

Procurement of Rubber

*6. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:†
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Kerala State Government has urged the Central Government to ask the State trading Corporation (STC) to procure additional 20,000 tonnes of rubber at the benchmark price to avoid an imminent crash in prices of the commodity; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Govt. of India has authorised State Trading Corporation of India to procure 30,000 MT of Natural Rubber on Government Account.

Further, imports of Natural Rubber were banned in February, 1999 even against Advance Licences. At present, therefore, procurement of Natural Rubber by STC for supply against Advance Licences is continuing.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Sir, the answer given in the question is not a clear answer. What I had asked was whether the Central Government had been urged by the Kerala State Government to procure additional 20,000 tonnes of rubber at the bench-mark price. In the reply, what the Minister had stated is that the Government of India has authorised the State Trading Corporation to procure 30,000 MT of natural rubber on Government Account. The Government has already instructed the State Trading Corporation to purchase the required quantity of raw rubber. It is at that time that the State Government had made the request that an additional quantity of 20,000 metric tonnes would have to be purchased. The question whether the Central Government had issued any such order on the basis of that request is not clear from this reply. If no such order has been issued, will the hon. Minister take steps to issue such an order?

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: On the initial request of the Government, merely keeping in mind the rubber position globally, the STC was given orders to procure 10,000 MT of rubber.

After this measure was found insufficient, the Kerala Government again approached us. and instructions were given for a further procurement of 20,000 MTs of rubber by the STC. It is this 20,000 MTs that has been reflected in the answer. Together with this 20,000 MTs, uptill now, the STC has procured 30,000 MTs of rubber in order to protect the domestic rubber producers in Kerala.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Sir, in order to keep the price in the market at a reasonable level, it is necessary that a portion of the total quantity of rubber has to be exported. Has the STC taken any steps to export a certain quantity of rubber?

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, this question is with regard to procurement of rubber. As far as the export of rubber is concerned, we should be able to match it with the global price. The only reasons we are being forced to procure rubber by the STC is because, globally, rubber prices are much lower. So, if we are going to procure at much higher prices in order to protect the rubber industry, at those prices, it will not be possible for us to export because we are procuring it at a much higher price than the price at which rubber is available in the world market. As and when rubber prices globally, got stabilised, we will then start looking at the question of exporting rubber.

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Sir, taking into consideration the surplus stock available in India, and also the fall in price of natural rubber, import of rubber against advance licence was banned in February this year. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether such a ban is still in operation. If not, what is the quantity of natural rubber imported since February, 1999.

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, such a ban is still in operation. The STC is, in fact, procuring rubber on the basis of indents received from advance licence holders. So, in a limited way, we are still procuring rubber. But, as far as the ban on import is concerned, even on the basis of advance licence, the ban still continues to hold.

PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Sir, the rubber growers are very much affected as the price of rubber has gone down. The rubber growers in Kerala and in a part of Kanyakumari district are suffering a lot. The steps taken by the Government are not sufficient to ensure their growth and their existence. What further steps the Government propose to take in this regard?

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, this is the only step we can take. We are buying what they are producing, at the cost price; otherwise, they would not be able to get it if the Government was not intervening and was not procuring rubber from the rubber producers. They would be forced to sell at a cost much below their production cost. If the hon. Member feels that this measure is not enough, I welcome his suggestions as to what more measures we should take to protect the domestic rubber industry.

SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Sir, I would like to point out to hon. Minister that it is not unknown for commodities to be exported with subsidies from the Government. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether he would consider exporting subsidy even...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Exporting subsidy!

SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA:.... giving subsidies so that it can meet the international price.

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, that is not a measure that has been considered as yet. I am sure it is something that we can look at, if the need arises.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, at present, 85,000 tonnes of rubber is surplus in the country. This is apart from the rubber meant for domestic use. It means, there is 25 to 30 per cent rubber which is surplus in the country. In this background, I want to seek information on two points. I want to know whether the Government would ask the STC to export as much rubber as possible in the international market.

The STC has agreed to procure rubber from the open market, but they have not done it, as expected. They even refused to do it demanding certain concessions from the Government of Kerala. In this background, will the hon. Minister take steps on these two counts—exporting, even with subsidy; and asking the STC to procure as much quantity as possible?

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: Sir, as far as export, with subsidy, is concerned, I have answered it previously. Now, as far as the question of STC making certain demands from the Kerala Government is concerned, I would only like to point it out to you, Sir, that on procurement of rubber, upto now, the STC has lost Rs. 44 crores. There is a procurement tax that is levied by the Government of Kerala on rubber producers, to increase the money flowing into their own coffers, which is to the tune of 11%. Of this Rs. 44 crores that

the STC has lost, Rs. 8 crores have not gone to the rubber producers, but have gone into the coffers of the Kerala Government because they refused to do away with this 11 % procurement tax.

So, the only thing we are asking the Kerala Government to do is if we can step in to protect your rubber industry, perhaps, you too should take some measures and do away with your procurement tax for a while. Okay, it might give your coffers a little bit hit, but we will not be subsidising your Government revenue as well. I think, these are the measures that need to be taken side by side.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, the hon. Minister has made a statement about Rs. 44 crores. Ask him to give the details. Please give the details of it.

SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH: I will give the details.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 7.

जालंधर दूरदर्शन से प्रसारित होने वाले कार्यक्रम

*7. श्री बलवन्त सिंह रामूवालिया: क्या सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को इस आशय की शिकायतें प्राप्त हुई हैं कि दूरदर्शन के जालंधर केन्द्र से प्रसारित किए गए कार्यक्रम अश्लील, भाषा की दृष्टि से अशुद्ध तथा अंधविश्वास फैलाने वाले हैं;

(ख) यदि हां, तो सरकार द्वारा इस संबंध में क्या कार्रवाई की गई है, और

(ग) क्या सरकार ऐसे केन्द्रों से प्रसारण हुतु कार्यक्रमों का चयन करने के संबंध में आधार तथा दिशा-निर्देश तय करने के लिए लेखकों, शिक्षाविदों, समाज-सेवकों और सांसदों की संयुक्त समिति गठित करने पर विचार करेगी ?

सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री अरुण जेटली): (क) सरकार को ऐसी कोई शिकायत प्राप्त नहीं हुई है।

(ख) प्रश्न नहीं उठता ।

(ग) दूरदर्शन के कार्यक्रमों संबंधी मामले प्रसार भारती के क्षेत्राधिकार में आते हैं जो कि एक सांविधिक निगम है और सरकार इनके बारे में निर्णय नहीं करती है। तथापि, प्रसार भारती द्वारा सूचित किया गया है कि विभिन्न केन्द्रों में उन्हें कार्यक्रमों की आयोजना एवं उनके निर्माण