

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 PARLIAMFN-TARY 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. GANESHI) (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;

(b) if so, the amount involved in purchasing these ships ; and

(c) the total foreign exchange implication of the project ?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMEN-
TARY AFFAIRS, AND SHIPPING AND
TRANSPORT (SANSIDYA KARYA
TATHA NAUWAHAN AUR PARIVAHAN
MANTRI) (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR) :
(a) to (c). Government of India do
not acquire ships themselves but they
approve proposals submitted by Shipping
Companies.

During 1970-71, the acquisition of 26
vessels of 6.05 lakhs GRT costing Rs.
161.44 crores was approved by Government.
After 1.4.1971, acquisition of 3 more vessels
of 1.51 lakhs GRT has also been approved
at a cost of about Rs. 15'00 crores. Pro-
posals submitted by 4 shipping companies
for acquisition of 6 vessels with 2.76 lakhs
GRT costing approximately Rs. 59 crores,
all of it being payable in foreign exchange,
are under various stages of consideration.

{ Hindi Medium in Kendriya
Vidyalayas

*144. SHRI JADEJA : Will the
Minister of EDUCATION AND SOCIAL
WELFARE (SHIKSHA AUR SAMAJ
KALYAN MANTRI) be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have urged
the Kendriya Vidyalayas to switch over to
the Hindi medium from the new academic
year ;

(b) whether this directive of the
Central Government has caused resentment
among parents and teachers of non-Hindi
regions particularly Kerala State ; and

(c) If so, the reaction of Central
Government thereto ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WELFARE (SHIKSHA AUR
SAMAJ KALYAN MANTRALAYA MEN
UP-MANTRI) (SHRI D. P. YADAVA) :
(a) to (c). No, Sir. No such direc-
tive has been issued by the Government.
However, in April, 71, reports appeared in
some sections of the Press giving an
impression that Union Ministry has issued
directives, which would lead to the conver-
sion of the Kendriya Vidyalayas into
completely Hindi-medium Schools. Since
this was not factually correct, a 'Press
Note' was issued immediately contradic-
ting the false reports.

Agreement for Imports under PL. 480
Programme

*145. DR. SARADISH ROY !
SHRI M. M. JOSEPH :

Will the Minister of FINANCE
(VITTA MANTRI) be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have signed
another PL. 480 agreement covering
commodities worth \$ 120 million in April,
1971 ;

(b) if so, the main features thereof ;

(c) whether Government propose to
take positive steps to stop dependence on
480 imports which play an increasing role
in our economic affairs ; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE
(VITTA MANTRI) (SHRI YESWANT
RAO CHAVAN) : (a) and (b). Yes, Sir.
A statement containing a note giving
main features of the Agreement is laid
on the Table of the House. Copies of
the Agreement have been placed in the
Library of the Parliament separately for
the information of the Hon'ble Members,