

that they have got no proposal for the beautification of that place. In this context, may I ask the hon. Minister what the Central Government has done for the beautification of Digha and what proposals they have got for the beautification of this place?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT AND TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI A. P. SHARMA): I agree with my friend that Digha is a very beautiful place. It is no doubt a tourist centre, but the importance of this tourist centre is so much that even the State Government has not made any such proposal. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA: Does the Hon. Minister know that the State Government has done a lot of things there? The Central Government is also thinking of linking Digha with the railway lines. Yesterday, while answering a question, the Railway Minister said that a railway link line will be constructed to connect Digha with the nearest railway station. A lot of people visit that place. So my pointed question to the Hon. Minister is whether the Central Government is thinking of constructing an ITDC [Hotel] there and an artificial lake, to attract people from different areas to that place?

SHRI A. P. SHARMA: There was a meeting of the Tourism Ministers held in November 1978 in New Delhi and the Central Government invited proposals from the State Governments. My hon. friend would see that, in the recommendation of the West Bengal Government, Digha is not included. Only three other places are there for

creating facilities, these being Sandakphu-Phalut trekking Ayodhya hills, and Sunderbans. Digha is not included. But I want to inform him that there are many other private hotels there in Digha and, for the present the Central Government does not propose to have any other hotel there.

+

Rubber Industry's refusal to use rubber imported by STC

*908. **SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:**
SHRI K. M. MADHUKAR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rubber industry has refused to use the natural rubber imported by State Trading Corporation;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor.

(c) what is the quantity of natural rubber imported and lying for want of purchases with the STC and since when; and

(d) what is Government's plan to dispose of the same?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Government have no information.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Quantity of rubber imported
(Since September, 1978)

Stocks lying with S.T.C.

47,350 tonnes.

The unlifted stocks as on 6-8-1980 which have been with STC for about 9 months are 6631 tonnes.

(d) The lifting of rubber imported by STC is constantly reviewed by Government and appropriate action is taken from time to time in consultation with STC.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: I want to draw your attention to the statement laid on the Table of the House. In reply to part (a) of my question, as to whether the rubber industry has refused to use the natural rubber imported by the State Trading Corporation, Government's reply is that the Government have no information. The reply is not 'No Sir, that is not being done'. Why should Government not have information from the State Trading Corporation on this score? They can ask for information whether it is a fact that part of the rubber is lying there unheeded.

Then, in reply to part (c) it is stated that the quantity of rubber imported since September 1978 by the STC is 47,350 tonnes and the stocks lying with STC as on 6-8-80 is 6631 tonnes. That shows that the STC did not care to calculate the gap between the need of the industry here and the quantity of indigenous rubber production. Otherwise, this gap would not have been there. If this is so, in whose interests did the STC import such a huge amount of very high priced rubber from the international market? Is it not to please multi-national rubber companies, to keep the stock in hand and press down the rubber market so that these rubber using multi-nationals could have cheaper rubber and the indigenous rubber is pressed down? Was that the reason for the mis-calculation?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I do not know why the hon. Lady Member has taken objection to the mode of my answering to the question.

I have no information about the refusal of the industry to lift the natural rubber imported by the State Trading Corporation. She might have the information. What I said was that

the government has no information and I have no information. The facts that I have given would indicate that the information of the hon. Lady Member is not correct because the total rubber imported from September 1978 to the first part of 1980 was 47350 tonnes and today the stock is about 6631 tonnes. Therefore, the balance had been lifted by the industry. For the information of the Member I can tell that even in January 1980 the stock was 14000 tonnes; April 1980—11500 tonnes; July 1980—7300 tonnes, August 1, 1980—6674 tonnes. That was the position with the STC. Therefore, gradually it has been lifted and today the stock is 6631 tonnes.

Therefore, over the period, they have lifted it. A question was asked as to why a stock is being maintained by the STC. Sir, STC has to maintain a buffer stock to bridge the gap, if situation demands, between the indigenous availability and the total requirement of the industry.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: The Minister has not answered one of my questions—whether a part of the imported stock lying with the STC is being turned as unusable and whether the Government of Kerala has requested the Central Government not to import rubber.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Not only the Kerala Government has requested but even all the members of Kerala have made a unanimous demand on the Ministry of Commerce and I agreed and practically told them on the floor of the House that we are not importing any rubber for the time being and we are watching the situation.

With regard to the usability, it is not a fact that it is not usable. But when rubber is stored for a longer period, naturally it becomes a little affected and a part of it may be damaged, but it is not fully unusable.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Choubey....
(Interruptions).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Rubber comes from Kerala. So Kerala members may be given preference.

SHRI E. BALANANDAN: In part (b) of the hon. Minister's reply he says that the government will review from time to time the import of rubber. Can the hon. Minister give an assurance to us that this year rubber will not be imported into India?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I cannot give a blanket assurance. What I told the other day I can reiterate—that we are watching the situation and definitely we would not like to see that the prices crash. But what is the present position of the market today? Rubber prices are going up, they are not going down.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: From the hon. Minister's reply it is clear that 47000 tonnes were imported from 1978 onwards but the lifting of the companies seems to be very sluggish. The reason obviously should be that the quantity imported was calculated on a wrong basis.

I would rather request the Minister and would like to know from him whether he would make an objective study of the quantity of indigenous production in the country and on the basis of that will he review the policy of imports? And if he is convinced that the indigenous production is sufficient to meet our demands in the country, will he impose a total ban on the import of rubber?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: My whole difficulty is that whatever study we make, the hon. Member does not find it objective. I mentioned that the total requirements of the country are 175,000 tonnes. When I was replying to the debate I mentioned that our total production is in the order of 150,000—155,000 tonnes. Therefore, there is a gap. But the hon. Member does not agree with that point of view.

Therefore, I do not know what should be the criteria for an objective study.

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: The problem is that you are calculating the internal demand assuming that all the factories will work throughout the year and that there will be no power shortage and in that way, an exaggerated calculation is made. In fact there will be strikes in the factories and there will be power cuts. So naturally your calculation of the internal demand is exaggerated.

SHRI XAVIER ARAKAL: Is it not a fact that the Government of Kerala and the Rubber Board, both of them, were equally guilty of not informing the Central Government about the actual production and demand of rubber in the country.... (Interruptions). Let me finish. Will the Minister categorically make a statement that rubber will not be imported to the detriment of the rubber-growers from Kerala and the country?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: As regards the latter part of the hon'ble Member's question, I have already assured that import will not take place as it affects the interests of the growers and affects the indigenous availability.

Protest from Buyers of jute from Australia

+

*910. SHRI CHANDRA BHAN
ATHARE PATIL:

SHRI BALASHEB VIKHE
PATIL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he is aware that some big buyers of jute goods from Australia have protested in regard to the supply of jute cargoes with so much dirt that they had to quarantine the containers and fumigate them before deliveries could be taken by the buyers, thereby incurring heavy demurrage expenses during the process.