

Minister whether an Indo-Iraqi Joint Commission is being proposed and also whether that Joint Commission between India and Iraq will take up joint ventures in third countries?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA: We have already an Indo-Iraq Joint Commission and that Commission will be in session in the last week of this month. Joint ventures with third countries is a very important item and it will be discussed at the meeting.

SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA: When you have admitted in your statement that there is a very big scope for trade between the two countries, may I know the reasons why no agreement has been signed between the two countries?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA: This is simply a matter of formality because we have an agreement already. Another agreement is going to be signed at the end of the conclusion of this discussion to be held in the last week of this month.

SHRI R. S. PANDEY: The hon. Minister has just stated that there is no agreement but, in spite of that, negotiations took place. May I know what are the things that were being exported from our country before these negotiations, like blades, etc.?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA: We are exporting mainly engineering goods and we are getting some oil from that country. Just now, at the moment, a delegation of Project and Equipment Corporation, State Trading Corporation, Handicrafts and Handloom Export Corporation, Electronics Trade and Technology Development Corporation and Delhi Small Industries Development Corporation are visiting that country. From the names of the organizations, the hon. Member can guess the areas and the items of interest for our Iraqi friends.

Calicut Airport

*174. **SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN:** Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the amount earmarked for the construction of an airport in Calicut in the plan outlay for 1976-77; and

(b) if no amount is sanctioned, the reasons for delay in taking a decision in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH): (a) and (b). The project for the construction of an aerodrome at Calicut was included in the draft Fifth Five Year Plan. However, due to increase in the cost of operation consequent on hike in prices of aviation fuel and also to their tight fleet position, Indian Airlines had to review their plans and found themselves unable to operate to Calicut in the Fifth Plan period. The project had therefore to be postponed and no provision has been made in the Annual Plan outlay for 1976-77. Nevertheless, it is proposed to pursue the proposal subject to availability of resources.

SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN: From the hon. Minister's answer, it is understood that no provision has been made in the Plan outlay for 1976-77. May I know when the construction work of airport at Calicut will be commenced and by what time it will be completed?

MR. SPEAKER: He has replied that it would be pursued when the resources position is better.

SHRIMATI BHARGAVI THANKAPPAN: May I know the expenditure to be incurred for the construction of airport at Calicut and the States with which Calicut will be connected by air and the revenue likely to be made after that?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH: I can give the expenditure incurred so far by the Department of Civil Aviation and the State Government in acquiring land, fencing, etc., the expenditure has been of the order of Rs. 26 lakhs. But the entire project has been frozen for the time being; it will be taken up when the Indian Airlines are in a position to start a service to Calicut.

SHRI C. H. MOHAMED KOYA: I am told that Safari Airways are going to have an air link between Calicut and Cochin from Birla airstrip by Dakota. I am sure the Dakotas will be unpopular and then Government will come forward with the argument that the Calicut Airport is not popular. May I get an assurance from the hon Minister that, even if Safari Airways operate Dakotas there, the statistics will not stand in the way of taking up the Calicut airport?

SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH: Some private operators like Safari Airways and one or two others have shown some interest in starting a service to Calicut. For that purpose, we are thinking of developing and improving the existing airstrip at Chilaria—I think, that is what the hon Member mentioned. The proposal is under the consideration of the Department.

Export of Sugar, Cotton and Potatoes

*175. **SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI:**

SHRI D. D. DESAI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether export of sugar, cotton and potatoes in 1975-76 was a record;

(b) if so, the figures thereof; and

(c) whether Government propose to encourage export of other agricultural products and processed foods?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA): (a) and (b). Export statistics for the whole year 1975-76 are not yet available. However, as per present indications, exports of sugar, cotton and potatoes are likely to reach a record level.

(c) The Government's endeavour is to encourage the exports of agricultural products and processed foods to the best extent possible, depending on production, availability for export, prices of the commodities and other factors.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DAS MUNSI: I would like to know from the hon Minister what is the actual assessment of the Ministry with regard to export of sugar in the current year and also who are the important buyers of our sugar?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA: This year we are expected to export 10.37 lakh tonnes of sugar fetching Rs. 422.29 crores. Our importers are various countries like Iran and Egypt and some other parties who are not directly giving to some countries but are distributing to other countries. Many countries of Asia and Europe are taking our sugar, and we have a very good market.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Cost of Production of Indian Tea

*164 **SHRI C. JANARDHANAN:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cost of production of tea is higher in India as compared to the other international producers; and

(b) whether India is likely to lose its dominating position in the international tea market due to the increase in price of tea?