

decline in the availability of wood as fuel and the difficulties being experienced by the people in procuring kerosene oil requirement for cooking purposes excepting rationed quantity from the retailers, are causing great hardship in the absence of the adequate availability of fuel for cooking. Besides, Etah is a backward district.

The cooking gas agency in Etah cannot meet the requirement of the entire district comprising of Aliganj, Patiali, Rajaka Rampur, Ganj Dundwara, Sakeet, Bhargain, Sahawar, Sidhpura, Amapur, etc., having a population of about thirty thousand, each. A great need of setting up a cooking gas agency in each of these areas is being felt to overcome the fuel shortage.

I would, therefore, urge the Government to kindly conduct a survey of these areas to explore the possibility of setting up cooking gas agencies and thereafter take necessary steps to appoint the dealers in the selected areas.

(viii) Need to increase the support price of Cotton

SHRI KADAMBUR JANARTHANAN (Tirunelveli) : There has been poor yield of cotton crop this year, i. e. 1986-87 in States like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. In order to protect the interests of the cotton growers, support price of cotton should be reconsidered and increased at least by 25 per cent so that using the yarn market sluggishness, the speculating cotton traders may not exploit the poor farmers.

12.16 hrs.

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER
 ON THE VISIT OF H. E. MR.
 MIKHAIL GORBACHOV,
 GENERAL SECRETARY
 OF THE CENTRAL
 COMMITTEE OF
 THE CPSU

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : The General Secretary

of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev, visited India from the 25th to the 28th of November at my invitation. The visit was in keeping with the established tradition of exchanges at the highest level between India and the Soviet Union. It was an important milestone in our bilateral relationship. It contributed significantly to stability in the region and peace in the world.

I held long and intensive discussions with General Secretary Gorbachev on a wide spectrum of issues, bilateral, regional and international. Talks were held simultaneously at the senior Ministerial level. These exchanges took place in a very warm and friendly atmosphere, characterized by mutual confidence and trust.

We discussed the broad outlines of our future cooperation in a longer term perspective. The rich experience of our past cooperation enabled us to explore new avenues to raise our bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively higher level. Several bilateral agreements were signed. Statements have been laid on the table of the House. The Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation encompasses the Tehri hydro-electric complex, the modernization of the Bokaro steel plant, the setting up of new coking coal mines and oil exploration in West Bengal. One important element of this agreement is the provision of local cost financing by the Soviet Union. The agreements in the economic, commercial, consular and cultural areas reflect the growing strength and dynamism of our relationship.

General Secretary Gorbachev and I agreed to restructure the pattern of our commercial and economic exchanges to realise the vast untapped potential for economic collaboration. Our Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Kamentsov are working out the details. We also decided to give a major thrust to our cooperation in science and technology. Large research and development projects are being identified in frontier technologies. A Soviet team led by Academician Marchuk, President of the USSR Academy of Sciences, will visit India shortly to discuss with our scientists the specific projects to be undertaken.