

(a) whether the Government had issued orders for rounding off paise to the nearest rupee about ten years back but the same has not been implemented so far;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA):

(a) Yes, Sir. Orders for rounding off Government transactions were issued in June, 1986. These orders have been implemented through amendment to Central Government Account (Receipts & Payments) Rules.

(b) and (c) Does not arise. However, these orders are being brought to the notice of all concerned, once again.

Tobacco Cultivators

5431. SHRI SODE RAMAIAH:

SHRI RAMCHANDRA VEERAPPA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by the Government to help the Tobacco cultivators of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka;

(b) whether the Tobacco cultivators of Karnataka are facing the shortage of fertilizer;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to provide the adequate quantity of fertilizer to the tobacco cultivators?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Some of the steps taken to help the Tobacco cultivators of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, inter-alia, include:

(i) providing financial assistance for use of approved seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation equipments, suckercides and roof insulation of barns;

(ii) supply of seeds/seedlings of highyielding and disease resistant varieties of FCV/Burley tobacco;

(iii) supply of tarpaulin at subsidised rates for storage of cured leaf;

(iv) co-ordination with Central Tobacco Research Institute for evolving high yielding disease resistant varieties;

(v) pest and disease control through fumigation of nurseries;

(vi) encouraging use of sprinkler irrigation system;

(vii) improving curing and storing facilities;

(viii) arranging supply of inputs such as coal (for curing), fertilisers, and suckercides;

(ix) conducting analysis of soil and water samples to advice farmer on its suitability for growing tobacco;

(x) training and exposure of farmers to latest research findings/improved package of practices; and

(xi) enhancing exports of tobacco and tobacco products by reorientation of the domestic production of tobacco to meet changing international needs, enhancement of quality and productivity levels, monitoring and strict control of pesticide residues, aligning grading to international standards, and permitting imports for product development.

(b) to (d) There was shortage of Sulphate of Potash (SOP) fertiliser during the month of May and June, 1998. On persuasion of the Tobacco Board, Indian Potash Ltd. has imported SOP. With the arrival of 10,000 tons of SOP at Chennai on 13.7.98 and its subsequent transportation to Mysore has eased the situation.

DGS & D Rate Contract

5432. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some of the items available in the market are at lower rates than DGS & D rate contracts;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith criteria being adopted for settlement of rate contract and the manner in which it is ensured that the rates are lower;

(c) whether the Government are aware that some corrupt practices are prevailing in DGS & D;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) DGS & D Rate Contract prices are valid for a year or two and applicable uniformly throughout the country for the period. Prices of such items in the open market are, however, not static nor uniform.

DGS & D has more than 250 items in the Rate Contract list at present. The occasional prevalence of comparatively lower prices in the open market for similar items available on DGS & D Rate Contract, cannot be totally ruled out.

As per the procedure and instructions for finalising the Rate Contracts, quotations are invited in response to specific tenders which are widely published and circulated. The rates received are examined taking cognisance of the prevailing market rates, variations in the cost of raw material, taxes and duties, published price indices of finished product/raw material and the rates allowed in the previous Rate Contract. Besides, "Fall Clause" condition ensures that the selected supplier cannot sell or offer the item to others at lower than the Rate Contract prices. The right to foreclose the Rate Contract in the event of lower market trend is also available.

(c) to (e) As and when specific complaints are received, these are duly enquired for appropriate action, DGS & D organisation has a Grievance Cell for redressal of public grievances. Besides Government has appointed Vigilance Officers and has recently approved "Citizens' Charter" enabling