

have now finalised the draft consultancy agreements. These have now been received by the Union Government for obtaining clearance from the foreign exchange angle.

(c). The State Government have intimated that work on the approaches to the bridge both on the Calcutta as well as Howrah sides is already in progress and work on the main bridge spans will start after finalisation of contract agreements with the firm of consultants intended to be engaged by the State Government for their Hooghly River Bridge Commissioners. According to the State Government's estimate the bridge is scheduled to be completed by 1979.

(d) Since this is a State Project necessary action for procuring material required for the bridge is being taken by the State Government themselves. They have intimated that they have already collected a considerable amount of construction materials like steel, cement, stonechips etc.

Maintenance and Repair of National Highways by various States

1727. SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHARI: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from the State Governments about increasing the quantum of Central assistance for the maintenance and repair of the portions of National Highways passing through their respective State areas by their P.W.D. and Roads Departments;

(b) if so, what has been the decision of Union Government and the Planning Commission in this regard; and

(c) whether there is any system of continuous supervision and consultation between the Central Roads Department and the concerned State

agencies about the condition of National Highways?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes Sir;

(b) The maintenance and repairs of National Highways is a non-plan expenditure and is provided in the Revenue Section. The Planning Commission are, therefore, not concerned. Funds for this purpose are allotted to the State Governments in accordance with the prescribed norms and subject to the available resources.

(c) National Highway development and maintenance works are being executed by the State Public Works Departments who act as agents of the Government of India. The State Chief Engineers consult the Roads Wing of this Ministry about their problems as and when they consider it necessary. In addition, the Technical Officers of the Ministry also inspect the National Highways from time to time and provide the required advice and guidance.

Proposal for Conference of Agriculture Ministers for stepping up procurement

1728. SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHARI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state whether a Conference of the Agriculture Ministers of various States is under consideration for devising ways for further stepping up procurement so that the targets may be reached?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE): It is proposed to hold a conference of Chief Ministers in New Delhi during the middle of the March, 1974 to discuss the price policy for the next

Rabi season. The progress of procurement is also likely to be reviewed at this conference. However, a number of discussions have already been held with the Chief Ministers and Food Ministers of the concerned States, and action is being taken by the State Governments to step up the pace of procurement with a view to achieve the targets.

Disruption in Milk Supply of Calcutta

1729. SHRI JAGDISH BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to the inordinate delay by the Centre to rush enough quantity of milk powder to West Bengal, milk supply has been seriously affected in Calcutta; and

(b) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI B. P. MAURYA): (a) and (b). The requisite information is being collected from the Government of West Bengal and will be placed on the Table of the Sabha as soon as it is received.

Opening of Urdu University in Karnataka

1730. SHRI C. K. JAFFER SHARIEF: Will the Minister of EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any demand from Karnataka has been received by Central Government for opening one Urdu University in the State of Karnataka in view of the increasing number of Urdu speaking persons there; and

(b) if so, the main features thereof?

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THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE (PROF. S. NURUL HASAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Supply of Foodgrains and Sugar to Fair Price Shops the same day by F.C.L

1731. SHRI C. K. JAFFER SHARIEF: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether foodgrains and sugar are to be issued on the day bank drafts and permits are presented at the Food Corporation of India's depots in Delhi;

(b) whether in most cases the supplies are not issued the same day which results in repeated visits by the shopkeepers to the depots and the ensuing great hardships to the public; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE): (a) to (c). Distribution of foodgrains and levy sugar within a State/Territory is the responsibility of the State Government/Union Territory Administration. In accordance with a new system which has been introduced, each fair price shop holder is allotted a date on which he has to lift the stocks from the F.C.I. godowns. Every possible effort is made by the F.C.I. to ensure that foodgrains and sugar are issued to the fair price shop holders on the same day the bank drafts are presented by them. This ensures regular availability of stocks with the fair price shop holders for the card holders.