

(v) Statement No. XIV—Eleventh Session, 1974.

(vi) Statement No. XIII—Twelfth Session, 1974.

(vii) Statement No. XVII—Thirteenth Session, 1975.

(viii) Statement No. I—Fifteenth Session, 1976.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-10407/76.]

REVIEW & ANNUAL REPORT OF HINDUSTAN ZINC LTD., UDAIPUR FOR 1974-75

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following papers (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (1) of section 619A of the Companies Act, 1956:

(1) Review by the Government on the working of the Hindustan Zinc Limited, Udaipur (Rajasthan) for the year, 1974-75.

(2) Annual Report of the Hindustan Zinc Limited, Udaipur (Rajasthan) for the year 1974-75 along with the Audited Accounts and the comments of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-408/76.]

LIMESTONE AND DOLOMITE MINES LABOUR WELFARE FUND (AMDT.) RULES, 1975 EMPLOYEES' FAMILY PENSION (AMDT.) SCHEME, 1976, ANNUAL REPORT OF CENTRAL BOARD FOR WORKERS EDUCATION FOR 1974-75 & NOTIFICATIONS.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): I beg to lay on the Table:—

(1) A copy of the Limestone and Dolomite Mines Labour Welfare Fund (Amendment) Rules, 1975 (Hindi and English versions) published in Notification No. G.S.R. 255 in Gazette of India dated the 21st February, 1976, under sub-section (4) of section 18 of the Limestone and Dolomite Mines Labour

Welfare Fund Act, 1972. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10409/76].

(2) A copy of the Employees' Family Pension (Amendment) Scheme, 1976 (Hindi and English versions) published in Notification No. G.S.R. 182 in Gazette of India dated the 7th February, 1976, under sub-section (2) of section 7 of the Employees' Provident Funds and Family Pension Fund Act, 1952, together with an explanatory memorandum. (Placed in Library. See No. LT-10410/76].

(3) A copy of the Annual Report (Hindi and English versions) of the Central Board for Workers Education for the year 1974-75. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10411/76.]

(4) A copy each of the following Notifications (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (3) of section 37 of the Apprentices Act, 1961:—

(i) The Apprenticeship (Second Amendment) Rules, 1976, published in Notification No. G.S.R. 38(E) in Gazette of India dated the 23rd January, 1976.

(ii) The Apprenticeship (Amendment) Rules, 1976, published in Notification No. G.S.R. 125 in Gazette of India dated the 24th January, 1976. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-10412/76].

12.01 hrs.

77

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

SUPPORT PRICES OF VITAL AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA (MARMAGOA): I call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement:

"Need for urgent and widespread purchases by Government to support prices of vital agricultural commodities."

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI ANNA-SHAHEB P. SHINDE):** Mr. Speaker, Sir, a statement has been circulated by me already. Though the basic points remain the same, there is some slight modification in the statement which I am reading. I would, therefore, seek your permission to make those changes.

Prices of agricultural commodities have shown a fall over the last one year or so and prevailing prices are generally lower than those at the corresponding time last year. Government is fully conscious of the need to prevent an undue decline in prices of agricultural commodities. As hon. Members are aware, Government is already following a policy of giving price support to major foodgrains and important commercial crops. In the case of foodgrains, procurement prices are fixed which operate as support prices. Further, for cotton and jute minimum support prices and for sugarcane, minimum prices payable by sugar factories to cane growers are fixed. These prices are determined on the advice of the Agricultural Prices Commission.

Consequent on very encouraging kharif prospects and the anticipated decline in prices, the Government of India particularly alerted the State Governments in early October, 1975 asking them to make adequate arrangements for making support purchases, whenever and whenever necessary. Extensive purchases of foodgrains are accordingly being made by the Food Corporation of India, the State Governments and other public agencies to ensure that the market prices of foodgrains do not go below the level of procurement prices. As a result of purchase operations, the procurement target of 46 million tonnes fixed for rice for 1975-76 season has already been exceeded. More purchases are being made. There is no restriction on the

movement of coarse grains and, as a support measure, a quantity of 2.5 lakh tonnes has been purchased at procurement prices. For wheat a quantity of over 4 million tonnes has been procured during 1975-76 marketing season. Despite the recent fall, the prevailing prices of foodgrains of fair average quality are generally above the procurement prices fixed by the Government.

In case of sugarcane, the prices actually paid by sugar factories to cane growers are always higher than the minimum prices.

Since the market prices of kapas are ruling above the support level, the question of undertaking prices support operations by the Cotton Corporation does not arise. However, the Cotton Corporation of India is at present making purchases of cotton at market prices on behalf of National Textile Corporation for meeting part of their requirements. Besides, purchases of cotton are being undertaken by the Maharashtra State Cooperative Marketing Federation under their monopoly procurement scheme.

In the case of jute, current prices are above the statutory minimum prices. However, price support operations were considered necessary during the peak marketing period in October-November 1975 when market prices in some primary markets hovered around the minimum prices. Up to 27th February, 1976 the Jute Corporation of India had purchased a quantity of 5.81 lakh bales of raw jute. Bulk of the purchases have been made under price support operations.

The price position of the entire range of oilseeds and oils is under continual review of the Government. The Government of Gujarat have announced market purchase of groundnut-in-shell, through the co-operative agencies at Rs 150 per quintal. Government of India is also considering further steps for checking the fall in prices of groundnut and other oilseeds and, as a result, the oil prices have picked up.

With a view to checking undue fall in the prices of potatoes, the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation has been entrusted with the responsibility of purchasing and exporting about 30,000 tonnes of exportable varieties of potatoes from the States of Punjab, Haryana and U.P. The Food Corporation of India has also been asked to undertake commercial purchases of potatoes.

Hon. Members would recall that there had been a steep rise in prices of agricultural commodities during the inflationary period of 1972-74. The recent fall in prices represents, to an extent, the process of normalisation of the price situation. Agricultural production plays a very vital role in the economic development of the country and Government is fully conscious of the need for stabilising the prices of major agricultural commodities. Whenever necessary credit policy followed by the Reserve Bank is adjusted to meet the requirements of the situation. Remunerative prices are being ensured to the producers to prevent an undue decline in the prices. The Government of India is keeping a close and constant watch on the price situation and prices of agricultural commodities. All possible measures will be taken to protect the interests of the producers.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Sequeira. I think you should be brief. You should not take more than three minutes.

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA : I do not think it will be possible because as I speak you will realise that.

MR. SPEAKER: I know if you prepare yourself, you can make your points.

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA: I will make my points and I will take as much time as is necessary.

The first thing I would like to say is that the fact that this Government's attitude to agricultural prices is doing too little too late is borne out by the fact that even with reference to the call attention motion, the Govern-

ment has to modify the statement that is presented to the Members one hour earlier, by making a different statement on the floor of the House.

If you read the statement, you will come to the conclusion that everything is well with the agricultural prices in the country. But all of us know that the position is quite different. And if you go through the Economic Survey itself, you will find that with reference to wheat, Government itself admit that the purchase price, the procurement price is acting as a support price in many cases and yet, inspite of this, the procurement in the kharif season has been less than the target fixed by the Agricultural Prices Commission.

Again, with reference to rice, Government admit that in many parts of the country, procurement has assumed the character of a support operation. And, yet, the Agricultural Prices Commission's target of 5.3 million tonnes has been scaled down to 4.6 million.

It is no secret to anybody in this country to-day that agricultural prices have been falling and in many cases they have been falling below the prices the Government say, should act as support prices. For example, in November, with the arrival of the early Kharif, rice fell by Rs. 40 to Rs. 120, wheat by Rs. 45 to Rs. 150. In Karnataka hybrid maize in the end of November fell by Rs. 80 to between Rs. 70 to Rs. 80 while the cost of production determined by the Agricultural Department in Karnataka is Rs. 100. Mr. Shinde himself on the 23rd of November, in Bangalore, gave an assurance that the Government was prepared to buy the entire quantity that was available, at the prices fixed by the Agricultural Prices Commission.

Against this, please look at our performance. Our kharif production this year is estimated at 70 million tonnes which is a record. It is also estimated that rice production has crossed 40.7 million tonnes, also another record. It was estimated that the marketable surplus will be 27 million tonnes. These are all government figures. Against

[Shri Erasmo De Sequeira]

that the procurement has been a meagre 4.6 million tonnes upto February.

I read now a cutting from the Tribune of Chandigarh. I will read only half a paragraph. This is dated Bombay, February 27.

"Prices of rabi foodgrains and oil seeds including wheat, dal, gram and some other coarse grains have registered a sharp fall of 30-40 per cent at the wholesale level during the last few weeks."

The prices are still falling.

The agricultural prices wholesale index for foodgrains on the 24th of January was 323. On the 14th of February it was 316 and on the 21st of February, which is the latest figure available, it has come below 300—it has gone to 295.3. The rabi crop, as we all know, is due. Government's own estimate is that rabi this year will be between 43 and 44 million tonnes. I had asked in this Call Attention the need for urgent and widespread purchases of foodgrains. Against this Government talks about what it has done and it presents the view that everything is well. As I have demonstrated to you, this is absolutely incorrect. This is nothing more than misleading this House and this country. Therefore, I want to ask the Government, what it is doing—

1. To increase immediately the storage capacity that is available. According to the Chairman of the FCI, the present capacity is 8 million. He can increase the capacity to 10 million tonnes if he squeezes the stocks and he had given an assurance that private storage will be sought, if necessary, to increase the storage capacity.
2. Whether they will give us an assurance on the floor of this House that they will purchase whatever agricultural commodities are available in the market, whatever surplus is available in the coming rabi—

43 to 44 million tonnes, and they will also give us an assurance that they will stabilise the price level at least at the price level prevailing at this moment.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: I have already submitted that Government would like to protect the interests of the producers of this country and that is why we announced the procurement prices and mass purchases are being made by the public sector agency—F.C.I. The hon. Member while putting some of the queries made a statement which is factually not correct. He even said, procurement for instance is not going on well. I can submit for the information of the hon. House, for the first time we are having not only prospects of record production, but we are likely to have a record procurement in the history of this country and procurement is still on. Kharif season goes on up to October end. We have come very close to 5 million tonnes and we still expect 7 to 10 lakh tonnes out of Kharif production. This was never the position in any year in the past during the last 25 years.

As far as rabi is concerned, we anticipate very good procurement prospects because the rabi crop is also good and all machinery is geared to see that the procurement operation is carried on everywhere. Procurement operation covers paddy which is 40 to 45 per cent of the total production. Wheat is also 25 to 30 per cent of the total production. Then with coarse grains—maize, jawar, bajra and wheat and rice almost cover 90 per cent of grains. Even in case of barley which is very small part of the total production, Government is thinking as to what could be done to see when ensuing barley arrival starts in the market how to support and help the farmer. Government of India's position is very clear in this. The agricultural economy plays a very important role in the economic development of this country and, therefore, the Government of India would like

to see that producers' interests are protected. All public sector agencies and others and State Governments are aware of this position and we will take necessary steps whenever needed.

Even about the storage, I must admit very frankly, because of the massive procurement operations carried on by us, the storage position is found to be inadequate. We are taking all steps necessary for this purpose. So far as grains of fair average quality is concerned, we propose to purchase the same and no grain would be rejected by Government of India and State Governments. We will see that in every nook and corner of the country these operations are carried on. About increasing the storage capacity etc we will see how this can be done because various technicians and technical experts have invented very modern and very easy techniques. We will see how schools and colleges could be utilised temporarily during vacation and procurement will not be allowed to suffer because of storage difficulties.

**SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA :**  
 Regarding price stabilisation is the Government prepared to give an assurance?

**SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE:** It is covered in my reply.

**श्री मूल कब डागा (पाली) :** अध्यक्ष महोदय भारत सरकार ने अब तक जितने आश्वासन दिये हैं—उनको देखते हुए यदि सिंगे साहब मेरे प्रश्नों का स्पष्ट उत्तर दे दें तब मुझे तसल्ली होगी क्योंकि यहाँ तो केवल बोलने पर रेस्ट्रिक्शन है. . . .

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप सबाल पूछिये ।

**श्री मूलकब डागा :** मेरा पहला सवाल यह है—हिन्दुस्तान की सरकार बतलाये उसके पास साइन्टिफिक तरीके पर खाद्य पदार्थों के भाव मुकर्रर करने का कौन सा उद्दीका है? हिन्दुस्तान में जितने क्लान भाग आताते हैं,

सब भाग में जाते हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ— अब आपने मक्खंदूरी बढ़ा दी, सिचाई की दरें बढ़ गईं, बिजली की दरें बढ़ गईं, फ्रिटिलाइजर के भाव बढ़ गये, तब कौन सा साइन्टिफिक तरीका है, जिससे आप एग्नीकल्चर प्रोड्यूस का भाव मुकर्रर करते हैं? मैं तो यह चाहता हूँ कि इस पार्लियामेंट की एक कमेटी होनी चाहिए—आप का एग्नीकल्चर प्राइस कमीशन जो भी रेट फिक्स करे यह कमेटी उसकी जांच करे—तब हम आप के भाव मन्जूर कर सकते हैं वरना हम आप के द्वारा मुकर्रर किये हुए भावों को नहीं मानते ।

दूसरी बात—आप के पास कितनी ढीलन है कितना पैसा आपके खजाने में है जिससे आप सब प्रोक्पोर कर लेंगे। आप ने पहले घोखा दिया—आपने कहा था रॉ-काटन खरीदने के लिये 300 करोड़ रुपया दिया जायेगा लेकिन 10 करोड़ भी नहीं दिया। इस लिये आप अपनी जुबान से कोई आश्वासन मत दीजिये ।

तीसरी बात—फ़ुड कारपोरेशन आफ इण्डिया की जो मशीनरी है—क्वालिटी के आधार पर यह खराब क्वालिटी है यह अच्छी क्वालिटी नहीं है—इन सब के लिये कितनी मशीनरी बढ़ा दी है? कितना अनाज इस दफा हुआ है कितनी आप के पास ढीलन है और इसके लिये कितनी मशीनरी आप ने बढ़ा दी है ।

मेने पीछे ये उत्तर प्रदेश वाले बँटे हैं— कह रहें थे आज वहा कोई आलु खरीदने वाला नहीं है बाजार की हालत खराब है— लेकिन आप कहते हैं—आल-पासिबिल-एफर्ट्स-बुड-बी-डन ।

**श्री रामभू नाथ (वीरपुर) :** 1 रुपये का पाँच किस्से बिक रहा है ।

श्री मूलचंद डागा : मैं काश्तकारों के हित में आप से पूछना चाहता हूँ—फ़ूड कारपोरेशन आफ इण्डिया ने कितनी मशीनरी बढ़ा दी है, कितना रुपया आप ने उनको दिया है और क्वालिटी के मामले में उनका क्या निर्णय है ?

जो भी फ़ूड आप खरीदना चाहते हैं—क्या डिस्ट्रिक्ट लेवल पर जो सोशल वर्कर्स हैं, चाहे कांग्रेस के काम करने वाले हों या दूसरी पार्टियों के हों, उनको इस काम में इन्वाल्व करेंगे, उनकी मार्फ़्त खरीदेंगे ताकि मिडिल-मैन को एलिमिनेट किया जा सके ? आप जब तक ऐसा नहीं करेंगे तब तक हमें आप के आश्वासनों में कोई मन्नोर नहीं होगा।

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : I would like to share the concern of the hon. Member as far as producers' interests are concerned. But, one has to understand and take a balanced view of the whole thing because there has been a fall of 24.2 per cent in the prices of cereals over the last one year. Between 1972-73 and 1975, there was a general rise of 89 per cent in the prices of cereals and when all the forces of inflation were getting out of control, the whole economy was getting distorted.

So, one has to visualise first of all the general back ground in which we are taking a view in regard to this matter.

श्री मूलचंद डागा : मैं ने स्पैनिफ़िक मवाल किया उसका आप स्पैसिफ़िक रिप्लाइ दिलाइये। यह जनरल रिप्लाइ है जो मंत्री जी दे रहे हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मुझ पर छोड़िये। मैं देखूंगा।

You should be brief.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : Now, the first question that the hon.

Member has asked is this. What are the principles on the basis of which the agricultural commodity prices are determined. The hon. Member himself is aware and the House is also well aware of the fact that we have the Agricultural Prices Commission, a very well-established institution—one may or may not agree with the Commission's recommendations that is a different thing—which goes into the cost of production data and then takes a view in the matter. (Interruptions)

श्री मूलचंद डागा : हिन्दुस्तान की 75 परसेंट पॉपुलेशन के साथ खिलवाड़ होगी।

MR. SPEAKER : You should hear him.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : Even the cost of production data is made available to them. There are now units, as I mentioned earlier, in the country for collecting the index of the working class cost of living. Similarly we have now set up units all over the country and, with the help of the agricultural universities and other specialist economic organisations who collect the cost of data of the agricultural commodities, that data is computerised and made available to the A. P. C. On the basis of the data available to them and various broad considerations of the economy, they make their recommendations. Those reports are already available to the hon. Members. If they want any report, I am quite prepared to make that report available to them. Those reports are placed in the Library. Then the Government takes a decision on the basis of the recommendation of this commission. The other query raised by him is whether those are made available to carry on the procurement operations. He complained of inadequacy of funds. I can assure him and the House that as far as procurement operations are concerned, Government has given this general assurance to this country in regard to the procurement prices for these agricultural commodities

when the prices are announced; we are committed to this policy that we will be purchasing the foodgrains commodities in regard to which the procurement prices are announced. No lack of funds or inadequacy of funds would be allowed to come in the way; we are fully conscious of this matter; funds will not come in the way.

In regard to the other matter which the hon. Member raised namely that adequate fund for cotton is not available, I would say that there the difference was that it would be purchased at a higher price and not at the procurement price. The Reserve Bank did not agree with this proposition to make credits available for that. As far as purchase operations at procurement level and minimum support level are concerned, funds will not come in the way. I can give this general assurance to the country.

SHRI M. C. DAGA : This general assurance will not do.

कितना फंड अवैलएबल किया जायगा और  
 कितना माल पैदा हुआ है ?

MR. SPEAKER : Necessary funds will be available. He said it already.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : We are really a great country and we have adequate resources to meet any contingency. So, the hon. Members need not have any apprehension in their minds as far as the procurement operations are concerned.

SHRI H. M. PATEL (Dhandhuka): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would first of all like to question the statement made by the hon. Minister that the Agricultural Prices Commission takes into account the cost of production of the farmers. I do not think that that is correct. He says that there are available figures of cost of production and they go according to them. I would like to know where these reports on costs of production are and whether, in fact, he can say that the procurement price had any relation what so ever to the cost of production or they go by other considerations. I would

like you to please explain to us in full details the precise basis on which the A. P. C. fixes the prices. Have they ever set this out in their reports?

However, I am not going further into that. It is clear that that is not so. Then I find that Rs. 105/- is the procurement price of wheat for 1975-76. That is the declared price. In the statement that was read out from the market report for February, it seems that there had been a fall Rs. 100 in the price of wheat and, yet, it was well above the procurement price.

What kind of procurement price is this which even after a fall of over 100 within a matter of few week is still above the procurement price, and yet you say in many places the procurement price has become support price. Something is not proper. In fact, prices have fallen right down to even below procurement prices. I would like then to know what is your procurement machinery? Does the Food Corporation buy from the farmers? How many procurement places are there? Do they buy from district or taluka headquarters? How far do they expect the farmers to take their produce to be able to sell the same? In fact, in most cases the FCI must be buying from the traders. They do not buy from the farmers and the farmers in many parts of the country are compelled to sell their produce to traders below the procurement price fixed by the Government. This is a well-known thing, and it is not fair to farmers.

I would like the hon. Minister to give information to this House of this simple nature as to what purchases have been made by the Food Corporation of India week after week during the Rabi harvesting season, what prices have been paid and what are the prevailing prices in different market centres. This will be interesting information for this House to have regularly during this season, though as I said before even that will not be a sufficient assurance that the farmers are not compelled to sell their produce below the procurement price. This is an investigation which you might like to make.

[Shri H. M. Patel]

Sir, the Minister said that the target fixed for the procurement of kharif crop and of rabi crop by the Agricultural Prices Commission was reduced by the Government. Now, they have decided to purchase more than what they had fixed but still they have not reached the target fixed by the Agricultural Prices Commission. So, will the Minister say that they will go on purchasing irrespective of the target whatever quantities that are offered and at far more places than those from which the FCI is at present making purchases so that the prices do not go below the procurement prices anywhere in the country? This is the major assurance one would like to have.

During this period they have continued with their policy of importing foodgrains. Has it any effect on prices, making them go down yet further? Where was the necessity of continuing the imports during this period when the possibility of procuring far larger quantities than the target fixed were available? Why did you not purchase far more quantities within the country and thereby enabled the farmers in this country to obtain somewhat more remunerative prices, bearing in mind the high prices which the farmers had to pay for fertilisers and other inputs which they buy?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: As far as one of the important points raised by the hon. member is concerned, as to whether Government would give a broad assurance that in any part of the country procurement would be made by Government at the different centres at procurement prices, I can say very positively that we will take care that in co-operation with State Governments that all grain of fairly average quality offered by producers would be procured at procurement prices and no grain will now be rejected anywhere, if it is of fairly average quality. But occasions do arise, for instance, last year some

wheat was not sold earlier by farmers started arriving in the market when there were good prospects came in the market, some reports appeared that it was weeviled wheat. Naturally weeviled wheat will not be acceptable to consumers anywhere. These are exceptional cases. By and large, Government would take care to see that the interests of producers is protected and we will procure at market centres, because these operations are carried on in important mandies of the country so that farmers are not required to go to district or regional headquarters. These operations are carried on in natural mandis, and these would be carried on all over the country.

SHRI H. M. PATEL: How many procurement mandies are there in the country?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: I have already mentioned in my mam statement that we have alerted State Governments that if in any centre, in any market, prices go below the procurement price level, either they should themselves step in or ask the Food Corporation of India to do so. We have fully geared the FCI machinery to undertake these operations, both the administrative machinery, staff and other necessary prerequisites.

The hon. member raised the question on what principles the prices are fixed. He is a very enlightened member with a lot of experience in administration also. He should go through the reports of the APC which I would commend for his reading. Naturally the cost of production data are one of the important criteria taken into consideration in determining prices. Naturally, we have to take economic factors into account. These are the principles on which APC makes its recommendations.

Then he asked. Suppose prices fall by Rs. 100 or Rs. 105 and Government do not think it fit to intervene, what will happen? These are exceptional cases of deficit States where prices had



shot up to Rs. 250 and Rs. 260 a quintal. Now these are distortions in the economy, and naturally as a result of a bumper crop now expected, the prices will come down to Rs. 120, Rs. 150, which are above the procurement; prices of wheat in surplus areas. I do not think that should really cause undue concern to hon. members. One can have differences as to what should be the reasonable level of prices, honest differences. That is a different thing.

SHRI H. M. PATEL: I linked it up with prices of inputs which still continue to be very high. I did not necessarily suggest that these distorted price rises should influence your decisions. But certainly the price rise of inputs has not still come down anywhere near the fall in prices of foodgrains.

MR. SPEAKER: You need not explain it. He has followed it. Let us not make it a debate.

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA: No, there should be a dialogue.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: Then the other point was whether import of foodgrains was having any adverse influence on prices in the local market, depressing prices. Broadly, I can say that these imports should not directly have an impact on prices because these are not thrown into the market. We are putting them in buffer. Honourable members will appreciate that the world food situation is so bad that a country like India cannot afford to take any risk and get into the clutches of some foreign Powers. Therefore, we are taking abundant precautions and whatever imports are made should not really directly affect local market trends. In fact, a large part of the procurement as well as imports are getting into the buffer stock. Also most of these imports are on account of previous commitments

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Deb.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: By and large, I assure the House, though I share their concern, that they should not really feel that Government are not taking adequate measures.

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA: One important point has been left out. We asked him to report to the Houses prices till date. What has he to say about that?

MR. SPEAKER: Leave something for Shri Deb also to ask.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: If any hon. Member wants any information, and if he tells me, I am prepared to pass on that information.

SHRI ERASMO DE SEQUEIRA: Let it be given to the House, not to any one personally.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE: Unless the Speaker so directs, how is it to be done?

SHRI DASARATHA DEB (Tripura East): The hon. Minister says that the procurement price is the minimum support price for the agricultural commodities. In this respect, I cannot agree with the hon. Minister. In the eastern region, in Assam, Bihar, Eastern U.P. etc. inspite of the fact that procurement price for paddy was fixed at Rs. 75 per quintal, paddy was being sold at Rs. 50-60 per quintal which is much below the procurement price. This sort of thing could not support the small agriculturists. Have the government investigated or will they investigate whether the fixed procurement price is being paid to the agriculturists in all the states?

The hon. Minister says that the cost of production is also one of the factors to be considered when fixing the minimum price for any agricultural product. I say that it should be not only the cost of production of the agricultural commodity but also the general price of other things which the agriculturist has to buy for his day-to-day requirements. If the price level of agricultural products falls to a

[Shri Dasaratha Deb]

much too low level in comparison to the price level of other things which he has to buy, how is the government going to ensure that the agriculturist does not meet with ruin? Take for instance the price of cotton. In 1974-75 the price of cotton was Rs. 200 per quintal; it has come down to Rs. 100 per quintal whereas the price of cloth remains as high as it was last year. How are you going to benefit the agriculturist by fixing a minimum price for cotton without reducing the price of cloth? Now, mustard seed was selling at Rs. 250 per quintal in 1973-74.

MR. SPEAKER: Let us not go into too many details; one example is enough.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB: I am saying that its price has now come down to Rs. 125/- per quintal. Two years before coconuts were selling at Rs. 1300 per thousand; now they sell at 500 per thousand. Potatoes are now selling at Rs. 25-30 per maund compared to Rs. 60 sometime ago. My question is this. What steps do the government propose to protect all the agriculturists who are producing these things?

Further, jute is an important crops in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam and Bihar, they account for almost half the total jute production in India. Jute is being sold at Rs. 35-50 per maund this year whereas the peasants are demanding Rs. 100 per quintal as the minimum price.

Here the report says that the Jute Corporation of India are operating in the market. I know how they are operating.

MR. SPEAKER: You have already taken 10 minutes. I gave you three or four minutes. Mr. Sequeira co-operated with me. Now you are taking more time. You straightway ask the question.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB: The Minister should consider procuring jute

from the small market, on the road-side. The Jute Corporation should purchase jute from the road-side. You will always find a difference between the small local market price and the godown price. My question is whether the Jute Corporation is going to reach the village level to procure jute. If that is not done, by mere fixing up the price for this commodity, the small and marginal holders are not going to get that price. I want to know the steps the Government is going to take in that respect.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: About jute I would not like to add anything to my original statement except one point that we are interested in ensuring the Minimum price to the jute producers at the primary level at Mandis and that would be our effort. The hon. Member made a general statement that the prices of paddy, in the Eastern States, are falling below the procurement price. In fact, he mentioned about U.P., Bihar and West Bengal. Last year, the price of rice in Bihar was ranging from Rs. 200 to Rs. 220 per quintal. This price can be converted into paddy price. This year its price is Rs. 140 to Rs. 162.0. Then in West Bengal it was Rs. 175 to Rs. 188.0 last year. Now it is Rs. 157 to Rs. 160.0

MR. SPEAKER: You can tell about Tripura and Assam.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: The same statement broadly applies there also. As far as our information goes, the market prices have not been below the procurement price and we have requested the State Governments to step in immediately if the prices go below the procurement price. That is our approach in future also. Then the hon. Member referred to the question of parity between the manufactured goods and agricultural commodities. I can say, by and large, that if 1961-62 is taken as base of 100, the present index of industrial goods of course I have got the figures for April-December 1975—is 247.6. If there is any change in the last three months,

it will be marginal, that is, one or two points. As far as agricultural commodities are concerned, it is 288.3. This is the latest figure, that is, last month. In respect of individual commodities, I cannot say whether in terms of trade, it is in favour of agriculture or in favour of manufactured goods. The general index position is that it is still marginally in favour of producers. So far as the procurement policy is concerned—it is an All India policy—we have to apply it to the country as a whole including Tripura and Assam.

12.44 hrs.

PONDICHERRY BUDGET, 1976-77—  
GENERAL DISCUSSION AND  
DEMANDS\* FOR GRANTS 1976-77

MR SPEAKER We now take up discussion on the budget and also the Demands for Grants of the State of Pondicherry.

DEMAND NO 1—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs 3,32,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1977 in respect of 'Legislative Assembly'."

DEMAND NO 2—ADMINISTRATOR

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs 10,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1977 in respect of 'Administrator'."

DEMAND NO. 3—COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 1,19,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1977 in respect of Council of Ministers'."

DEMAND NO 4—ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs 16,18,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1977 in respect of Administration of Justice'."

DEMAND NO 5—ELECTIONS

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 1,97,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending the 31st day of March, 1977 in respect of Elections'."

DEMAND NO 6—REVENUE

MR SPEAKER Motion moved

"That a sum not exceeding Rs. 63,95,000 on Revenue Account be granted to the President out of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to defray the charges which will come in course

\*Moved with the recommendation of the President.  
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