

(a) whether the Union Government have prepared any action plan to deal with the situation arising due to hike in PDS prices; and

(b) if so, the details of steps taken by the Government to check the price hike to foodgrains and other essential commodities in open market due to hike in PDS prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) The Central Issue Prices of wheat and rice under PDS are revised by the Government from time to time to neutralise the increase in the Minimum Support Prices/Procurement prices of wheat and paddy. Similarly, retail issue price of levy sugar for distribution under PDS is increased from time to time. The recent increase in retail issue price of levy sugar is merely 5.26% which is marginal.

No substantial rise in retail open market prices of wheat and rice have been reported after the revision in CIPs of wheat and rice w.e.f. 29.1.1999. As regards sugar, no rise in its retail price in the open market has been reported.

The open market prices depend on various factors such as demand and supply, general inflationary trends, seasonal marketing behaviour. etc.

Government constantly monitor and review the open market prices of essential commodities and all possible steps are taken as and when need arises. Open Market Sale of foodgrains from public stocks is also resorted to if price of foodgrains rise in the market.

Expenditure on Research Projects

2039. SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE: Will the Minister of OCEAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the achievements of Antarctica research centre during the last three years; and

(b) the expenditure involved in the expeditions and the research projects undertaken during the said period?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) During the year 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98, Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Expeditions to Antarctica were launched. A special cruise for the Antarctic waters for assessment of Antarctic Marine Living Resources such as krill was also launched during 1995-96.

Some of the major scientific and logistics accomplishments under the Antarctic Research programme are:

- Studies on ozone, trace gases and aerosols of the Antarctic atmosphere, were conducted.
- Meteorological parameters that can be employed for climate modeling and prediction, were achieved.
- *In-situ* geological and air-borne geophysical investigations of the Central Droning Maudland area and establishment of a permanent seismic station, were undertaken.
- Experiments on solar terrestrial physics like optical aurora, geo-magnetic perturbations, planetary boundary layer, were continued.
- Very Low Frequency whistler monitoring and propagation studies were initiated.
- Establishment of a permanent GPS Observatory for planetary geodetic studies, was completed.
- Identification and taxonomic classification of organisms as a part of on-going bio-diversity studies of Antarctica was done.
- Experiments on Antarctic albedo and snowdrift patterns were taken up.
- Studies on adaptation techniques of human beings in adverse conditions were continued.
- Application and utilisation of clean energy sources like wind and fuel cells in Antarctica were planned and accomplished.
- Upgradation of communication facilities through near real time picture transmission established.
- Reorientation of waste discharge and handling facilities, was done.
- Construction of medical inspection room in Maitri, was completed.
- International bilateral collaborations were initiated with Germany, France, Italy, USA, Argentina & Peru in various domains of polar science.

- Four technical reports were published and an Indian National Antarctic Database was created.
- Initial assessment was made on the distribution and abundance of krill, cephalopods and Antarctic fish in the FAO fishing area No. 58, in the Indian Ocean sector of the Southern Oceans with relation to prevailing physico-chemical and biological parameters in the water column.
- Assessment of commercial exploitation of krill through development of post-harvest technology and marketable value added products, was undertaken.

Antarctic Study Centre (ASC)

- The Construction of Phase I of the ASC at Goa, comprising logistic, administrative, service and residential blocks was completed and the ASC started functioning from its new premises.
- The 17th expedition was launched from the Centre in December 1997.
- Basic computing facilities and library were established at ASC.

(b) The Year-wise total expenditure on the Antarctic Expedition and the related research projects, is as follows:

Rupees in crore	
Financial Year	Expenditure
1995-96	19.51
1996-97	20.85
1997-98	21.51

Ban on Lottery

2040. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken any decision to impose ban on lottery;

(b) if so, the alternate arrangements proposed to be initiated to make good the loss in revenue and protect the loss of employment opportunities in case of ban on lotteries;

(c) whether any violation of directions of Supreme Court in conducting the lottery by State Governments brought under the notice of Government;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government allow the State Governments including Kerala to conduct lottery which are implementing the lottery as per rules; and

(f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) to (f) A proposal to impose a comprehensive ban on the lottery trade in the country is under consideration. The proposal covers the entire country including Kerala. Issues like loss of revenue and loss of employment opportunities will be duly considered while taking a final view in the matter.

It may be mentioned that the overwhelming view in the Department related Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs, which considered the Lotteries (Regulation) Bill, 1998, was for across the board ban on the kinds of lotteries. The purpose of the said Bill was, *inter alia*, to ban single digit lotteries. Subsequently, there was also a near unanimous demand in the House that the legal curbs should not be confined to single digit lotteries only, but should extend to all kinds of lotteries. Similarly, in the Conference of Chief Ministers held in November '98, an overwhelming majority of the Chief Ministers favoured a comprehensive ban on all kinds of lotteries.

No specific instance of violation of directions of the Supreme Court in conducting lotteries by the State Governments has come to notice. However, the directions of the Supreme Court do not prohibit imposing a ban on the lottery trade.

Scholarship to Young Artists

2041. SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state: