and that is the difference.

Shri U. M. Trivedi: Is the Government aware that the public is against it? Is the Government aware that Government servants are paid only at the rate for the shorter route? Is the Government aware that the Members of Parliament are also paid at the rate for the shortest route?

Shri Alagesan: In the House itself speeches were made; Members made requests that the Mail trains should be diverted via the longer route, and there were other representations also because Jaipur happens to be on the main line which is the longer route and it is the capital of Rajasthan. We do not have any information that the people are against this change.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The Question Hour is over.

Now, short notice question No. 64, Dr. Rama Rao. I shall allow the other hon. Members who have also tabled short notice questions on this, to put supplementaries.

Short Notice Questions and Answers

GODAVARI FLOODS

I. Dr. Rama Rao: Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Government have received any reports regarding the breaches in the river Godavari, near Rajahmundry, in Madras State;

(b) the extent of loss caused to the people by the submerging of the town of Rajahmundry and other low lying areas surrounding it; and

(c) What immediate steps Government propose to take to relieve the people of the acute distress they are in?

The Minister of Home Affairs and States (Dr. Katju): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c). A copy of the report received from the Government of Madras is laid on the Table of the House. [See Appendix IV, annexure No. 43.]

A final assessment of the damage caused to life and property has yet to be made. Loss of human life is believed to be not more than 26 including 14 persons who were drowned due to the sinking of a boat. Damage to crops and property, particularly house property, has been reported to be extensive. All possible relief measures immediately needed for the evacuation of the affected families, supply of food-stuffs and provision of shelter and medical supplies to prevent the outbreak of epidemics have already been taken by the Government of Madras.

No specific request for any assistance, financial or other, has yet been received by the Central Government; but two aircraft were placed at the

disposal of the Madras Government for the dropping of supplies over the affected areas. 100 tons of milk powder have also been supplied and further 100 tons will be sent shortly.

There are adequate stocks of food-grains in the Madras State to meet the situation; if required, additional stocks will be sent.

The Army has instructions to assist whenever its help is needed.

Dr. Rama Rao: The statement says on page 8: "The housing problem perhaps presents greatest difficulties as mentioned earlier. Practically all the poor people have lost their houses and considerable sections of the middle class families have also suffered." On page 7, paragraph 15 says: 'Most of the people in the affected areas had to leave almost all their belongings behind.' Now, Sir, unfortunately I have to put the whole thing in a question form. In spite of the commendable speed with which the Madras Government have moved in the matter, in spite of the prompt help given from various sources, like the Tanjore Cyclone Relief Fund, are the Government aware that nearly 2,000 square miles of area have been affected and nearly 10 lakhs of people have been affected, and are the Government also aware.....

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Why all these questions together?

Dr. Rama Rao: Unfortunately, the whole thing has to be in a question form.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: He has made a statement.

Dr. Rama Rao: Are the Government aware that the help rendered is not sufficient and are the Government going to give any liberal grant from the Central fund?

Dr. Katju: Wherever these extensive floods occur, whether they are in the Godavari or in the Mahanadi or in Damodar—wherever they do occur—very large tracts are affected and very many people suffer. That goes

without saying. About the grant from the Central Exchequer, much will depend upon the final assessment of the damage, upon the resources possessed by the State concerned, as to how far they can go, and the request made by them to the Central Government. Every request, I daresay, will, under these circumstances, be considered here with the utmost sympathy. I cannot go beyond that.

Shri Raghuramaiah: May I know, Sir, why food droppings from the air have been stopped? You were good enough to say something about that.

Dr. Katju: The report says, Sir—I do not know whether my hon. friend has got the report—that while the flood was at its height, various 'lankas' had been formed—I mean various islands had been formed; I have not come across this expression in Northern India—and they were not accessible. Therefore, the only way in which relief could be afforded and food supplies made was by dropping from the air. Within two or three days the water fell, the river dropped and the places became accessible, and then boats were used.

Shri Raghuramaiah: I have got one more question. The report says that lakhs of acres of paddy crop have been submerged. May I know, Sir, since it affects the food problem, whether the Government have any scheme of helping the agriculturists to start a second crop?

Dr. Katju: You must give the Government—everybody can understand that—a few more days. As I said, there has to be a final appraisalment of the problem as to what is needed and what is not needed. Every help will be given, in regard to submerged areas, property—everything.

Shri Raghavaiiah: In view of the enormity of the loss of life, crops and damage to irrigation channels caused by the inundation of the Godavari floods, may I know whether, in addition to the plan chalked out by the Madras Government to give sufficient relief to the destitutes and others

affected, the Government of India propose any plan?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Apart from what the Madras Government is doing, has the Government of India contemplated any particular plan independently of the Government of Madras?

Dr. Katju: It would be highly improper for the Government of India to have any independent plans of their own. It is a matter for the State Government in the first instance. We are awaiting their final report and final request. It is true that it is very extensive. In my knowledge, in Orissa we had a flood like this and then in Bengal; the Damodar is the river of sorrow and the Kosi is the river of sorrow. Everywhere this is so.

Shri K. S. Rao: (*Spoke in Telugu*)

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The hon. Member wants to know whether the Government are supplying free food to labourers who depend on agricultural labour.

Dr. Katju: I cannot answer this question definitely, Sir. But the report indicates that there were free food supplies made extensively through official agency as well as through reliable non-official agency, and 29 grain shops had been opened in the town of Rajahmundry. My hon. friend is distinguishing labourers from others. The Government of Madras have been looking after all poor people without any distinction. But I should like also to add here, in addition to what the Government of Madras have said, that the country owes a great deal to the very valiant, gallant and selfless effort which has been made both by officials and by the villagers—non-officials—who have combined together to meet this calamity. It came all of a sudden, within two days, and the Government of Madras, say, everybody from the highest officer downwards to the lowest revenue staff and the villagers and non-officials worked with great

strain in saving themselves and in assisting themselves and others as much as they could. I think it is a glorious example of what can be done by united effort.

Shri Krishnacharya Joshi: May I know, Sir, how many villages were affected in the Hyderabad State?

Dr. Katju: I do not know.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: In view of the recurrence of floods on a major scale in different parts of the country, to which the Minister has made a reference, why is it that the Government cannot benefit from past experience and be ready with quick relief on occasions such as these?

Dr. Katju: If the hon. Member were to read the report, I think, in this particular case the Government almost acted with electric rapidity.

Shri Sarangadhar Das: May I know, Sir, with reference to giving help to the cultivators to grow a second crop on the fields that have been submerged and in respect of crops that have been damaged, if any help has to be given, will not the final assessment be too late for the purpose?

Dr. Katju: As soon as the water subsides and if it becomes possible to grow crops, I am absolutely certain that the cultivator there will not need any begging from us. He will see to it that the second crop is sown there and then and if any help is required then the Madras Government and the new Andhra Government will give it.

Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava: In view of the magnitude of the calamity, may I know if the Government are sponsoring any non-official relief measures from the States through the Chief Minister or non-official agencies in the other States?

Dr. Katju: I think some funds have been given. The Prime Minister issued some help and one of my colleagues, Mr. Giri has gone to Rajahmundry and he will bring on-the-spot report to us. Non-official agen-

cies have also raised some subscriptions and relief funds have been opened in Madras too.

Dr. Rama Rao: May I know, Sir, that in view of the fact that a large section of handloom weavers have been seriously affected by the floods, have the Government any proposal to contribute something from the Textile Fund to the handloom weavers who are ruined?

Dr. Katju: I shall communicate this suggestion to the hon. the Chief Minister of Madras State.

Shri N. M. Lingam: Is it a fact, Sir, that the behaviour of the Godavari for the last one hundred miles has not been investigated and this factor has been responsible for the lack of adequate precautionary measures by the Government?

Dr. Katju: I do not know whether this has any connection with the question but I may add for the information of the House that from several years there has been, what is called, the Godavari Project under the consideration of the Government. It was estimated to cost in the beginning about Rs. 110 crores. Laterly I heard that it would cost about Rs. 240 crores. Expert advice has been taken from world famous engineers and so far as I know the opinion is divided whether the proposition is a feasible one or not. But please do not forget that there are some rivers which do behave like this, then what can be done?

Shri Gopala Rao: In view of the fact that in the affected areas cholera is spreading in a virulent form, are the Government prepared to send some medical missions and medicines from the Centre?

Dr. Katju: Reports indicate that already a large medical staff has been sent there and if more help is needed it will be sent.

PRICES OF GASOLINE AND KEROSENE

II. Shri M. L. Dwivedi: (a) Will the Minister of Works, Housing and

Supply be pleased to state what are the different prices prevailing in India of gasoline and kerosene as compared to the prices before the last World War and during the War?

(b) What are the causes for the rise in prices?

(c) What is the percentage of profits which the Assam Oil Company are making?

(d) What are the production prices and landed prices of gasoline and kerosene?

(e) What is the justification for the prevailing rates?

(f) Are Government taking any steps to arrest the onward trend in the rise in prices and to reduce them to the pre-war level?

The Deputy Minister of Works, Housing and Supply (Shri Buragohain): (a) and (b). Retail prices of Petrol and Kerosene before the war the maximum prices during the war and as at present current (f.o.r. main installations) are placed on the Table of the House. [See Appendix IV, annexure No. 44.]

The increase includes the higher incidence of such factors as duties and taxes, transportation costs, devaluation etc.

(c) In the last few years the profits of the Assam Oil Company have been high, but it is the contention of the Company that account should be taken of the undistributed profits ploughed back into the business, in earlier years and that these profits accrue to the holding Company, namely Burma Oil Company Limited, and that that Company's final profits are quite moderate. They also say that the holding Company spends large amounts for survey and exploration work on behalf of the Assam Oil Company and that this should not be ignored.

(d) No information is available regarding the production prices. As regards the current landed prices,