

The wholesale price index has also increased only marginally. During the last one year, a relative price stability has been achieved in spite of contra-seasonal increase in the prices due to erratic rains and drought situation.

The demand and supply position in respect of cement is evenly balanced.

In respect of several essential commodities, the public distribution system has become an important instrument for supply-management effort. This has helped in mitigating the disastrous effects on the prices of several commodities in the country.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can continue tomorrow, now the time is over. Shri Xavier Arakal will make a statement under rule 377 now announced by the Speaker. Then we will adjourn for half-an-hour.

16.28 hrs.

MATTER UNDER RULE—377—Contd.

(viii) NEED FOR A FOREIGN AIRMAIL SORTING OFFICE AT COCHIN

SHRI XAVIER ARAKAL (Ernakulam): I raise the following matter under rule 377:—

Kerala State is the most thickly populated and literate State of the Union of India. Many Keralites have gone abroad in search of jobs and many have settled down in various countries throughout the world, these Keralites remit valuable foreign exchange to the tune of Rs. 200 to Rs. 400 crores a year to the Central exchequer. There is a large foreign correspondence in the State which requires the immediate attention of this Government. There is an urgent need for a full-fledged Foreign Air Mail Sorting Office to meet the needs of the Keralites.

Cochin is the *de facto* capital of the State. There is already an understaffed infrastructure at Cochin. It has mail sorting office. Moreover, Customs House, air and sea-ports, many industrial and insti-

tutional establishments, etc., are situated at Cochin. Above all, it is the central point of departure and arrival of passengers and goods.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to convert the existing foreign airmail inward sorting office into a full-fledged foreign airmail sorting office and staff it immediately so that delay and hardship can be avoided.

MR. CHAIRMAN: As announced earlier, the House stands adjourned to reassemble at 5.00 p.m. today for the presentation of the General Budget.

16.30hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Seventeen of the Clock.*

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled at Seventeen of the Clock.*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUDGET (GENERAL) 1983-84

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Finance Minister.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Sir, I rise to present the Budget for the year 1983-84.

2. The Economic Survey for 1982-83, placed before the House a few days ago, has given a detailed account of the trends in Indian economy during the current year. I shall, therefore, be brief in reviewing the economic situation.

3. A drought year is always a difficult one for the economy. The decline in agricultural production that the drought entails has an effect which goes beyond the rural sector. The drop in the purchasing power of our farmers exerts a deflationary influence on industry. The drought also affects power generation and has an adverse impact on the external payments. It