

SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, let me explain the reason for my asking this question. Sir, the price of tea has doubled over the past two years but there has been no increase in either the cost of production or the wages of labour. This is the result of a faulty policy. With the change in Government there should be change in policy also. Today, the common man is getting tea of inferior quality. Will the Government ensure that the common man in India gets superior quality tea? About a year-and-a-half back, the price of tea was Rs. 23/- per kg. and now it has increased to Rs 45/- per kg. What steps are being taken by the Government to bring down the price of tea?

SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU : Due to scanty rainfall, last year in South and North East India, production of tea has fallen short by 20-25 million tonnes. When we saw that the price of tea was rising, we reduced the quota for export and this led to fall in auction rates... (*Interruptions*).. I can give you the auction price of the Tea Board but not the retail price. The Government does not regulate tea prices and the tea auctions are held according to the supply and demand position. Due to a fall in production, exports were reduced with a view to stabilizing prices. The price-rise was also due to increase in levies, sales tax and duties by the West Bengal and Assam Governments. The Central is discussing this matter with these Governments.

SHRI RAGHAVJI: Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister the names of the tea-exporting countries in the world and what is India's share in the international market?

SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU: There are many multi-national companies in Africa, Indonesia and South America. Presently, India, Sri Lanka and Kenya are major exporters. Production of tea is increasing all over the world. Every year production is increasing by 110 million kilos and consumption is increasing by 55 million kilos. There are new entrants in the international market and their cost of production is low. The quality of Kenyan tea is inferior and Indian tea is in great demand. When auctions are held in the

international market, Indian tea gets the maximum realisation.

SHRI NANI BHATTACHARYA : Sir, recent events in Eastern Europe indicate that sale of tea can be increased if sale outlets are opened over there. What is the Government's thinking in this matter? May I know the results of the promotional campaign launched by the Tea Board for the purpose of domestic consumption?

SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU: Sir, we are exporting tea to Eastern Europe and to the rupee payment areas. The system will be changed in future, be it in the general currency area or the rupee payment area. Secondly, the Tea Board has many schemes for increasing tea production. If you want, I can read out the list. It is a long and comprehensive list. ... (*Interruptions*)...

[*English*]

Sir, these are also very important. I do not mind ; I will just give the headings. It will not take much time. They are; Tea Plantations Finance Scheme, Tea Machinery and Equipment Hire-Purchase Scheme, Tea Replantation Subsidy (for old plantations), Tea Area Consolidation Scheme, New Tea Units Financing Schemes and Darjeeling Interest Subsidy Scheme. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Now Question 355 - Mr. Chiranji Lal Sharma is not here. Question 356-Shri Pyarelal Khandelwal, Dr. A.K. Patel-both are not here.

[*Translation*]

They give notices of questions and then don't remain present here. This is not proper.

[*English*]

Newsprint Allocation Policy

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*357. **SHRI LOKANATH CH-
OUDHARY:**

SHRIMATI J. JAMUNA:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering some changes in the newsprint allocation policy; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA): (a) and (b). The Newsprint Allocation Policy for 1990-91 is under formulation.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHARY: I want to know what are the new features and additions that are being proposed to be considered, when this new allocation policy will be finally formulated. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. UPENDRA : I had a meeting with the Newsprint Advisory Committee some time ago, and we have more or less formulated the views, and the policy is being finally drafted. We will announce it in the House in the next few days.

One of the major changes is that the newspapers have been demanding allocations on the basis of higher growth rates. Previously, we were taking an annual growth rate of 5% into consideration. Now, in the new policy, we have agreed to raise it to 7% i.e. the newsprint will be allocated on the basis of a 7% growth in circulation. That is one major change.

They wanted some reduction in the Customs duty on the import of newsprint. The hon. Finance Minister has already announced a cut of Rs. 100 per tonne in Customs duty on the imported newsprint. These are the major points.

One major demand for de-canalization of the imports which they have been demanding, could not be agreed to.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHARY: I want to know this: the small newspapers are agitating for a long time. They are not getting the required newsprint. Will the new policy specially take into consideration the require-

ments of the small newspapers; and also; is it a fact that many big newspapers give a bigger circulation figure than their real circulation? They create an artificial requirement, and they send their newsprint to the market for sale. Has this come to the notice of the Minister?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : We are taking care of the requirements of the small and medium newspapers. Whatever they want, is being allotted fully.

As regards the rate also, there is a concession for the small newspapers. They are fully exempted from Customs duty; and in the case of medium newspapers, the Customs duty is half as that for big newspapers. Their full requirements are being met.

What the hon. Member has said is also true., viz. that many newspapers, small newspapers give bogus circulation figures. And on the basis of that, they get allocation and indulge in black marketing of the newsprint also. We have come across certain incidents. But, right now, we have no machinery to check up the daily circulation of these newspapers. But we are trying to tighten the arrangement and see that the circulation figures are correctly reported. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI J. JAMUNA : What is the position of shortage of newsprint at present?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : The annual requirement is 5.65 lakh metric tonnes out of that, the indigenous mills produce 2.95 lakh metric tonne. We are short by 2.70 lakh tonnes; and that is being imported.

PROF. K.V. THOMAS : This is a sad fact that in a democratic country like India the big newspapers media are controlled by large by big business houses. Very often they try to divulge the public opinion according to their vested interest. On the other hand, there are small and medium newspapers which do not have this interest. It is either conducted by individuals who are interested in the media or some newspaper

medium and small newspapers as also the regional newspapers, will you take a little more lenient view on this? Very often newspaper quotas are allotted. There are allegation that they are selling it in the black market; there may be something like that; I am not questioning it. But looking to the larger interest of the country and big people who are trying to get public opinion in their favour, will you help the small and medium newspapers?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : As all of us are aware, many newspapers including the National Newspapers, are controlled by big business houses. It is a fact of life. I don't think we can do anything about it right now; and we cannot control the Press. But, as far as the small and medium newspapers are concerned, in the recent meeting of the Newsprint Advisory Committee, the representatives of the big newspapers wanted de-canalisation of the import, that is, they want the permits to be given to them so that they can import on their own, and not through the STC; and that will be to the detriment of the small and medium newspapers. Therefore, we did not agree to de-canalisation because the interest of the small and medium newspapers would be affected because they cannot go directly and import the newsprint.

Secondly, we are encouraging the small and medium newspapers by giving them more and more advertisements. We are cutting the cost from the big newspapers and diverting it to the small and medium newspapers.

SHRI MAGANBHAI MANIBHAI PATEL : There are some cases of small newspapers pending with the Government. By which time is the Government going to dispose of cases of those small newspapers who have asked for their quota?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : These quotas are given quarterly. I don't think there is anything pending.

SHRI RAM NAIK : The hon. Minister has said that all the requirements of the small

newspapers will be met. What are those requirements?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : I said, the total requirement is 5.65 lakh tonnes. This includes both figures of the small and medium newspapers; and we are completely meeting the full requirements of the small and medium newspapers.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BANWARILAL PUROHIT : Hon. Minister is talking of helping small and medium newspapers. News print is allocated quarterly to them. Whether they are medium or small newspapers, they get their allocation from five different divisions set up by you. And they have to employ five to seven persons who go to different places with money to take delivery. In such a difficult situation, you should change your policy for small and medium newspapers and give them the option to take delivery from the nearest indigenous factories, instead of compelling them to go to different divisions for taking delivery. In this way, if one hundred tonnes of newsprint are allocated and they are required to go to five different divisions to collect 15 to 20 tonnes of newsprint from each division, then they would be put to lot of inconvenience in collecting their quota from five different places. As such, I would like to know from, the hon. Minister whether he proposes to make any changes in this policy.

SHRI P. UPENDRA : No, these days allotment is being made from nearest indigenous factories. If there is any case in which quota is delivered from some distant mill, we look into it and make necessary changes so that quota is delivered from some nearby mill.

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*358. **SHRI YUVRAJ :** Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether old machinery is being