

Increase in the General Freight Rates on India-Pakistan-U.K. Route

*141 SHRI P. K. DEO Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (NAUWAHAN AUR PARIVAHAN MANTRI) be pleased to state

(a) whether a conference between the representatives of India, Pakistan and U.K. was held recently in India regarding freight rates,

(b) if so, the main points discussed at the conference, and

(c) the decisions taken in regard to the proposed increase of 15 per cent in the general freight rates on India-Pakistan-U.K. route?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SANSADIYA KARYA TATHA NAUWAHAN AUR PARIVAHAN MANTRI) (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR)

(a) A delegation of the India-U.K./Continent Conference held discussions with Government in April, 1971

(b) The question of general increase of 15% in freight rates from 1st June, 1971 given notice by the Conference and the withdrawal of London surcharge imposed on 30.11.1970 were discussed.

(c) No decision has been taken so far. It is proposed to hold further discussions with the Conference in this regard shortly.

Excise Duty on Tobacco used in Bidi Manufacture

*142. SHRI D.D. DESAI. Will the Minister of FINANCE (VITTA MANTRI) be pleased to state :

(a) whether the excise duty on leaf tobacco used for manufacture of 'beedis' is higher than the excise duty on leaf tobacco used for the manufacture of cigarettes and snuff,

(b) whether leaf tobacco growers had demanded in the past reduction or at least equalisation of excise duty on 'bidi' and 'cigarette tobacco' and

(c) if so, the steps being taken by Government remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (MANTRAI RAJYA MANTRI) (SHRI K. R. GANESH)

(a) The excise duty on *non-flue-cured* tobacco used for the manufacture of 'beedis' is higher than the excise duty on such tobacco used for the manufacture of cigarettes and snuff, but the excise duty on *flue-cured* tobacco used for the manufacture of 'beedis' and snuff is lower than the excise duty on such tobacco used for the manufacture of cigarettes.

(b) and (c) No Sir. However, tobacco growers from some parts of the country had requested that leaf tobacco grown in their parts and used for the manufacture of 'bidis' should not be subjected to excise duty at a rate higher than that leviable on such tobacco used for chewing, snuff, hookah etc. Government had considered this request, but had not acceded to the same.

Plan to Acquire Ships to Increase Tonnage

*143. SHRI R. R. SINGH DEO : Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (NAUWAHAN AUR PARIVAHAN MANTRI) be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are planning to acquire several ships to increase the country's shipping tonnage;