

Scarcity of Rice in West Bengal

105. Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: Will the Minister of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any reports about the high prices and acute scarcity of rice prevailing in all deficit districts and areas in West Bengal, outside the statutory ration areas, as a result of cordoning-off of the surplus rice areas and prevention of all movements of paddy and rice from the cordoned-off surplus areas to deficit areas of the State under the Essential Commodities Act and Orders thereunder; and

(b) whether Government have received any request for rice and wheat from the Government of West Bengal to meet the ration needs of deficit areas in the State?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation (Shri Govinda Menon): (a) Prices of rice in West Bengal have been statutorily controlled and increasing number of population is being brought under modified rationing by the State Government. Some people are not satisfied with the ration and try to supplement it by purchasing in the black-market, thus creating a feeling of scarcity and pushing up the black-market prices high.

(b) knowing the Central Government's position about rice, West Bengal Government have not demanded any specific quantity of rice. They want their wheat quota to be increased. The Government of India are increasing the wheat quota of West Bengal to the extent possible, keeping in view the overall availability and the demand of the other deficit States.

Foreign Air Companies

106. Shri Babubhai Gupta: Will the Minister of Transport, Aviation, Shipping and Tourism be pleased state:

(a) the foreign air companies which were nationalised during the year 1953-54; and

(b) the new foreign companies which have sprung up thereafter on the Calcutta-Siliguri and other routes?

The Minister of Transport, Aviation, Shipping and Tourism (Shri Sanjiva Reddy): (a) and (b). With the nationalisation of scheduled air transport in India in 1953, the two nationalised Corporations—Indian Airlines Corporation and Air India International—took over the operations of the ex-Indian Air Companies. Indian Airlines Corporation took over operations of 8 Indian Air Companies operating services within India and to neighbouring countries while Air India International took over the operations of Air India International Ltd. operating services to foreign countries. No foreign air company was nationalised then. Operations of scheduled services are reserved for the nationalised airlines; no foreign companies have sprung up in India after nationalisation.

Aid from U.K. for Famine Areas

107. Shri P. C. Boroah:
Shri Dharmalingam:

Will the Minister of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation be pleased to state:

(a) whether the British Government have offered an interest-free loan of Rs. 10 crores to India to tide over the food crisis;

(b) if so, on what precise terms; and

(c) the articles/commodities to be procured with this loan and how much of each of these are to be imported?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, Community Development and Co-operation (Shri