

STATEMENT

(a) Presently only rail link for interchange of rail traffic between India and Pakistan is via Attari-Wagah.

(b) Normally one passenger train per day is run each way. According to materialization of traffic goods trains are also run as and when required.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) to (f). An Indian delegation visited Islamabad from 29th to 31st July, 1986 and a draft agreement on the resumption of rail communication between India and Pakistan via Munabao-Khokrapar route was drawn out. While we have indicated our willingness, an appropriate response from Pakistan is awaited.

SHRI AMARSINH RATHAWA: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Railway Minister through you the total amount involved in the proposed second railway link between India and Pakistan as also the Pakistan's contribution in it.

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Sir, the hon. Member is a learned Member. No expenditure is involved in it as it does not require laying of second railway line. You are aware that an Indian Delegation visited Pakistan from 29th to 31st July, 1986 and a draft agreement was also prepared after deliberations in Pakistan, but it has not yet been signed. Thereafter, an important national daily of Pakistan 'Dawn' published a news item that the Indian railway employees were uprooting the railway line falling in Indian territory. The Indian Embassy in Islamabad contradicted the news item and clarified that there was no such move. There is no need to lay new railway line between Munaba and Khokrapar as it has already been laid and thus no expenditure is involved in it. This question is not related with it.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the railway line between Munaba and Khokrapar has been there since pre-independence days. If rail

communication with Pakistan is established through this line, then the passengers of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh will be extremely benefited. In this regard, I would like to know whether the problem about it is from our side or Pakistan's side?

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Sir, I have already made it clear that there is no question of laying of a new railway line. Munaba station is situated in India and Khokrapar station falls in Pakistan territory. The distance between the two stations is 6.5 kilometres. I have mentioned this in clear terms that from our side we are ready. The then Minister of State for Defence of Pakistan, Shri Rana Muyid Mahmood, made it clear on 16th March, 1988 that it was essential to open this railway line. The Indian Government is ready for this but there has been no response from Pakistan's side. We are ready to send our delegation to Pakistan if we receive appropriate response from them and the Government will open this railway line.

[English]

Export Earnings from Spices

*208. SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been decline in the export earnings of cardamom, pepper, ginger and cashew upto March, 1988; and

(b) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSI): (a) As compared to exports during 1986-87, export of cardamom, ginger and cashew had declined and export of pepper had increased during 1987-88.

(b) The reasons for decline in exports are inter-alia fall in production, stiff competition from competing countries and high domestic prices of these products.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS: The hon. Minister has admitted that as compared to

1986-87, the export of cardamom, ginger and cashew had declined. Earlier, while replying to another question, the hon. Minister was saying that the exports had increased to the tune of 21 per cent. When we analyse, we find that gems which were brought here from outside are polished and sent back. And, it is claimed that exports have increased. Cardamom, cashew ginger and other products are the cash crops of India, for centuries. Even during the olden days, even Before Christ, they were being purchased by the Greeks and other traders. I am sorry to say that no attempt has been made to see that these export items are improved and encouraged. And now it is seen that the exports are decreasing. Mainly the Gulf countries used to purchase them to the tune of Rs. 300 crores. Exports to those countries alone were to that extent. This year they have gone down, and already those countries have taken Guatemala as their supplier. But no attempt is made to see that cardamom which is a peculiar spice which is available in Kerala, a tropical area is exported. Especially, in my friend Shri Kurup's constituency 80 per cent of the world's cardamom is produced. Unfortunately, we have never made any attempt to see that it is sold and export is promoted. I am sorry to say that our economy was very much affected. I would like to know, what positive steps the Government have taken in improving the trade of cardamom, ginger and pepper.

I would like the Minister to clarify one point. I am told that trade wings of our various Embassies have discarded this matter and fail to enter into an agreement with the respective countries who require it in time, and therefore export could not be done. Is this criticism correct?

SHRI P.R. DAS MUNSI: I would like to reply first to the last part of his question. Excepting in the rupee trade area, where we have our exports, in no other country is there an agreement. These are private parties and they approach the private market; they negotiate and settle. So, to say that the Trade Officers and trade offices in Embassies abroad refuse, and discourage and did not enter into an agreement is not correct.

Sir, it is a fact that the pepper, ginger and cardamom are facing a crisis recently. The hon. member is quite aware of it; he knows all the facts; he knows the data; and he knows the figures. If you permit me, it will take more time, I can go into every aspect of it. There is nothing to hide. Government of India made all possible attempts.

Now I come back to cardamom. What can we do in cardamom? If Guatemala cardamom productivity is five times, six times more than ours in terms of simple sheer price competition, we cannot match with them in gulf countries. How to compensate it? To improve productivity by more research in cardamom, we have taken steps. The hon. member is quite aware that we have a research station in Kerala and things are improving. The results will come a little after.

In regard to the last year's matter, there was a severe drought. The hon. member from Kerala is quite aware that the production of cardamom has gone down in the last year and the domestic price has shot up in such a manner that they prefer to feed the domestic market and not to go to international market for getting a low price because Guatemala cardamom offer is lower. How to help them now? The Government took steps. We increased the CCS from ten per cent to fifteen per cent. We have given air freight subsidy to the tune of seven rupees per kg to Gulf countries. These are the measures we have taken. In the Gulf countries, if they prefer cheaper variety of Guatemala cardamom, then why should they buy the cardamom of India at a higher price? To bring down to a normal order and to protect our growers, we have taken these steps and measures. If you say that the Government has not taken steps. I am quite aware that some wrong campaigns are being built up against the Government policies on spices so far as Kerala is concerned, which is absolutely wrong. I would like to clarify that the Government took all possible steps. With all respect, I convey to the Kerala Government and the MPs from Kerala that some of these measures were not taken in the past so far as cardamom is concerned.

In so far as pepper is concerned, the hon. Member is aware that India was leading in the pepper community in the world trade till the last year. What can we do? After we received about sixty rupees per kg. in a particular given year, the whole world was producing pepper. Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia they have gone like anything in pepper cultivation. That the productivity ratio of Brazil, Indonesia and Malaysia is much higher than the productivity ratio of India now. Should I give the figure?

We have to improve the productivity. Secondly at the given hour, the international pepper community is not a cartel; I would like to inform the hon. Member that the crisis was very bad because of the fall in international price. Even exporters in international pepper community did recommend 'please do bring down the price to less than one dollar; we are prepared to do it less than one dollar'. Then, what we did? To protect our exporters to go to the market, the Government took a bold step. We have withdrawn the export duty five thousand rupees per tonne in pepper.

Not only that, we have given ten per cent CCS on the consumer pack under brand names. Therefore, we have taken the measures. Now we have to approach the market and we have to compete in the international market. Centuries ago, many people did not know what the spices are. But now many people of the world know about the spices. So, we have to compete with them in skill, in price and in productivity and accordingly we are doing that. So, it is not a fact that we are not taking steps. We have taken many more steps than before.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS: Sir, my second supplementary arises from the Minister's answer itself. He has said that only private parties are negotiating for export, barring in certain areas. Government is collecting cess on the production. Pepper cess is there and that amount they are collecting. On all items of spices they are collecting that cess and pooling the amount. I know that it has now become few thousand crores of rupees. They are keeping this amount which is meant for developing trade

and cultivation of these cash crops. I am sorry to inform the Minister, through you, Sir, that pepper in Kerala is facing the biggest crisis. There will be no pepper production at all in the next five years. A disease has come which is called Rootwilt, by which the pepper garden completely gets destroyed. It is because of the erosion of soil. Due to erosion, the top soil is not available. When the rains come, erosion takes place. This is a big problem and is going to affect the pepper cultivation very seriously. You feel that the pepper export will be very high this year but it is going to get dwindled, it is going to be much less. In view of all this, my specific question is this: with the money which they have collected and with the Spices Board which they have constituted, what are they doing both for the purpose of export and for the purpose of improving the cultivation.

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSI: Sir, I am happy to inform the hon. Member that the Spices Board is one of the promoters and they are always fighting and championing the cause of the Kerala spice growers. Let there be no misunderstanding. To meet their budget, to look after their expenses, the Spices Board needs certain amount. 3.5 per cent cess on pepper and 3 per cent cardamom is not fetching thousands of crores of rupees.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS: I am sorry, it is many crores.

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSI: It is not even many crores. About rupees seven crores may come by way of cess on various items. So, that looks after the minimum budget of the Spices Board. The hon. Member will appreciate that the Spices Board is doing some development works for improvement in the production of pepper and soil erosion. These are not the matters concerning the Ministry of Commerce, these should be addressed to the Agriculture Ministry. So far as I understand, State Governments also have a very important role to play insofar as improvement of agriculture and soil erosion programmes are concerned.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: Sir, the question is not only about cardamom and pepper, it is about cashew also, which my hon. friend

has forgotten. With regard to cardamom, I fully agree with the Minister that the Spices Board is doing good work and we have increased the productivity. I am sure, within two or three years the result will be there. But one thing more can be done by the Government. As there is an international pepper community, why don't you try for a cardamom community also so that cardamom producing countries can join together and arrive at a minimum price? If that is done, we can certainly improve our cardamom export and the growers can be helped. I would like to know whether the Minister will consider this suggestion. Secondly, Sir... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: No, that is enough.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: Sir, my question is about cashew as I told you.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Why are you asking about cardamom then?

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that the cashew industry is in a crisis due to the wrong policy of the State Government of Kerala? Cashew procurement has failed and crores of rupees are to be paid to the growers. This year we are going to face a serious crisis and there will be no cashew export because of the wrong policy of the State Government of Kerala. Is the Government going to be a silent observer to this or they are going to do something about that? These are parts (a) and (b) of my question. He forget about cashew. Because it is Kerala Government's failure, as he did not ask about cashew.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: His question is whether you will take over Kerala Government.

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSI: Sir, in regard to the hon. Member's suggestion for having an international community or association for cardamom, it is a good suggestion, we will certainly consider.

In so far as the cashew is concerned, I would like to inform the hon. Member that before the monopoly procurement scheme

was taken up by the Kerala Government, our Ministry wrote to the Government twice to consult us on various issues concerning export. Unfortunately, we are not consulted, we are not even acknowledged. While these steps are taken by the Government, the factory is closed down. I do not say the objective of the government was wrong the objective was high, there is a very good point in the policy, but without taking into account the infrastructural arrangement, the ultimate impact on the economy; if they had consulted us we could have given them proper counsel at the appropriate stage so that the suffering in Kerala would not have been at the stage as it is now. And therefore, Sir, in the peak hour when the works were not done, we lost the market to the tune of Rs. 70 to Rs. 75 crores, and I am sorry, if the Kerala Government in the appropriate time had provided their counsel, we could have checked the situation.

SHRI GEORGE JOSEPH MUNDACKAL: Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister for abolishing the export duty so that the farmers are getting now a little fair price. I want to know from the hon. Minister one thing. This Cardamom Board is controlled by traders and exporters and they are following a policy of killing the duck to get golden eggs. The exporters are adulterating pepper and ginger and exporting them by agmarking, and the goods are coming back to our country. The result is that our international trade has suffered and our reputation is going down. You are to find out some method by which you send articles of good quality outside our country so that we get good name and good reputation in the foreign markets. So, my request is to give more representation to farmers on the Spices Board and be more strict with the quality control.

SHRI P. R. DAS MUNSI: Sir, I would like to inform the hon. Member that in all these respects, we have already taken steps, we have reviewed the programme and no less than the Prime Minister himself expressed deep concern about the prices paid to the growers in Kerala and told us repeatedly to check up and examine every matter to improve the condition. We have taken special

measures and after this Session, Sir, we are again visiting Kerala in the gross roots to see what are the conditions prevailing between growers and traders and in what manner we can improve the situation, and I can only inform the hon. Member that whatever lacunae and loopholes are there in the spices trade, the Ministry is taking an overall view of this and shortly, my senior colleague, Shri Dinesh Singh - he is not here today - is having an overall meeting with the senior people in the Ministry and taking some measures which will be announced very shortly... (*Interruptions*).

[*Translation*]

Conversion and Doubling of Railway Lines in Rajasthan

*212. SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the survey for conversion of railway line from Luni/Jodhpur to Barmer/Jaisalmer into broad gauge and for doubling the track from Marwar to Luni/Jodhpur has been completed and submitted to the Planning Commission;

(b) whether the survey report with regard to doubling the track from Agra to Jaipur and from Jaipur to Marwar has been sent to the Planning Commission; and

(c) if so, the details of the progress made in the construction of above rail lines?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD): (a) Surveys for conversion have been carried out and reports submitted to Planning Commission. No survey has been done for doubling.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN: The reply given by the hon. Minister is only partly satisfactory. Reports were submitted to the Planning Commission as per the recom-

mendation made after the survey for conversion of Luni/Jodhpur to Barmer/Jaisalmer rail line was carried out.

I want to know whether any reply has been received from the Planning Commission regarding the survey report submitted to it. If so, when was it received and when did you send your proposal to them? The hon. Minister may kindly give all this information.

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has raised the question whether broad gauge railway line will be constructed by conversion of railway line from Luni, Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaisalmer as suggested by the Ministry of Defence. I have given the reply that recently on 31.10.88 a meeting of the railway officials was held with the Planning Commission. We had sent the survey report to the Planning Commission but we have not received any reply from the Commission to that effect. When a meeting was held with the Planning Commission, it gave a suggestion in its first phase to carry out a second survey on priority basis. This survey is for Sawai Madhopur, Jaipur, Phulers, Meret Road, Jodhpur, Bhedet Road, Lalgah and Bikaner. This proposal will be considered. Since no suggestion has been received from the Commission regarding Luni, Barmer, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer, I can not say anything in this regard.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN: Meeting was held for the suggestion sent by you to the Commission. Can the survey report regarding Luni, Jaisalmer and Barmer be laid on the Table of the House?

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: As I have already mentioned, no meeting has been held regarding the survey conducted for Luni, Barmer, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer line. The meeting held with the Planning Commission recently is regarding the survey to be conducted for Sawai Madhopur, Jaipur, Phulera, Meret Road, Jodhpur and Lalgah. Its survey will be conducted in the proposed budget for 1989-90. No reply has been received from the Commission regarding Luni, Barmer, Jodhpur and Jaisalmer.