

know whether we intend to expand the trade between the two countries. Because the balance of trade is in our favour, we would be able to export more commodities to that country and get better and favourable protection. May I know in what respect, in regard to which commodities we would like to expand the trade with Bangladesh?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: We export to Bangladesh engineering goods, and textiles, apart from coal, and a number of other consumer items. It depends on the requirements of that particular country. So far as import is concerned, we are mainly importing newsprint. For import of fertilisers, negotiation is going on. In regard to expansion of trade, again from the statement the hon. member will get an idea as to how it is expanding. For instance, in 1976-77, our total exports to Bangladesh were Rs. 54 crores. In the first six months of the current year, it is nearly Rs. 33 crores. That means, it is going to be almost Rs. 12 to 13 crores more.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: In order to reduce as far as possible the imbalance in the trade, I am sure our Government is trying to explore the possibilities of importing from Bangladesh such items which they are in a position to supply and which we require. In this connection, reports had appeared in the Press that we were interested in purchasing from them something which they have got in plenty and surplus also, i.e. natural gas for commercial or domestic purposes. May I know whether anything has been done in that respect so that we can import that easily from Bangladesh to the eastern part of our country?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: In fact, when I was there, I had a discussion with the Bangladesh Ministers as to what are the commodities they are in a position to supply to us which we require, in order to improve their exports to India. One such item I have

already mentioned. For instance urea. They are expanding their fertiliser plant and we are importing urea from different places. If they are in a position to give urea, we would be prepared to accept it. In regard to gas, particularly we did not mention this subject, because as the hon. member himself is aware, Bangladesh took two positions, just on the eve of my departure. That is why it was thought that perhaps it is not a very appropriate time to raise the issue. But we are interested in it and if they are in a position to give it to us, we will be accepting it.

Pelletisation technology to be used in Kudremukh

*278. **SHRI CHITTA BASU:** Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision regarding pelletisation technology to be used in Kudremukh; and

(b) if so, full facts thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b). No, Sir. The public undertaking concerned, viz., Kudremukh Iron Ore Co. Ltd., has invited tenders for setting up a pelletisation plant at Mangalore based on iron ore concentrates processed at Kudremukh. The last date for the receipt of tenders is 15th December, 1980. A decision on the technology to be used for pelletisation will be taken after the evaluation of various tenders.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Kudremukh project was built with Iranian collaboration, but due to the political turmoil in Iran, the iron ores which were to be lifted by the Government of Iran could not be lifted. Thereby, there has been some piling up of iron ores at Kudremukh. In view of this, what are the Government's proposals

in the matter of disposal of the iron ores produced in Kudremukh project?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: It is true that the original arrangement which we had with Iran could not materialise because of a certain situation there and I would not like to comment on that. Particularly my problem is that iron ore concentrates which will be produced at Kudremukh cannot be used and it has no ready market in any part of the world, unless there is a system of direct reduction, which is still in the manufacturing process. Therefore, the only alternative is to establish a pelletisation plant to convert it into pellets, for which there is a ready market. In the expansion of the steel industry we can use part of it. As I have already indicated in the reply to the main question, we have invited tenders, the last date for which is 15th December. After we received offers from the various countries we would be in a position to indicate how quickly we can establish it.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: There is a press report that our Government had some negotiations with the Government of Indonesia and some contracts were also entered into for the supply of pelletised iron ore to Indonesia. If this is a fact, as the hon. Minister himself admits that there is no pelletisation plant in our country, how was it possible for the Government of India to enter into a reported contract with the Government of Indonesia to supply pelletised iron ore?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: It is not true that we do not have any pelletisation plant. We have two pelletisation plants one in Goa Mandvi and another pelletisation plant of Chowgule. By an arrangement with Indonesia, we would be receiving 30,000 tonnes of sponge iron and they want to have some pellets from us. It may be possible for us to provide pellets from the Mandi pelletisation plant. So far as Kudremukh pelleti-

sation is concerned, it is not possible, because it is not yet established.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I want to know whether there has been some agreement with the Government of Indonesia for the supply of pelletised iron ore.

MR. SPEAKER: No. He has denied that.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Has he denied that?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: It is not pelletised iron ore. They want some pellets. The question is from where we can give them the pellets. We cannot give them from Kudremukh pellet, because we do not have the pelletisation there. But we can give them from the Mandvi plant.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there any contract?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: There is no contract. In fact, Indonesia is interested in selling sponge iron. In order to sell their products, they gave us the offer "if you are in a position to sell pellets, you can do so; we are prepared to accept it."

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: The hon. Minister has stated specifically the various evaluations that are going on to meet the situation of piling of iron ore and the heavy losses. I would like to know the precise evaluation that is taken up immediately to see that the situation of the piling up of iron ore is eased.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Let me explain the position. The hon. Member is not aware that the Kudremukh project has been commissioned in September, one of the projects which has been commissioned on time. For pelletisation we will take some time.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: I am not referring to the commissioning of the

pelletisation plant but the evaluation part. Iron ore is now piling up.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I have already mentioned that we have invited tenders and the last date is 15th of December. After that we will be in a position to do that.

Fall in the price of Marine Products

*280. **SHRI K. B. CHOUDHARI:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the steep fall in the price of marine produce in the last year;

(b) whether Government have taken steps to counter this downward trend in prices, which will ruin the small fishing operator;

(c) whether Government have proposed some measures of relief to the fishing trawler owners and small operators so that they can sustain themselves during this depression; and

(d) if not, what Government propose to do in the case of the fishing industry; since reliefs are usually given to other industries like tea, jute etc.?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE & STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d). There was no fall in prices of marine products during the last year. However, there have been fluctuations in the international prices for shrimps during the current financial year. The small fishing operators are getting other varieties of fish besides prawn. According to the information received from the Ministry of Agriculture, the local prices of fish have registered an upward trend. Cash compensatory support and import replenishment are already available to certain exportable marine products other than shrimp.

SHRI K. B. CHOUDHARI: Sir, there was no fall in the price of fish in general, but the fall in price is in respect of prawn. What measures the

Government have taken in this respect?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I have already explained the position that so far as the export compensation is concerned, I had explained that they are already entitled to have it and it is not as if in one item the price falls, sometimes they make good in other items. So far as fisheries are concerned, it is the Agriculture Ministry which is the administrative Ministry that is concerned. I am concerned only with the exports. They have indicated that there is an upward trend, there is no downward trend.

SHRI K. B. CHOUDHARI: I would like to know whether the small boat owners have been given relief.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: This question is to be answered by the Agriculture Ministry. I am not competent to answer.

खनिजों पर रायबंदी की दरों में संशोधन

281. श्री एन० ई० हीरो : क्या इस्पात और खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या बिहार सरकार ने खनिजों पर रायल्टी की दरों पर में संशोधन करने के लिए केन्द्रीय सरकार से अनुगोष किया है ;

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्सम्बन्धी ब्योरा क्या है ; और

(ग) उस पर सरकार की प्रतिबन्धना क्या है ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A Study Group, which included officials of certain State Governments,