

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He is getting up every now and then.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please, please. You should read the rules and come to the House. Please see the rules.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. Dhandapani, put some question. Do not talk about Sri Lanka.

SHRI C. T. DHANDAPANI: I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Central Government have got any concrete schemes to provide employment and other facilities to the persons who are going to be repatriated.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD: The Ministry of Rehabilitation deals with Sri Lanka repatriates, with Burma repatriates, with Tibetan refugees, and also with displaced persons who came from East and West. This question purely deals with Dandakaranya. If Shri Dhandapani puts a separate question, I will give full details and answer.

Cost structure of Production of National and Local Dailies

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*1058. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL:

SHRI ARJUN SETHI:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the organisations representing newspapers have represented to Government that the cost of newsprint has gone up so high that the newspapers will be finding it impossible to produce a newspaper which a common man can buy;

(b) whether Government have gone into cost structure of production of national and local dailies and also the grievances ventilated by the newspapers organisations; and

(c) if so, what is their finding and to what extent relief can be given to newspapers in the price of newsprint supplied to them?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (KUMARI KUMUD-BEN M. JOSHI): (a) Some representations from newspapers expressing concern over the increase of newsprint price and the levy of 15 per cent customs duty on newsprint have been received.

(b) No study of cost structure of production of dailies has been made recently. However, one of the terms of reference of the reconstituted Press Commission relates to "Economics of the newspaper industry; newsprint, printing machinery and other inputs for newspapers." The present term of the Commission is upto 31-12-1981.

(c) Small newspapers would now be sold newsprint at a price which would not include any amount relateable to import duty. Medium newspapers will be supplied newsprint at a price which would include an amount relateable to import duty of only 5 per cent ad velorem. The newsprint allocation policy for the current year which was announced recently (copy already laid on the Table of the House on 28-4-1981) provides for certain facilities/consideration for small and medium newspapers.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: It is a very well-known fact that the newspapers particularly the bigger ones, resort to increase in their prices now and then without any check or regulation by the government. I wanted to know through this question from the Government whether the Government proposes to evolve a mechanism whereby looking to the cost structure of the newspaper, prices have to be increased or have not to be increased. If there is no such mechanism, will the Government consider the question of evolving some mechanism where the price increase

has to be related to the cost of production of the newspaper? As far as the question of the Press Commission is concerned, will the Press Commission also make a recommendation with regard to the cost structure so that the prices can be or cannot be increased in relation to the cost of production?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI VASANT SATHE): We have no control on the newspapers as far as their price fixation is concerned. As for the Press Commission, they will go into the entire question and if they recommend certain measure by which we can do something to co-relate the price with the cost, that, of course, will be taken into consideration.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: The total newsprint required for all these newspapers is more than four lakh tonnes out of which approximately 70,000 tonnes is indigenously produced and nearabout 3½ lakh tonnes is imported which bears an import duty also and as a result of that naturally the cost of newspaper is going to rise further here. In view of this, has the Government considered or is considering any proposal to increase the indigenous capacity of our plants so as to do away with the import of newsprint and make available indigenous newsprint at cheap prices? Has the Government so far examined this? The hon. Minister, Mr. Sathe, while inaugurating a conference at Wardha said that the Government is also considering to review the policy of price hike of the newspapers. As far as that is concerned, I would like to know what is that which is under consideration of the Government? Or was it a statement by the Minister as usual without any reference to facts?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: The allegation is as usual.

I have always been saying that as far as price is concerned, after the Supreme Court struck-down the

price page schedule, we have not yet thought of any mechanism by which we can control the prices relating to pages or consumption of newsprint by the newspapers. That is why, we are awaiting the recommendation of the Press Commission on this. As to the indigenous production of newsprint, we are doing everything possible to increase the production of indigenous newsprint. The Karnataka Plant and the Kerala Plant have been set up. But as the Members know, in Kerala due to a longer strike even before the Plant went into operation, there the newsprint could not be produced. Now these are the constraints. When these plants go into operation, we hope that it will ease the requirement of foreign exchange for newsprint.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER: Due to the rise in prices of newsprint and the import duty, it is very difficult for the small and medium newspapers to compete with the large newspapers. Therefore, are the Government thinking of supplying newsprint to the small and medium newspapers, whose circulation is below 50,000, and to the weekly papers also, at subsidised rates? Will the Government give advertisements to the small and medium and weekly papers in a large quantity so that they can compete with the large papers? If that is not done, these small papers are likely to close down which will result in the journalists and other workers being thrown out of job. Bearing this in mind, what are the steps he is going to take?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: As far as the small newspapers are concerned, as the hon. Member knows from the answer itself, they have now been totally exempt from the additional duty by the Finance Minister. So, there will be no burden on the small newspapers. The small newspapers, whose circulation is below 15,000, are totally exempt. Newspapers with a circulation of 15,000 to 50,000 which are called medium newspapers, have

to pay only 5 per cent of the duty, as against 15 per cent for the big newspapers. Therefore, the small and medium newspapers would be in a better position to compete with the bigger newspapers, as far as this relief is concerned. As far as the other reliefs are concerned, we are already giving them. As I have already said, for example, we have now brought the advertisements to language newspapers on par with advertisements to English newspapers. That is a very big and major relief.

PROF. N. G. RANGA: That is so far as dailies are concerned.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Mainly dailies. For periodicals a different set of criteria apply, as far as advertising is concerned. I am talking of advertisement relief that we are giving. As far as the supply of newsprint is concerned, we are now opening depots at State levels so that the small newspapers can get newsprint in sheets at the depot instead of being required to go to a port or head office and get them in rolls.

SHRI XAVIER ARAKAL: The hon. Minister has referred to relief to the newspaper industry, which is one aspect. Another aspect is the availability of newspapers to the common man at reasonable prices. Which are the newspapers which get the maximum benefit out of the schemes mentioned by the hon. Minister? The reality is that the small and medium newspapers do not get much benefit, mainly because of the influence and lobbying of the large chain newspapers. Further, with the rise in prices, it is beyond the capacity of the common man to buy newspapers. The organisations which control the newspaper industry very seldom care for the needs of the common man. Will the Government consider these points as well and ensure that the small and medium and regional newspapers get the maximum benefits from these schemes?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: That is precisely our policy. The idea is to help the small and medium newspapers so that the big organisations of large newspapers do not exploit them.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: But you are on record that 60 per cent of the advertisement revenue goes to the big newspapers.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: That is true. But more was being given in the past. We have now brought it down to 60 per cent. We want to bring it down still further.

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, अखबारों की कीमतों में वृद्धि होने से बहुत सारे समाचारपत्रों और खास तौर से छोटे और मझोले पत्रों की बिक्री में कमी आ गई है तो मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या इस के बारे में आप ने कोई आकलन तैयार किया है और क्या यह बात सच है कि मूल्यों में वृद्धि के कारण छोटे और मझोले बहुत सारे पत्रों ने समाचार एजेंसियों से खबर लेना या तो बन्द कर दिया है या बहुत कम कर दिया है ?

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : और आल इंडिया रेडियो की खबर लेते हैं जो गलत होती है ?

श्री बसन्त साठे : वही तो सही होता है ।

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : मैंने जो पूछा वह लगता है आप ने सुना नहीं ।

श्री बसन्त साठे : नहीं, मैंने सुना है ।

असल बात यह है कि यह जो ड्यूटी लगाई गई है इस से प्रायः छोटे अखबारों पर कोई बोझ नहीं पड़ने वाला है । ... (व्यवधान) ... जब वह सारी ड्यूटी माफ कर दी तो बोझ कैसे बढ़ेगा ?

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : कीमत बढ़ी है... (व्यवधान)...

श्री बसन्त साठे : बोझ से फिर उस का मतलब नहीं है। यानी आप दां चीजों को मत जड़िए। आप ने यह कहा कि ड्यूटी का बोझ लगने से छंटे अखबारों को अपना दाम बढ़ाना पड़ा और उन की बिक्री कम हुई, तो यह बुनियाद में ही आप का कहना गलत है क्योंकि उन पर जो ड्यूटी लगाई गई वह माफ कर दी गई है इसलिए अब उन पर कोई बोझ ड्यूटी का नहीं है।... (व्यवधान)...

श्री रामावतार शास्त्री : दाम बढ़े हैं या नहीं, यह बताइए।

श्री बसन्त साठे : दाम यदि बढ़ा रहे हैं तो उस के कोई और कारण हैं जैसे पालेकर अवार्ड लागू हो गया, इस का उस से कोई ताल्लुक नहीं है। दूसरे जो कारण हैं उस में जैसा मैंने कहा हम राहत दे रहे हैं जितना हम से बन सकता है ऐडवर्टाइजमेंट के रूप में या न्यूजप्रिन्ट उन के घर या स्टेट में पहुंचा कर, इस रूप में हम मदद कर रहे हैं और दूसरे तरह की जितनी मदद हो सकेगी वह हम करेंगे। लेकिन कोई जानबूझ कर दाम बढ़ाना चाहे तो उस पर तो मैंने शुरू में कह दिया कि हमारा कोई कंट्रोल नहीं है।

SHRI CHIRANJI LAL SHARMA: Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister what percentage of the newspaper requirements is met by indigenous production and how much percentage of the requirements is imported.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Seventy thousand indigenous.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: 70,000 indigenous—yes, in terms of thousands. But he is asking in terms of percentage. Can you tell me, as a matter of fact, what is the percentage?

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: 15 per cent indigenous and 85 per cent imported.

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I agree with you. (Interruptions). I am not good at mathematics. 15 per cent is indigenous and 85 per cent is imported.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: He is misleading you.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Vajpayee Ji, I have to get facts from him.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: I am asking a very short question, because there is no time. Would the Government consider stopping the supply of newsprint to those newspapers which are consistently refusing to implement the Palekar Award?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: This is a situation which we will consider.

SHRI K. MAYATHEVAR: Sir, the hon. Minister is very much worried about colour TV. We do not want colour TV. Some people may want it.

The common man is unable to purchase the newspaper nowadays due to unexpected and sudden increase in its price. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government is going to bring or introduce any legislation to bring down the price or stabilise the price or control the price of newspapers from the present abnormal level.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, I do not know if my friend is suffering from jaundice and seeing colour.

SHRI K. MAYATHEVAR: No jaundice...

(Interruptions)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: As far as control is concerned, I can categorically say that we intend to have no control.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Question Hour is over.