

(c) if not, the detailed reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SAWAI SINGH SISODIA): (a) The Third Pay Commission had recommended that in hill stations and unhealthy and remote localities where a house rent allowance was already admissible under special orders, it should continue to be paid. The Commission had not made any recommendation for the payment of house rent allowance in hill stations and unhealthy and remote localities where it was not already admissible.

(b) and (c). Does not arise in view of (a) above. However, Central Government employees having all-India transfer liability are being paid house rent allowance in Mizoram as a measure of incentive.

Orissa Government's proposal for a third level air service in the State

4908. SHRI ARJUN SETHI: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Orissa has approached the Central Government with a proposal for operating the third level air services in the State;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what action Central Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI A. P. SHARMA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Decline in Prices of Cardamom

4909. SHRI P. M. SUBBA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Cardamom groging areas are getting reasonable price or not;

(b) if so, how; if not the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are in a position to explain why the prices of cardamom have come down to so low a level;

(d) what is annual average production of cardamom from Sikkim;

(e) whether the State Government can export cardamom direct; and

(f) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Average price per kg. of Cardamom at first selling point in the auctions at Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka varies from Rs. 100—115, Rs. 90—105 and Rs. 85—105 respectively. Considering estimated cost of production, the average sale price of cardamom is reasonable.

(c) It is a fact that price of cardamom has come down to a lower level compared to previous years. The reason is stiff competition faced in the international market from Guatemala which is trying to undercut India's exports. Due to its enhanced supply capacity, Guatemala is offering cardamom at lower prices. Cardamom being an export oriented commodity, its price in the internal market is directly related to the reduction in its price in the international market. Our cost of exports is found to be on the higher side as compared to that of other exporting countries.

(d) The annual average production of large cardamom in Sikkim ranges from 2,500 to 2,800 tonnes.

(e) Yes, Sir.

(f) Does not arise.