

Lanka meet from time to time to discuss the resolution of any outstanding problems and development of close and cordial relations between the two countries.

Utility of Aircraft Carriers for Indian Navy

736. SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN:
SHRI V. MAYAVAN:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to *Times of India* (Ahemdabad edition dated the 22nd August, 1973 under the heading Utility of Aircraft carries for Indian Navy Questioned; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) whether the experts of the Defence Ministry agree with the views expressed by the editor in regard to the Indian aircraft carrier 'Vikrant'; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken to replace the Indian ship carriers?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Government do not agree with the views expressed therein.

(d). Does not arise.

Varying Wages Paid to Bidi Workers

737. SHRI SHASHI BHUSHAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) the nature of efforts made to sort out problems arising out of varying wages paid to bidi workers in different States in the country; and

(b) the names of States which have since revised the wages of bidi workers and the steps taken to persuade other States also to do so?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): (a) The matter was discussed at meetings of the Labour Ministers of the concerned States held at Mysore in June 1972 and at New Delhi on the 17th January 1973. It was agreed at the latter meeting that in order to narrow down disparities in the minimum wages of the bidi workers the present minimum wages may be brought upto Rs. 3.25 per day (with variations upto Rs. 3.50 per day), for rolling 1000 bidis, without prejudice to the higher wages already prevailing in some States/areas.

(b) The Governments of Assam, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Orissa have revised the minimum wages. The Governments of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tripura have notified proposals for revision of wages of bidi workers inviting comments. In West Bengal and Kerala, the wages are reported to be already higher than those agreed to, at the State Labour Ministers' meeting held on 17-1-1973. The matter is being pursued with the remaining States.

Firms/Companies Supplying Equipment and Stores to Defence Services

738. SHRI SHASHI BHUSHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) which private sector firms and companies are supplying equipment and stores to the three Defence Services;

(b) what are the items supplied and at what rates;

(c) whether private firms are reaping huge profits out of these supplies; and

(d) if so, what steps are proposed to be taken to reduce the profits of the private sector firms to reasonable limits?

THE MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE PRODUCTION) IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI VIDYA CHARAN SHUKLA): (a) and

(b) There are several agencies, procuring items of stores for the Defence Services viz. Director General Supplies and Disposals, Department of Defence Supplies, the three Service Headquarters, their Store Depots and their several Units, and Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The number of procurement agencies would run into several hundreds. DGS&D is generally handling procurement of established items. The items having developmental aspects are procured for the Services through the Department of Defence Supplies. Food stuffs and grains are procured by the Army Purchase Organisation of Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Purchases of established items worth Rs. 50,000 and below are made directly by the Services. Information on (i) the names of the private sector firms and companies supplying equipment and stores to the three Defence Services (ii) the items supplied and (iii) the rates, would run into volumes and it would be nearly impossible to furnish the information in a consolidated manner. Moreover the effort involved would not be commensurate with likely advantage.

(c) and (d). Bulk of purchases is made by DGS&D on competitive basis. While deciding on tenders, the reasons for the increase over the last purchase price are gone into and orders are placed only after the reasonableness of the prices has been looked into. It is not possible to identify the quantum of profits made by supplying firms against DGS&D's contracts on Defence accounts. In the case of purchase on proprietary basis, the cost structure of the quotation is gone into and it is ensured that, as far as possible, the profit margin claimed is at a reasonable level.

The Department of Defence Supplies is basically handling the developmental items which were hitherto being imported or are being introduced into the Services for the first time.

Even though comparative rates are available in many cases, attempts are

usually made to bring down prices before accepting the offers

In respect of most of the contracts finalised in Department of Defence Supplies, negotiations are held with the tenderers by a Committee which includes representative of Ministry of Finance, Users, Technical Committees etc., where efforts are made to obtain the store to the best advantage of the Government.

Indian Missions to Middle-East to Explain Indian Position Regarding Arab Struggle

739. SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state whether in view of the West Asian Crisis, Government have sent any Mission to the Middle-East to explain India's position and support the Arab struggle?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): No, Sir. India's support of the Arab cause in this matter is well-known and our Embassies abroad as well as our Permanent Representative in the U. N. are in constant touch with the leaders of the countries concerned.

Diversion of U. S. Arms to Pakistan via Iran

740. SHRI P. G. MAVALANKAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that small arms and other military equipment produced by U. S. A. are being diverted or delivered to Pakistan via Iran; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) According to our information, including press reports from Pakistan, transfer of some arms and equipment of