

seeds, cotton textiles, leather manufactures and cement received a set back. Major exports which suffered deterioration in 1978-79 were vegetable oils and oilseeds, iron ore, rubber manufactures, textile fabrics, tea and coffee, fruits, vegetables and pulses, cashew kernels, jute manufactures and iron and steel. The adverse trends in exports during this period was mainly due to inadequacy of domestic production and other domestic constraints as well as international developments. In some cases, Government policy deliberately discouraged exports in the wake of fall in production.

(c) The Government is trying to take all possible measures to remove the existing constraints on export production like shortage of power, transport bottlenecks, port congestion and supply of other inputs to increase exportable surpluses. Efforts are also being made to improve our market intelligence abroad and to seek greater market access in foreign countries, particularly in all exporting and developing countries.

Kits and Publicity Albums for Presentation

507. DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Regional Director of Air India advanced during 1978-79 in Swiss Francs over 50 lakhs of rupees to the Regional Director of Tourism to prepare 2,000 presentation kits and publicity albums;

(b) whether this order to produce the kits and albums was placed with one advertising agency in Geneva;

(c) whether this advertising agency and its London-based company have closed down business and are not traceable;

(d) whether Government have enquired into this and fixed the responsibility for the huge loss; and

(e) if so, the steps taken against those found guilty of dereliction of duty and flouting of set norms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI KARTIK ORAON): (a) and (b). The Government of India Tourist Office, Geneva, working in collaboration with Air India under an arrangement called "Operation Europe", had assigned several jobs covering media advertising a research project and production of a sales kit to its advertising agency M/s Knight Keeley of Geneva, as part of its publicity promotional campaign for the year 1978-79. To enable the agency to complete the work, advances totalling SF 681,000 (approx. Rs. 35 lakhs) were made to the agency from time to time during the year. The agency is reported to have completed work amounting to about SF 256,500 (approx. Rs. 13 lakhs). The balance of the work has not been completed.

(c) The advertising agency in Geneva is reported to have severed its connection with the London-based company some time during 1974-75. It is reported that this advertising agency has closed down its business in Geneva and the whereabouts of Mr. Jim Vakeel, who is said to be its sole proprietor are not known.

(d) and (e). Government have already initiated action to examine the case in detail with a view to fixing responsibility and taking such action as may be found necessary.

Appointment of a Panel to go into the Causes of the Increase in Prices of Essential Commodities

508. SHRI FAROOQ ABDULLAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government have appointed a panel to go into the causes of the increase in prices of essential commodities and suggest measures to check them;

(b) whether inspite of this the prices are increasing and the artificial shortage of essential commodities have also been reported; and

(c) if so, by what time Government are able to check the increasing trend of price rise?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c). Does not arise.

Sale Prices of Edible Oils in the Country

509. SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state

(a) whether it is a fact that the price trend of edible oil in the country is showing that difficult days are ahead;

(b) what are the selling prices of each variety of edible oil in the country;

(c) whether it is a fact that State Trading Corporation is not releasing cheaper imported palmoleine and RBD palm oil to the consumers who have to depend on high priced indigenous oil; and

(d) whether Government have considered the feasibility of creating an oil buffer and introduce a dual price system?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c). The prices of certain types of edible oils have shown

an increasing trend recently; the retail prices of important edible oils as on 29.2.1980 at certain selected centres are given in the Statement. However, the Government have taken a number of steps to make edible oils available to the consuming public in adequate quantities and at reasonable prices. Imported edible oils including Palmolein and RBD Palm Oil are being supplied to the State Governments for sale to the consumers through licensed Fair Price Shops. The State Governments have been requested to energise and reactivate the Public Distribution System in their respective territories. Moreover, STC had also been undertaking market intervention through commercial sale of edible oils from time to time at certain selected centres with a view to keep the prices in check. The Vanaspati industry has been permitted to use as much as 95 per cent of its raw oils input for manufacture of Vanaspati, through purchase of imported oils from the STC, so as to lessen the pressure of demand on the indigenous oils and make the latter available in greater quantities for direct consumption. The State Governments have also been told to strictly implement the provisions of Storage Control Order, and to take action under law against any person who is found indulging in hoarding, profiteering etc.

(d) The quantum of imports by STC also includes the quantities required to be kept in stock as a sort of buffer to ensure uninterrupted supply to the State Governments for Public Distribution System, and to other major consumers. At present, there is no proposal to introduce dual-pricing system in edible oils.