

a model railway station, will the Government consider to upgrade the Berhampur railway station in Ganjam district to a model railway station in Khoradha railway division of Orissa?

[Translation]

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Sir, I have already clarified that we have taken up at least one railway station of each railway division which shall be developed as a model station. The hon. Member is aware that we have decided to develop railway stations of the State headquarters, district headquarters, railway divisions, State capitals, important junctions and the stations which are important from the point of view of tourism as model stations. So far as Bhubaneswar is concerned, it is already included in the list of model stations and the work is in progress there.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH RATH: Near Berhampur there is a cantonment. Will the Government upgrade Berhampur also as a model railway station? That is my question.

[Translation]

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I had already stated that we are not going to stop this process. After Bhubaneswar, several other stations will be developed as model stations and the criteria shall be the same. Other stations shall be improved on the lines of Bhubaneswar.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, what is the criteria behind the selection of a model station? Which stations in the South-Eastern Railways and Eastern Railways have been selected for this purpose?

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Sir, I will convey the information separately.

MR. SPEAKER: Do so in writing.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister had informed us that Kharagpur station would be developed as a model station. However, one and a half or two years have passed since then but the work in this respect has not begun so far. I would like to know from the hon. Minister when will the work start there? Besides, I would also like to know whether the M.Ps, M.L.As, Commissioners, Chairmen etc. are consulted before selecting a station which is to be developed as a model station or is it done solely on the recommendations of the Railway Board?

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Choubey, would you kindly tell us first why are you rarely present in the House.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MAHABIR PRASAD: Sir, the hon. Member is very clever and wise. As regards, Kharagpur station, I will inform him separately. I will consult and find out what more can be done in this matter.

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS: Mr. Speaker 'clever' is an unparliamentary expression. I should be expunged.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been used in a different context.

SHORT NOTICE QUESTIONS

[English]

Fall in Onion Prices

S.N.Q.No. 1. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the export target of onions for the year 1988-89;

(b) whether there has been an unprecedented fall in the prices of onion all over the country, particularly in Maharashtra State; if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether export target of onions fixed for 1988-89 has been achieved; if not the reasons therefor and the steps taken or being taken to achieve the target;

(d) whether there is a strong demand from farmers that onion export should be handled directly by agencies other than NAFED; if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(e) the steps Government propose to take to protect the interests of farmers producing onions in view of the sharp decline in the prices?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI DINESH SINGH): (a) At the beginning of the year 1988-89, it was decided to maintain export of onions at the level achieved last year (1987-88) i.e. 1.41 lakh metric tonnes. However, considering the good availability and reasonable price of onion, it was decided in October, 1988 to allow export of onions upto a level of 3 lakh metric tonnes.

(b) It is reported that the prices of onion have declined, particularly in the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat.

(c) According to provisional information available, exports of onions during the year 1988-89 would have reached 2.24 lakh metric tonnes, realising Rs. 65 crores, which is highest ever achieved for any year so far.

(d) On a request made by the Maharashtra State Cooperative Marketing Federation and Gujarat Agro Industries Corporation, a quota for export of 25 thousand tonnes of onions to each of these two organisations has been agreed to very recently.

(e) The Government of India has already asked the Government of Maharashtra to send their proposal for a market intervention scheme to protect the interest of the farmers.

[Translation]

SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, with profound regret, I beg to submit that the condition of the farmers in the country in general and the onion producing farmers in Maharashtra in particular is very deplorable. I have concrete evidence that onion is being sold at a price of Rs. 20 a quintal in Kopergaon market, Kaaskhangay, Anand and Pune. People have thrown away their produce of onion. You can well imagine what a poor price of Rs. 20 a quintal is being offered to the farmers for his produce when its cost of production comes to about Rs. 90/- a quintal. I would like to know the rationale behind channelising the export of onion through NAFED only. What I feel is that the exports will go up if the State federation or other such agencies are directly allowed to export because NAFED is nothing but a white elephant. There is rampant corruption and mismanagement there and there is neither any enquiry into their affairs nor any check on their misdeeds. The Government thought of making export as late as in October, will the Government formulate some long term policies so that export position could become very sound. Is the Government going to decide its policy as to what quantity of onion it would like to export from April next year. I would like to know whether the Government of Maharashtra has written to you, if so what are their suggestions? Three years ago the State Government as well as the Central Government purchased onion at the prices ranging between Rs. 75 to Rs. 85 a quintal and by that they suffered a loss of Rs. 28 crores. Is the Government going to fix any support price for onion? If not, the reasons therefore. The NAFED had tried to purchase onion at the rate of Rs. 30 and Rs. 24 a quintal. The NAFED is not working for the interest of the farmers. As such I would like to know as to what the Government is thinking about these two things. The question relates to agriculture and I know that it is not related to your Ministry. But we are helpless. Please let us know what you are going to do in this regard.

MR. SPEAKER: A full delegation com-

prising of 22 to 25 persons from Kopergaon had also come to me. They were also complaining that their onion was lying unsold.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the information you have received and what the hon. Member has said is correct. This year onion production has gone up. Rains caused heavy damage to onion in Maharashtra, particularly in Nasik. due to which, the prices of onion damaged due to rains, have fallen. We have received information that onion is selling at Rs. 30 a quintal.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: It is selling below Rs. 30.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Good quality onions which have not been drenched in water, are fetching a price ranging between Rs. 50 to Rs. 75 a quintal. So far as the question of export is concerned, the hon. Member is not satisfied with the performance of the agency which was hither to looking after export. I shall ask the Ministry concerned to look into the shortcoming of this agency. But I would like to make one thing clear. If we permit one and all to take up export work, it will definitely lead to fall in export price and no benefit will accrue from export. Instead, it will be more beneficial if all the exporting agencies work together and export is channelised. However, as I said, we have permitted the State Federations of Maharashtra and Gujarat to make export and let us see how they are working. Further policy in this regard could be formulated on the basis of their performance. It is very difficult to say anything at this stage about the quantity we will export next year. It all depends on the quantity to be available for export at that time. Export is not the only solution to this problem. If the export exceeds its limit, the prices in the domestic market will go up. The farmers will not be benefited if the traders hoard the stock of the onion at that time. We have asked the Government of Maharashtra to examine this point. If they so desire, market international could be done and in that case the Central Government as well as the Government of

Maharashtra should bear the loss in matching ratio.

SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it was a mistake on my part to ask the question. No policy for export for the next year has been laid down and it will lead to a further fall in the price. There will be nobody to purchase onion. I, therefore, urge the Government to issue immediate instructions that same export must be made, otherwise there will be a further fall in the prices. I do agree that the production has increased, but your figures prove that it is the international market which is considered to be a good market for onion. The Government of Maharashtra, the NAFED and the Ministry of Agriculture make procurement. As such orders should be passed within 2 to 3 days so that procurement may start early. Only the federations will not serve any purpose. The farmers are weeping and some of them have also fallen sick.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do agree that the difficulties expressed by the hon. Member are there. We have asked the Government of Maharashtra through a telex message to take some early decision in the matter.

[English]

DR. DATTA SAMANT: Sir, I have received a lot of complaints from Nasik and Lasalgaon. the farmers are paid 20 paise for the purchase of 1 Kg. onion whereas in Bombay it is sold at Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per Kg. and in Delhi it is Rs. 3 per Kg. So, this is the type of economy that we have in our country. Farmers are about to throw away the onions not because due to more rains it is a bad quality crop but because there is no cooperation between the farmers and the sellers. The middlemen are swallowing the money. The Government has no policy with regard to its export as there is no advance planning as to what the crop is going to be. That is the reason why the farmers in Gujarat and Maharashtra are suffering this year and next year they are not going to grow onions.

Keeping this in view, will the Government, instead of waiting for some proposal to come from Maharashtra, immediately intervene in this matter and see that the export of onions, which is at present 25,000 tonnes, is increased? Secondly, is the Government thinking of having some new policy to preserve onions and see that they are sold properly in the cities?

[Translation]

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, you are yourself a farmer. You can well imagine how is it possible to assess the food production for the next year at this stage. It will be of no use if we make an announcement this year that we will export this much quantity of onion next year and if the production falls short of our target next year, it is no use of making announcement here. We will make full export if we get the item available for export. Our present policies are for making maximum export. If next year's onion crop is good, we will export more quantity of onion than what has been exported this year.

MR. SPEAKER: You formulate your policy, we will make production.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Very good, Mr. Speaker, Sir, as you are ordering... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Choubey, please do not interrupt. You came late, but you will not be permitted to interrupt... (Interruptions)

SHRI DINESH SINGH: Mr. Choubey has nothing to do with the farmers. (Interruptions)

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY : I want onion, I purchase onion at the rate of Rs. 5 a kilo which is purchased at Rs. 50 a quintal from the growers. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: We will invite Shri Choubey to dine with us.

(Interruptions)

SHRI DINESH SINGH: As desired by you, we will make as much export as you wish... (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA: I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is aware of the total expenditure incurred for growing onions per acre. The hon. Minister has just now mentioned that the price given to the farmers varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 75 per quintal. Is it profitable? Or can it be at least considered as a support price? If not, what is the intention of the Government with regard to giving at least the support price to the farmers? Here I am not talking about remunerative price. What is the plan before the Government to see that the farmers get at least the support price for the onions that they are growing?

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Don't linger on the question because it spoils its importance.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA: The farmers are getting lesser price. You please ask the Government to pay attention towards it. We brought about green revolution and asked our farmers to increase production and the hon. Minister is telling that the production has increased.... (Interruptions)

[English]

I want to request the hon. Minister again that at least support price must be given to the farmers.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Don't linger on the question otherwise it becomes irrelevant.

SHRI DINESH SINGH: The Ministry of Agriculture will definitely consider this matter.