

of the House. [See Appendix II, annexure No. 8.]

(c) The project is expected to be completed by March 1956, except for a few bridges, the construction of which may extend beyond that period. A sum of Rs. 230 lakhs has been earmarked under the current five year programme, for the development of this National Highway.

(d) Tar pitch	No.
Stone chips	Yes.

The stone chips have always to be collected in advance, as and when railway wagons become available.

NICOBAR ISLANDS

*276. **Shri Raghbir Sahai:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) when was the expedition to Nicobar Islands undertaken which disclosed that India can obtain a huge amount of timber annually from those Islands;

(b) who constituted that expedition;

(c) when they submitted their report; and

(d) what steps have been taken to obtain the timber from there?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): (a) The expedition left Port Blair on 24th February 1952 and returned on 21st April 1952.

(b) A statement showing the Members who constituted the expedition is placed on the Table of the House.

(c) The leader of the expedition submitted his report to the Local Administration on 27th June, 1952.

(d) The question whether the timber is to be extracted departmentally or through private agency is under consideration. The Chief Commissioner's proposal to open a Forest Division in the Nicobars is under consideration.

STATEMENT

The names of the persons who constituted the expedition to the Nicobar Island.

(1) **Shri B. S. Chengappa,** Conservator of Forests, Andamans—Leader.

(2) **Dr. P. R. Sondhi,** Senior Medical Officer, Port Blair.

(3) **Shri G. B. Das** of the Survey of India.

(4) **Shri K. C. Sahni,** Assistant Forest Botanist, Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun.

(5) **Shri B. A. Subramaniam,** Assistant Conservator of Forests, Andamans.

(6) Forest subordinates, mazdoors, guards etc.

PRICES OF RICE

*277. **Shri T. K. Chaudhuri:** (a) Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state whether it is a fact that owing to the higher prices demanded by the Central Government and other State Governments from the Government of West Bengal for the rice supplied by them to the latter, the West Bengal Government have raised the price of rationed rice in the Calcutta Rationing Area from seven annas per seer to nine annas per seer with effect from the 1st June, 1953?

(b) Was there any prior consultation with the West Bengal Government by the Central Government before they decided to charge a higher price for rationed rice in the Calcutta Rationing Area?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): (a) and (b). There has been no increase in the prices of rice supplied to West Bengal either by the Centre or by the States in recent months, nor has there been any increase in the retail issue prices of 'fine' and 'common' varieties of rice in the Calcutta industrial area, which continue to be Rs. 0-10-6 and Rs. 0-7-0 per seer respectively.