

Mr. Speaker: There are so many interests.

Shri Namblar: We sympathise with the cause; we are for the Suba.

Mr. Speaker: That is why I have appealed to all to agree. All sections are agreed on the main thing.

Shrimad Renu Chakravarty: May I make one point very clear? If you are going to give your ruling to the effect that this might be permitted to be done, I would request you, before you put this to vote, to make it very clear to the House and to the country that this waiving of rules will never be resorted to any more. This may be made very clear.

Mr. Speaker: It is not possible to say that never again it will be resorted to, but at least I will give this guarantee that normally or ordinarily it will not be taken advantage of in future. If such a thing happens on account of the failure of Government, then certainly they would not come up for this.

Shri Namblar: But it will be a very bad precedent.

Mr. Speaker: There are different circumstances that come up, different considerations.

Shri Namblar: We sympathise with the cause very much more than they.

Mr. Speaker: That is why I am appealing to him.

Shri Namblar: But we are really afraid, frightened, that they will repeat these things.

Mr. Speaker: We will see. We are here.

Dr. M. S. Aney: I withdraw my objection.

Mr. Speaker: I hope all others will fall in line.

Shri Namblar: No, not in this case.

Mr. Speaker: I am appealing to him, because the cause is dear to him as to anybody else.

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi): When is it to be taken up?

Mr. Speaker: A new motion has to be made. It cannot be done today.

Shri Raghunath Singh: Why should we not move the motion just now? All the hon. Members are sitting in the Central Hall. They can all come. We can have the motion now.

Mr. Speaker: We have to suspend many rules. The Bill has to be introduced afresh. All things have to be done. It cannot be done in this manner. Tomorrow it may be done, but we will have to take care that tomorrow we finish all the work that we have.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Has the rule been suspended?

Mr. Speaker: That motion will have to be moved.

Shri D. C. Sharma: Ask the leader to make the motion

17.32 hours

*CAPACITY OF PORTS TO HANDLE CARGO

Shri Linga Reddy (Chikballapur): I am raising this discussion on points arising out of the answer given on the 1st March, 1966 to Starred Question No. 275. A discussion on this will be very useful and very purposeful.

The other day, the Food Minister was pleased to say that arrangements are being made for importing 9 million tons of foodgrains. Out of this, 5 million tons have been imported so far.

When we are faced with unprecedented drought in several parts of the country, it is very necessary that our ports should be in a position to handle the cargo of foodgrains in addition to handling other materials such as fertilisers etc., that come from other countries. It is very necessary that the Transport Ministry, the Food and Agriculture Ministry and the port authorities co-ordinate their

[Shri Linga Reddy]

activities to import foodgrains through the ports and send them as early as possible to the places where there is necessary. Time is the essence of the matter. 17.34 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

We have a number of major ports, but all of them are not fully developed. Sometime ago an expert committee from America came and inspected some of the ports, and I believe they have submitted a report. A summary of it, no doubt, has been given, but I wish the full report had been made available to the hon. Members. Now I understand that it is intended to import 1.5 million tons of foodgrains every month through these ports and send them to the other parts. Unfortunately foodgrains are not imported in ports situated near the drought affected areas. It is because the handling of the foodgrain and other cargo in the several ports are not properly planned for some reason or the other. I understand that some officers here in the food department are interested in getting the bulk of the imports through Bombay port only though there are other ports which can very easily and conveniently handle the grains and send them to the needy parts. For example, according to the answer given, Bombay received during 1964-65 a total tonnage of 17.5 million in foodgrain and other cargoes. Other ports like Calcutta, Kandla, etc. have very few shipments of grains. I understand that some officers in the food department are interested in getting foodgrains only through Bombay, the result being that the foodgrains received at the Bombay port are not being handled quickly and results in payment of demurrage. The hon. minister may find out the demurrage that had been paid. I understand that this demurrage is being shared by some interested officers and others. This may kindly be enquired into. An instance may be given. *Manhattan*, a supertanker carrying 72,000 tonnes of PL 480 grains was not in a position to be received in the Bombay port. Arrangements were made to receive it at Madras by stopping it mid-sea for a long time and unload

them into smaller ships. The same thing could be sent to Kandla port or Pradip port. Of course, it could not be landed there. But by smaller ships foodgrains could have been easily sent to Calcutta and other ports. It is necessary that the handling capacity of foodgrains and other materials should be geared up so that foodgrains could be sent to the needy places early. That is not being done at present. Out of 9.1 million tonnes that are to be imported from several parts, five million tonnes have been received. We have to receive about seven million tons from other countries such as America. At least in future it may be properly planned and grains should be sent to the other parts. If wheat is needed in an area, the wheat ship should be sent there. But it is sent to Madras and from there sent to wheat needing areas. The transport charges thus become heavy. Mangalore port can easily handle some grains but they are not at all sent there. Similarly, the Cochin port, the Vizagapatnam port and Marmagao port—all three ports—depend upon the supply of foodgrains that are received from several countries, whether it is imported wheat or rice, and to send them to the places where they are needed. But that is not being done. It is because of the unplanning, that is there in the Food Department. The whole thing may kindly be reviewed, and the ships should be overhauled, and the things be properly planned.

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Aviation (Shri C. M. Poonsach): As regards the handling of imported foodgrains, of the imported cargoes and the export of goods from this country, the capacity of the ports has got to be developed. It is with this object in view that the capacity of our various ports, major and minor, and the coastal ports, is being developed year after year. For the benefit of the hon. Members of this House, I may be permitted to quote that in the year 1964-65, the total handling capacity of our ports, major ports, was of the order of 48.4 million tons. In 1965-66, this capacity was stepped up to 49.5 million tons and in 1966-67, this capacity is now further stepped up to a new

level of 57 million to 58 million tons. That is to say, the capacity that we have developed to handle cargo, both import and export, at the various ports of India is being steadily developed and improved.

Apart from this, even the capacity of the minor ports all along our coastline is being systematically developed and that capacity is today somewhere at 8.5 million tons. With this development, now we are organising our machinery to handle the unprecedented import of foodgrains to this country. Up till recent years an average of five to six million tons of foodgrains we used to import. Due to abnormal conditions in the country this year, the proposal is to import about 12 million to 15 million tons of foodgrains, an all-time high record. We have to make extraordinary arrangements to handle this heavy import that we have before us. With this programme in view, the ports have been geared up to handle the increased volume of import. The imports of food grains could be arranged; ships could be chartered and the purchase of mechanical equipments for handling also could be agreed upon or arranged, but the capacity to deliver the goods at the ports depends upon several factors. Firstly, it is a question of berthing facilities; secondly, storage facilities and the transhipment facilities at the ports; thirdly, capacity to move unloaded grains to the hinterland either by rail, or by road and fourthly, which is a very important one, the labour that could be mustered at all these big ports to handle this big import programme. It is not a one-sided development. It is not merely the question of development of port capacity. It is all these things which go to the success of our handling the import of this heavy stocks of foodgrains. In that, we had to mechanise some of the handling programmes at the various ports, particularly at Bombay, Kandla, and now, in Madras, where we are now mechanising the unloading of foodgrains. We are having special mechanised installations at the various berths and by that we are trying to step up the discharge of foodgrains at every port. Besides this, railway movement also has to be organised. It is an all-round attempt to handle this big programme of imports which is being done continuously.

Till the end of April, we had been able to handle the imports fairly successfully. But in May, it is going to be a bit difficult because there has been a bunching of vessels at various ports, particularly Bombay. That is due to various reasons. The vessels that were chartered to bring grains from America used their maximum lay time of 15 days and they did not reach the ports sufficiently early. These were some slow-moving vessels which could not reach the ports according to the time programme. So, they slipped into May. Otherwise, we should have had them in April. Consequently there is bunching of vessels.

We have also made arrangements to import food by bulk carriers, with the result at the moment we have heavy bunching of vessels and consequently we are running into some difficulties this month. Our programme is that during the non-monsoon months we should be able to handle 1.5 million tons of grains in all our major ports and 1 to 1.2 million tons during the monsoon months. However, on accounts of bunching of vessels we are now finding it rather difficult to handle cargo in the way we have programmed for. However, this month as against 1.2 million tons, we may have to even handle much more than that, for which we are making every effort for the successful handling of the vessels that come.

The hon. member made a passing remark that that has been a tendency to accept vessels only at Bombay and other ports are not given due consideration. This is not a fact. Bombay, of course, is handling the bulk, because we have about five berths there and one berth is going to be added exclusively for foodgrains. So, six berths would be working only for food ships in Bombay. In addition, we have port installations to handle mechanically the discharge of grains from the vessels. For these reasons, Bombay is more suited to handle a larger import of foodgrains. Even though we have all these facilities we had to divert two vessels from Bombay to Madras, because there has been heavy bunching. We could not divert more vessels to Kandla, because Kandla also at the moment is somewhat congested.

[Shri C. M. Poonacha]

However, we are making every possible effort.

The other arrangement we are making is that we would be discharging these big tankers into Liberty coasters and ships at mid-stream and taking them to various ports, so that demand on berth facilities may be minimised. With all these arrangements, it is our hope that the programme which has been drawn up for import of foodgrains during the year will be successfully handled in spite of the difficulties we have to encounter. I can give the assurance that with regard to port handling, we will try to do our utmost. Much depends upon the rail and road movement and the facilities available at the various port areas.

Mention was made that Manhattan, the big tanker which is about to reach our port, has been arranged to be brought to Bombay and it has not been taken to Kandla or Paradip. It is not so. Because this bulk carrier has to be taken to a port from where the grain so discharged could be moved quickly by railways, we had to take it to Madras. We could take it to Paradip. But Paradip port by itself cannot handle the discharge. We do not have a rail connection to Paradip. We cannot go and unload it at Paradip and then move it by trucks. 70,000 tons of grain is coming in one load. So it has to be taken to a port which could handle it.

Shri Linga Reddy: What I said was that it could be taken to Paradip and....

Shri C. M. Poonacha: The idea is that it is not going to be unloaded at Paradip but it will be taken to Paradip from where it will be unloaded into "liberty" ships and moved to Calcutta. But the difficulty is, Paradip is a newly constructed port and we are not still fully organised at that port. So the owners of the vessel

themselves insisted that it has to be discharged at a port which is acceptable to them. This is one of the conditions of the charter party. Therefore, we had to accept their decision to unload this cargo at Madras. Then, Madras has all the other facilities of movement of foodgrains which, when it is discharged in Madras, could be organised to the best possible advantage.

Mention was made that we are not using the facilities available in other ports such as Vishakhapatnam, Mangalore and others. It is not correct. We have this year handled about 53,000 tons of foodgrains import through Vishakhapatnam, through Cochin about 48,000 tons, through Mangalore about 12,000 tons. The hon. Member would be knowing that Mangalore is a seasonal port. After 15th May we cannot handle any vessels there. Only for about 6 to 8 months in a year or, at the most, 9 months we can work vessels, and that too mid-stream which is very expensive. Even then we have made use of Mangalore port and discharged about 12,000 tons of foodgrains.

Shri Linga Reddy: I said that Mangalore port has to be developed quickly and made an all-weather port.

Shri C. M. Poonacha: When the major port comes into being, no doubt, we will take big tankers there. At the moment it is mid-stream unloading. Even with these difficulties and handicaps we have made arrangements to unload vessels wherever possible, so that our port capacities are used to the maximum and this heavy programme of foodgrain import is successfully handled.

17.53 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, May 17, 1966/Vaisakha 27, 1888 (Saka)