

The details of these, I will write to the hon. Member. So far as the questionnaire to be sent to hon. Members of Parliament is concerned, I will see that it is sent.

DR. G.S. RAJHANS : In view of the fact that it is a very important Committee, will the hon. Minister consider publishing the questionnaire in newspapers and elicit the opinion of the general public also ?

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY : It is a good suggestion.

I will see that it is published in the newspaper also.

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL VYAS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister how much time has passed since this Committee was set up and what progress has so far been made by the Committee ? Besides, who are the people represented on this Committee ? Is there any proposal to keep M.Ps., M.L.As. and the people from the lower strata on this Committee ? This is one such matter which affects the big people. The people who have been nominated to this committee are delaying the submission of the report. I want to know from the hon. Minister what immediate steps he is going to take to see that its report is submitted as early as possible ?

[English]

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY : The Committee has been set up after the Government of India Resolution dated 13-12-1985. Much time has not elapsed and they are doing their work, and representation has been given. If the hon. Member thinks that more representation should be given, we will look into that. But what I want to tell the hon. Member is this: if they have got any representation to be made, they could send the representation to Dr. Chelliah or to the Committee, and they will look into all these aspects.

Purchase Programme of Jute Corporation of India

*810. **SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL :** Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have received complaints that the purchase programme of the Jute Corporation of India gets delayed and it stops purchasing before October with the result that the farmers are exposed to sale to traders at a low price ;

(b) if so, whether paucity of funds is inhibiting the Corporation to play their full role to give relief to the jute growers ; and

(c) if so, the steps being contemplated to improve the functioning of the Jute Corporation of India particularly its purchase programmes ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN) : (a) A Statement is given below.

(b) & (c). There is no fund constraints for purchase of raw jute/mesta under price support operation as RBI has made available necessary funds to JCI on "as required" basis.

Statement

In order to protect the interests of jute growers and to check fall in raw jute prices Jute Corporation of India (JCI) commenced commercial purchases of raw jute from early, August, 1985. No purchase was called for in July, 1985 as raw jute prices remained well above the operational level. JCI started price support operation as soon as prices come down the support level in mid—September 1985. Price support operation for white and tossa jute continued till end of March, 1986 and for mesta, which comes late in the market, is still continuing. JCI has made a record purchase of about 27.92 lakh bales in the current jute season (1985-86) surpassing all past records.

[Translation]

SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, last year the price of jute bags had risen from Rs. 8 to Rs. 16 but its benefit did not go to the farmers ; the traders cornered the entire benefit. At the same time, the consumer had to suffer because he had to pay a higher price. This had an indirect bearing on the price of other commodities as well. I want to know what steps the Government propose to take to bring improvement in this regard and the time by which such steps would be taken ?

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN : Sir, it has been our effort to see that the Jute Corporation of India purchases jute only from those who actually produce jute. We had sent this proposal to the State Government with the instruction to issue certificates to the jute growers so that jute could be purchased on the basis of those certificates and that nobody else could bring the jute for selling.

So far as purchase is concerned, we continue to purchase jute and this year our purchases have touched a new record of about 28 lakh bales. Besides, it is for the first time that we have built a buffer stock of 6 lakh bales of jute so as to stabilize its price.

SHRI PRAKASH V. PATIL : Its raw material is a good packaging material. What steps Government contemplate to increase its consumption ?

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN : The Government are taking all possible steps. But the difficulty is that the synthetic material is doing a great harm to jute. We have brought it to the notice of the Industry Minister and now it has been decided that a representative each of the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Textile and the Government of West Bengal would sit together and think how balance between the two materials could be struck so that jute is not affected and at the same time synthetic material is also is used.

[English]

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO : Sir, I represent a part of the country where "Mesta" is not only grown in large quantity, but it is also the main crop because it is grown in dry lands by the farmers who own three to five acres of land. The Hon. Minister, in the statement laid on the table of the House has stated that till the end of March 1986 and even later on "Mesta" has been purchased and that too he has stated that record purchases have been made. This record purchase does not matter in certain circumstances because in the three northern districts of Andhra alone the estimated produce this year was 16 lakh quintals. I do not know how much has been purchased from the three northern districts of Andhra alone as far as "Mesta" is concerned. One of the reasons given by the JCI as to why the purchases have not been made is that they do not have godown facilities. The rent that you provide for godown is 25 ps. or 30 ps. which was fixed 15 years back. So, unless you revise the rates, it is not possible to get godowns. I would like to know whether there is a proposal to increase the rates that you pay for godowns, so that you can get to stock them. If not, then at least you can make use of the open agricultural market yards and stock the "Mesta" there. They say that we do not have permission to stock "Mesta" in the open market. So, if you get the permission from the Centre we can have no objection to purchase it. So, you will either have to increase the rent or you will have to allow them to stock it in the open yards. You will have to step up the production because still the plight of the farmers is very very bad. In the next year they will have nothing to put up for their livelihood unless some measures are taken immediately.

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN : As I have already stated, we have made the record purchase this year. The production was also about 100 lakh bales of jute this year. But at the same time when we have started the buffer stocking, this will help in stabilising the prices in future.

Another problem about the godown is that the jute production is very erratic. Sometimes it is 100 lakh bales and sometimes it is much less. So, we have to take the godowns according to the requirement each year. I can assure the Hon. Member that as far as the requirement of the godowns is concerned, we would ensure that the necessary godowns are available for the quantity of jute that we purchase.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI : May I know from the Hon. Minister, while appreciating that the Jute Corporation of India is trying to have more purchase of jute from the farmers, whether the Minister is aware that in Orissa a large number of jute growers had to sell their jute products at distress sales. It was widely discussed in the Assembly and the State Government also tried to bring it to the notice of the Central Government. But the Jute Corporation was not able to purchase adequately from the jute growers of Orissa. Therefore, they lost heavily. Will the hon. Minister think of having a separate headquarter for JCI in Orissa itself so that they can directly go to the farmer and not depend on the middleman who exploits the farmers ?

SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN : It is not the question of opening the headquarters. It is the question of opening the purchase centres. Purchase centres have been opened in all the States. We have been advertising through the medium of television, radio and newspapers that people should not sell their jute in distress because JCI is there to purchase and they will gradually start purchasing jute coming in the market.

Import of Sugar

*811. **SHRI K. RAMACHANDRA REDDY :** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Union Government have ordered the State Trading Corporation to import six lakh tonnes of sugar during this year till September, 1986 ;

(b) the cost at which sugar is being purchased in the foreign markets ; and

(c) the total loss suffered due to high prices of imported sugar and low priced domestic sale ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER) : (a) to (c). A statement is given below.

Statement

- (a) Quantum and schedule of import of sugar is decided after considering domestic stock, production and consumption of sugar, current price and expected trend of its movement in internal market and sugar price in international market. It will not be in public interest to disclose actual quantum and schedule of proposed imports of sugar.
- (b) Sugar is purchased at international market price and its average cost during 1985-86 was Rs. 2222 (provisional) per metric ton on cost, insurance and freight basis.
- (c) Sugar imports are made to meet the domestic requirements and no computation has been made of total profit or loss on account of these imports.

SHRI K. RAMACHANDRA REDDY : Sir, a very peculiar answer has been given. It is an answer which does not answer anything. In part (a) of my question I had asked : Whether Union Government have ordered the State Trading Corporation to import six lakh tonnes of sugar during this year till September, 1986 ? The answer given is that it will not be in public interest to disclose the actual quantum and schedule of proposed import of sugar. I do not know why the Government is secretive and does not want the House to know the facts when the whole world knows it from the newspapers about the quantum of sugar being imported. It is said husband will be the last person to know about the infidelity of the wife. In the same way Government does not want the House to know about the quantum of import of sugar.