

MR. SPEAKER : It is written in the reply itself. If you want to repeat, you can.

SHRI C. K. JAFFER SHARIEF : All that I have to say is, as rightly pointed out by the Hon. Speaker, it is not really the Railway Convention Committee. What is basically important is the technical experts in the field. Not one Committee but two Committees were appointed, not by the Railway, but by the Planning Commission who have gone into this question. When they have accepted, what more can we think of? The Railway Convention Committee went into other aspects of it which were not so important in the larger interests of the country and the railway system. Since technology is very important and we had already given the acceptance letter, it was not possible for the Government to go back on its commitment. So, we went ahead.

[Translation]

SUPPORT PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES

*206. SHRI RAJESH KUMAR :

SHRIMATI SHEELA
GAUTAM :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have recently increased the minimum support

prices of different agricultural commodities including commercial crops, oilseeds and pulses ;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the price of each item prior to the price revision; and

(d) the factors taken into consideration while making revision in the support prices ?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) to (d) The Government have announced substantial increase in the Minimum Support Prices of different crops for 1993-94 kharif season. These increases range from Rs. 20 per quintal in case of coarse cereals to Rs. 100 per quintal in case of cotton, as compared to the prices fixed for the 1992-93 season. A Annexure providing details of the Minimum Support Prices fixed for 1992-93 and 1993-94 seasons is enclosed.

While revising the Minimum Support Prices, the factors such as cost of production, changes in input prices, input/output price parity, trends in market prices, demand and supply situation, etc., are taken into consideration.

ANNEXURE

MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICES OF KHARIF CROPS, 1993-94

(Rs. per quintal)

Commodity	Variety	1992-93	1993-94	Increase in 1993-94 over 1992-93	
				Absolute	Percentage
1	2	3	4	5	6
Paddy	Common	270	310	40	14.8
	Fine	280	330	50	17.9
	Superfine	290	350	60	20.7
Coarse Cereals	FAQ	240	260	20	8.3
(Jowar, Bajra and Ragi)					

1	2	3	4	5	6
Maize	FAQ	245	265	20	8.2
Arhar	FAQ	640	700	60	9.4
Moong	FAQ	640	700	60	9.4
Urad	FAQ	640	700	60	9.4
Cotton	F-414/H-777	800	900	100	12.5
	H-4	950	1050	100	10.5
Groundnut-in-sheel . . .	FAQ	750	800	50	6.7
Sunflower seed	FAQ	800	850	50	6.3
Soyabean	Black	475	525	50	10.5
	Yellow	525	580	55	10.5
Jute	TD-5	400	450	50	12.5

FAQ—Fair Average Quality.

[Translation]

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR : Whether the interests of small and marginal farmers are taken into consideration while revising the minimum support prices? If so, whether there is a lot of difference between input/output prices? If so, the steps taken by the Government to remove middlemen to avoid this difference.

SHRI ARVIND NETAM : It is correct that the Agriculture Prices Commission consider the interests of small and marginal farmers while deciding the support prices. As the Hon. Member has referred to the issue of middlemen, I would like to say that the State Government always try that small and marginal farmers may get remunerative price.

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR : I have asked as to what steps are being taken to remove middlemen. He is talking of the State Governments.

The Agriculture Minister (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : The State Governments directly make purchase of every type of foodgrains and that is why we have been able to make an adequate stock of foodgrains. This year the support price of wheat was fixed at Rs. 330/- per quintal by taking into account of all these things otherwise the price would have gone down and the farmers would have suffered loss.

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR : Had the Agricultural Cost and Price Commission

recommended the support price of wheat at Rs. 305 per quintal but the Government has fixed it at Rs. 330 per quintal including Bonus. But the support prices of other commodities are much less than prices recommended by the Commission. In the circumstances, I would like to know whether the Government propose to increase the support prices of these commodities as per the recommendation of the Commission.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry to state that the hon. Member has not read that the prices have been fixed more than the prices recommended by the Commission. We have paid much more and the price is the highest price ever paid to them.

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR : Though you have given yet it has not reached to them, the middlemen have swallowed that amount in between.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : That is why all the powers for making purchases have been entrusted to the given State Agencies and if there are some middlemen, it is our joint responsibility to protect the interests of the farmers.

SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM : Mr. Hon. Speaker, Sir, I would like to submit to the Minister that the prices fixed at the time of crops has increased a lot. There is a sharp fall in the production of pulses and oilseeds and its reason is non-availability of remunerative prices by

the farmers of their produce. Pulse is such a thing as has a great importance for vegetarians. Pulses are a big necessity for poor people when they don't get vegetables at the time of flood. I would like to know whether the Government propose to provide some relief to the farmers in case they don't get remunerative prices for their produce in view of the increased support price of pulses and bilseeds.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : I think the hon. Member, has not gone through the entire situation. If she would have seen it, she should have come to know that we have increase the support price by Rs. 60/- such a heavy increase has never been made in past. Nobody has thought that the interests of the farmers should be safeguarded.

[English]

SHRI P. C. THOMAS : Sir, he has mentioned about the Agricultural Prices Commission. It is unfortunate that many crops which are yielding foreign exchange do not come under the purview of the Agricultural Prices Commission. There are many cases. For example, I can quote the case of cocoa. Cocoa is one commodity which was sold at the price of Rs. 24 per kg. But the price has gone down and it has now reached the lowest point. It has come to Rs. 9 per kg. The farmers are not able to cope with that. I would, therefore, plead with the Government that the Government should take immediate steps in this regard. I pray and beseech the Government to state what could be done in this respect.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : The necessity of those things has to be looked into. But still the Agriculture Department has taken steps for market intervention in respect of so many other cash crops just like chillies, pepper, cardamom etc. We will like to safeguard the interests of farmers who produce cocoa and cocoa-nut also. But these are the things which are out of the purview of the Agricultural Prices Commission. We will try to safeguard the interests of farmers there also.

SHRI LOKNATH CHOUDHURY : Sir, There is no doubt that the Government has substantially increased the prices and

the prices are remunerative in many cases. For that, we welcome the efforts of the Government. At the same time, I want to know whether the Government is aware of the fact that the price that is fixed is not reaching the marginal and the poor farmers. They are first to come to the market and sell their produce for their daily necessity. The other issue is that the price which the Government has fixed is not reaching the poor and the marginal farmers because they have no bargaining power. In that case, I would like to know what mechanism the Government is thinking to make so that the increased food price that the Government has declared - which we welcome - reaches the poor and the marginal farmers.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : This is a most important question. We have been trying to deal with the question on a war-footing. I have been warning all the State Governments, the FCI as well as the Ministry also to take immediate steps to see that no distress sale is effected because this is something which is against the interests of the farmers. I would request all the hon. Members plus the State Governments as also the State legislatures to look into this aspect because this is a cumulative effort. We have to safeguard the interests of the farmers. It is the cumulative effort which can save the farmers from that.

[Translation]

SHRI BRISHIN PATEL : Mr. Speaker Sir, the Government has increased the support price and the Minister claims that he has increased the prices to a great extent. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the increase support price is more or less than the prices of finished goods because the prices of finished goods have gone up manifold in comparison to the prices of agricultural produce.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Mr. Speaker Sir, every thing is taken into account. There is also a check on the prices of finished goods being manufactured in the factories, so that the prices of agricultural produce and finished goods. I will not leave Mill products. In comparison to this may have relevancy to some extent. I will have a check on

the prices of goods being manufactured in the factories. Comparatively, the capital formation has also registered a heavy shortfall. It will be rectified. Its index is also very high. But our efforts are to equalize these ratios to a certain extent.

SHRI RAM NIHOR RAI : Mr. Speaker Sir, it is being said repeatedly that the prices of farmers produce have just been increased by the Government. The prices of the farmers produce have been increase one fold, two fold or three fold which the pices of finished goods have increased in Geometric progression. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he proposes to help farmers too in view of the increased ratio of prices of fertilizers.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : That was exactly the question answered.

[Translation]

SHRI HARISINH CHAVDA : Mr. Speaker Sir, even in the last year the condition of farmers was not improved. The prices of finish goods are fixed on the basis of the cost of production, while the prices of goodgrains are fixed without considering the cost of sowing etc. What-even the prices are fixed are not helpful in improving the condition of farmers. Does the Government propose to fix the support prices taking into account the cost of production including the rate of wages paid to the labourers, consumption of fertilizers etc. So that the condition of the farmers may improve.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Mr. Speaker Sir, if the hon. Member would have made an enquiry about these things, he would have come to know that all the factors including cost of production etc. are taken into account and then the prices are fixed . . . (Interruptions) nothing has been left which has not been taken into account. If you are not a farmer then what can I do. If you were a farmer you would have known about that . . . (Interruptions) Should I read. I can give you all the account.

[English]

A to Z. Little knowledge is a very dangerous thing . . . (Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER : You can give it to him . . . (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI M. R. KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN : About paddy, the hon. Minister has given to the frames common, fine and superfine varieties. You have only three varieties regarding cotton. But nothing has been mentioned about the superfine, extra-line varieties which are produced in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. There are high fluctuations in the cotton prices. Therefore, I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government has fixed any price for the extra superfine cotton variety. Nothing has been mentioned in the answer. And how much has been the increase in the price from 1992-93 to 1993-94 ?

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : We have just given the distinction between the medium staple and superfine variety. Rs. 100 per quintal has been raised for both these varieties this year. (Interruptions)

SHRI M. R. KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN : It is only the medium variety. But only Southern States are producing the superfine variety. (Interruptions)

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : That is determined according to the price situation in the market.

[Translation]

SHRI RUDARSEN CHAUDHARY : Mr. Speaker. Sir, while fixing the support price of pulses and oilseeds, particularly the nature of these crops are not taken into account. This crop is a very sensitive against the natural calamities like fog, bacteria and insects. These diseases do not spare even the stem of these crops; what to talk of corn. I would like to know from the hon. Minister while fixing the support prices of these crops, is their sensitivity taken into account? And if not the reasons therefore, I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that he should take all these things into account while fixing

the prices of oil and oilseeds... (Interruptions)..... Will you please announce an increase in their prices?

MR. SPEAKER : You see, the time is running short.

[English]

MR. Minister, I think that is being done.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR : Whatever the Commission has recommended, we have already given more and not less than the prices recommended by the Commission.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

STEEL PLANTS

*181. SHRI PHOOL CHAND VERMA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a persistent demand for setting up of iron and steel plants in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : (a) and (b) The Central Government has no proposal to put up a new iron or steel plant in the public sector during the Eighth Five Year Plan. However, with the New Industrial Policy announcement in July, 1991, the iron and steel industry has been removed from the list of industries reserved for the public sector and also exempted from the provisions of compulsory licensing under the Industries (D&R) Act, 1951 subject to certain locational restrictions. Entrepreneurs are now free to take their own decisions regarding capacity, location, technology, etc. They are only required to file Industrial Entrepreneurs Memorandum (IEM) with Government indicating basic details of the proposed project. A large

number of IEMs have been filed by entrepreneurs for iron and steel projects in various States including Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

[English]

TELECOM FACILITIES IN NORTH-EAST REGION

*182. SHRI LAETA UMREY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any special thrust has been given to improve telecommunication services in the communicationally backward North East region;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) North-East Region mainly comprising of sensitive border areas and Tribal and Hilly areas is being treated as special focus area for providing the telecom facilities on priority basis during the 8th Plan period (1992-97). A statement giving the details of the special thrust given to improve telecommunication services in N.E. Region is laid on the Table of the House.

(c) Question does not arise.

Statement

For all round and faster development and improvement of Telecom Services in the North Eastern Region the development of Telecommunications had set up High Power Focus Committee the report of which has already been accepted by the Telecom. Commission. Many of the accepted recommendations of the Focus Committee have already been implemented and the other recommendations are under implementation and planned to be implemented during the 8th Plan Period. The 8th Plan envisages :

- Provide telephones particularly on demand in rural and tribal areas
- Waiting period for telephone connections not to exceed two years
- Provide phone facility in all Gram Panchayats by 1-4-1995, some more villages to have LDPTs by 1-4-1997.