

Shri P. T. Chacko: May I know whether our Trade Commissioners appointed in other countries cannot do anything to regain markets for Indian commodities?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): The position is that pepper is one of our chief articles of export in which we are interested as it gets foreign exchange. The fluctuations in the market cause uneasiness in the minds of the Ministry as they do in the minds of the trade. And here I would like to amend the answer given by my hon. colleague. The quality generally is supposed to be varying and that is why there have been certain adverse reactions in the export market. But Government is doing all that is possible. Our Trade Commissioners are certainly told to find out why there is a fall in the demand and the causes therefor. But beyond that I do not think the Government can do anything.

Shri P. T. Chacko: Are the Government aware that the falling of the price of pepper is causing great hardship to the pepper growers and the vast majority of pepper growers are small scale cultivators?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: We are aware that any fluctuations in trade causes hardship to people who are engaged in the trade or the person who produce, but actually these fluctuations are not caused by Government. I think, if my hon. friend will look into the figures of prices of pepper now, he will find that the market has hardened lately.

Shri A. M. Thomas: May I know Sir, what is the present export rate of duty on pepper?

Shri Karmarkar: The export duty is 30 per cent.

TEXTILES (IMPORT)

*313. **Shri P. T. Chacko:** Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state whether the import of foreign textiles has been completely stopped and if not, the extent of textile goods imported in 1951-52?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri T. T. Krishnamachari): No, Sir. A statement showing the value of such goods imported during the year 1951-52 is laid on the Table of the House. [See Appendix, II, annexure No. 19.]

Shri P. T. Chacko: May I know on what basis this is allotted to States?

Shri T. T. Krishnamachari: I do not think there is any allotment as such. I say this subject to correction. If my hon. friend wants a very precise answer, I would like to have notice.

TRADE WITH U.S.S.R. AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

*314. **Dr. M. M. Das:** Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) the total volume of trade in rupees (import and export separately) between India and the countries of Eastern Europe and the U.S.S.R. during 1951-52;

(b) the chief items of import and export and the values of the quantities imported and exported; and

(c) whether the trade was regulated by trade agreements?

The Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry (Shri Karmarkar): (a) and (b). Two statements giving the required information are placed on the Table of the House. [See Appendix II, annexure No. 20.]

(c) Letters were exchanged with Hungary and Poland for the regulation of trade with those countries and have been publicised. Trade talks with Czechoslovakia are now in progress for the conclusion of a fresh Agreement, the last Trade Agreement with that country having expired in March 1951.

Dr. M. M. Das: The total values of export and import of the countries given in the statement when individually taken do not balance each other. As for example, our export to Russia amounts to Rs. 6 crores 67 lakhs, whereas our imports from U.S.S.R. amounts to Rs. 1 crore and 38 lakhs. I would like to know how the balance has been paid to India.

Shri Karmarkar: In the usual manner. As a matter of fact, my hon. friend knows that any adverse or favourable balance is not actually paid in cash. It is adjusted against their account. For instance, with Russia, we have got an arrangement by which we pay into an English Bank and they receive the money through it. This is how it is arranged.

Mr. Speaker: The question is how does India get about Rs. 5 crores.

The Minister of Finance (Shri C. D. Deshmukh): By surplus elsewhere.

Dr. M. M. Das: I was under the impression that Russia does not fall

within the hard currency or soft currency.

Shri C. D. Deshmukh: It was included in the soft currency areas.

Dr. M. M. Das: May I know whether the trade agreements are sought to be concluded individually with these countries belonging to the U.S.S.R. group or with all the total countries combined.

Shri Karmarkar: With each individual country, naturally.

Dr. M. M. Das: May I know how payment has been made to Russia for their export of Communism to this country?

Mr. Speaker: He need not answer that question.

Shri A. C. Guha: May I know if any of these countries have got special trade agencies here?

Shri Karmarkar: I think so. Str. Through their embassies, they carry on these things and some of them have got trade agencies.

Shri Velayudhan: May I know whether any facilities are given for trading with Soviet Russia by private individuals between these two countries and whether any exchange facilities are given by the Government?

Shri Karmarkar: As the hon. Member is aware, ours is an absolutely free country and we are giving all possible help to private traders also.

Shri Velayudhan: My question has not been answered, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: He must take it for what it is worth.

Bidi LABOUR

*315. **Shri K. C. Sodhia:** Will the Minister of Labour be pleased to state:

(a) the approximate number of persons engaged in bidi making in the country under the heads:—

(i) manufacturers (ii) middle men and (iii) workers; and

(b) whether the provisions of any of the different Acts enacted during the last four years for labour welfare have been applied to bidi labour and if not, why not?

The Minister of Labour (Shri V. V. Giri): (a) and (b). The State Governments have been requested to furnish the necessary information which, when received, will be placed on the Table of the House.

I may, however, add some information which is relevant and it may be useful to hon. Members of this House. Bidi making industry is covered by the Minimum Wages Act. The Employment of Children Act 1939 also applies to the workshops connected with bidi making, which prohibits the employment of children below the age of 12. The bidi making establishments which are non-power establishments are governed by the Factories Act, in case they employ 20 or more persons. Some of the State Governments regulate bidi making concerns employing less than 20 workers to the Shops and Commercial Establishments Act. Almost all the State Governments who are primarily concerned with this industry have taken legislative measures to regulate the working conditions in the industry either to the Municipalities Act or to special enactments like the Unregulated Factories Act.

Shri K. C. Sodhia: Do the Government of India require periodical reports from the State Governments concerned over the application of these various Acts?

Shri V. V. Giri: We have asked the State Governments to supply the fullest information and when we secure it, we shall place it on the Table of the House.

Shri Namdhari: May I ask if Government intends to discourage this trade in the country, which is a waste of finance and which is an evil that reduces the constitution of the youths to a war-quality standard?

Mr. Speaker: He need not reply to that.

Shri B. Shiva Rao: May I ask whether any occupational diseases of bidi labour have been listed in order to extend to the workers the benefits of the Workmen's Compensation Act?

Shri V. V. Giri: I would like to have notice of this question.

Shri Venkataraman: Are the Government aware that the employers try to evade the Factories Act by employing contractors and if so, what steps do Government propose to take in this respect?

Shri V. V. Giri: Government will certainly take measures but my hon. friends, the trade unionists have a duty in this matter to see that the various Act are implemented properly with respect to the bidi workers.

Shri Nambiar: May I know what steps the Government of India are