

proposing them. And I don't see that those safeguards will automatically bring about a 100 per cent change in the situation, but they would go a long way towards safeguarding against the arbitrary use of this article.

62. [The Questioner (Shri Brahmakumar Bhati) was absent, for answer vide Colin pra]

Production/Export estimates of Cotton

*63. DR. SHRIKANT
RAMCHANDRA

JICHKAR:†

SHRI V. RAJESHWAR

RAO:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the estimate of total production of cotton in our country in the current year;

(b) out of this, the estimates for export;

(c) the average prices given in various States and how do they compare with the price under the Maharashtra Cotton Scheme; and

(d) the steps being taken to give remunerative prices to cotton growers?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R. L. JALAPPA): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The Cotton Advisory Board in its meeting held on 24th February, 1997 has estimated the total production of cotton in the country in the 1996-97 cotton year to be 160 lakh bales (170 kg. each)

(b) Export quotas for cotton are announced by Government after taking into consideration all relevant factors, including estimates of production, availability, consumption by the mills, small spinners and non-mill sector, likely surplus, prices trends etc. Government endeavours to balance the interests of the cotton growers on the one hand and on the other, the cotton consuming sectors, particularly the decentralised handloom weavers. So far an export quota of 12.20 lakh bales of cotton has been released by Government during the current cotton season (1996-97). In addition, a spill-over quantity of 6.90 lakh bales (approx) from the 1995-96 quota has also been permitted for export upto 28.2.97.

(c) The relevant information is as follows:

Comparison of Maharashtra kapas Price Vis-à-vis other States as on 14.2.97 or there about (Cotton Year 1996-97)

S.No.	Maharashtra Variety	Kapas price Price (Rs-Qtl) in Maharashtra	Equivalent variety in other States	State where grown	Price Range (Rs-Qtl) in other States
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	NHH-44	1975	F-414	Punjab	1820-1830
2.	LRA-5166	2000	LRA	Haryana MP	1825-1660

† The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. Shrikant Ramchandra Jichkar.

S.No. Maharashtra Variety	Kapas price Price (Rs/Qti) (In Maharashtra)	Equivalent variety in other States	State where grown	Price Range (RyQtl) in other States
3. H/4MEC-I	2100	S-4S-6H4	Gujara/MP	1700-2050
4. Y-1	1870	J-34/ Bikaneri Narma SG DCH-32	Punjab Haryana Rajasthan	1586-1850
5. DCH-32	Not Grown in Maharashtra	DCH-32	Karnataka	2600-2230

(d) The Government has been taking various steps to help cotton growers:

(i) Minimum Support Prices (MSP) of various varieties were announced before the start of the season.

(ii) Export quota of 12.20 lakh bales of cotton has been released during the current year. In addition a spili-over quantity of 6.90 lakh bales (approx) from the export quota of 1995-96 season has been permitted to be exported by 28.2.97.

(iii) The Cotton Corporation of India (CCO) has been making aggressive purchases to give support to cotton growers. As on 23.2.97 the CCI purchases during the current season have been 7.81 lakh bales, as compared to 6.14 lakh bales as on the corresponding date in the previous year. State Marketing Federations and NAFED have also been given export quotas and have also been buying cotton.

(iv) The ceiling on export of cotton yarn of counts below 41s in 1996 was increased from 80 million kgs to 110 million kgs. For the year 1997, the ceiling for export of cotton yarn below counts 41s has been further enhanced to 120 million kgs.

(v) Cotton has been removed from Selective Credit Control.

(vi) There are no stock-limits for cotton.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Sir, I must record my appreciation of the detailed reply which the hon. Minister has given. These days, we Members have become used to cryptic replies with as little information as possible. So, this reply today is a silver lining like silver cotton. I congratulate the Minister.

A table has been given in reply to part (c) of the question. It compares the prices of *kapas* with those of other varieties of cotton in other parts of the country. It is clear from this that the Maharashtra farmers got better prices. They got on an average, Rs. 150⁷- to Rs. 200/- more per quintal. This is because of the Maharashtra Cotton Scheme which has been working efficiently for the last 20 years. Therefore, the Government of India must support this Scheme. It should not only support but also encourage the Scheme. This encouragement can be given, this support can be given by increasing the export quota. My question is whether the hon. Minister will give a substantial increase in the export quota of cotton for the Maharashtra Scheme.

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Sir, I thank the hon. Member for complimenting me.

Whenever the question of allotting more quota for exports comes, we will certainly keep in view the question of giving some more quota to the Maharashtra State.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Thank you. This is an assurance.

Sir, while addressing the All-India Cotton Co-operative Federation, the hon. Minister assured that the Government would remove all curbs on cotton export. The hon. Minister, in his speech, said that according to the then estimates, the production would be around ISO lakh bales, that he was waiting for the Cotton Advisory Board's meeting to make fresh estimates and that, if the fresh estimates would be in the region of 160 lakh bales, all curbs on cotton exports would be removed. The Minister assured this in the presence of the Minister of Agriculture and other Ministers.

Sir, it is very heartening to note that the Cotton Advisory Board met just the day before yesterday and that it estimated the production for this year to be 160 lakh bales. I am the President of the Maharashtra Cotton Growers Association. We have our own Research Wing with a former Vice-Chancellor as its Head. Our estimates are five lakh bales more. So, this year if we have a production of 160 lakh bales or 165 lakh bales of cotton, will the Government remove all curbs on export of cotton, and, if so, when?

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Sir, I think, I have been misquoted. I have never said that I would remove all curbs on exports. I only said that liberal exports would be allowed during this year, we were under the impression that we would be getting more cotton during this year, but, recently, on the 24th, the CAD has given me the figure of about 165 lakh bales.

Keeping all these things in view, I cannot allow export of cotton under OGL because we have to look after the clothing needs of nearly 90 million people, we have to look after 1,581 mills

and we have to look after about 13.5 lakhs of powerlooms and 39.5 lakhs of handlooms. Keeping all these things in view, we are giving permission for exports. The hon. Member will be happy to know that this time we have already given permission for export of 12.20 lakh bales. In addition to that, there was a backlog of 6.90 lakh bales for which we have also extended the time up to the end of February. I think the Member will be satisfied with these measures.

DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR: Sir, I am partly satisfied, but at least go on for at least 65 lakh bales.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri V. Rneshwar Rao, The hon. Member is absent.

श्री शमशेर सिंह सुरजेवाला: सभापति महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने अपने सवाल के जवाब में लास्ट पैरा में यह बात कही है कि, there are no on stock limits for cotton. मैं मंत्री महोदय से पूछना चाहूंगा कि पिदले साल 1995-96 में टेक्सटाइल मिनिस्ट्री की सिफारिश पर गवर्नमेंट आफ इंडिया ने स्टॉक लिमिट्स मुकर्रर करी और उसका नतीजा यह हुआ कि पंजाब, हरियाणा, गुजरात और दूसरे जो राज्य हैं उनमें जब का टन की प्राइसेस नार्मली 1800 पर क्विंटल थी तो वह स्टॉक लिमिट इंपोज करने की वजह से 800 रुपये तक गिर गई और किसानों का बड़ा भारी नुकसान हुआ। नतीजा यह हुआ कि अगले साल किसानों ने बहुत कम कॉटन बोर्ड। क्या मंत्री महोदय यह आश्वासन देंगे कि किसी एक सैक्शन की मदद करने के लिए गवर्नमेंट सपोर्ट देकर यह खुद कर सकती है और क्या किसानों को इस बात का आश्वासन देंगे कि भविष्य में आप सड़नली इस तरह की स्टॉक लिमिट वगैरह इंपोज करके सरकार कीमतें नहीं गिराएंगी और किसानों को आप अच्छी रेम्युनरेटिव प्राइसेस देते रहेंगे, क्या मंत्री महोदय यह आश्वासन देंगे ?

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Sir, as the hon. Member knows, the price of cotton fluctuates depending upon its demand and supply. Unfortunately, during this year, the off-take by mills is not so much as we expected. I had a discussion with mill representatives. They say their inventories are going up because there is no sufficient demand for yarn and other tilings. They have to purchase as and when they require it. Moreover, they say,

the bank charges them 18 per cent of interest on the loan advanced. Therefore, the off-take is not so much. Keeping this in view, we have allowed this much quota during this year. It was not allowed at any time during the previous year. In addition to that, we have told the Cotton Corporation of India to go in for aggressive purchases during this period. They have purchased more than 1.21 lakh bales over and above the purchases they made during the last year. So, we are trying our best to see that the farmers are protected. Sir, no Government can give a categorical assurance that they will be giving a certain price, but we have fixed the minimum support price. Fortunately, their prices have not crashed below the minimum support price and it is still 30 to 35 per cent more than the minimum support price.

श्री शमशेर सिंह सुरजेवाला: सभापति महोदय, इन्होंने मेरे सवाल का जवाब देने की बजाय जो इस जवाब में इन्जुमरेटिड है वे सारे के सारे प्वाइंट इन्होंने पढ़ दिए। मैं आपसे यह पूछना चाहता था कि मैक्सीमम प्राइस की गारंटी आप नहीं दे सकते लेकिन सरकार एक सेक्शन की मदद करने के लिए किसानों के खिलाफ कोई कार्यवाही नहीं करेगी? इस तरह की सडनली आपने स्टॉक पर लिमिट इंप्रोज़ कर दी और व्यापारियों ने खरीदनी शुरू कर दी और कीमतें गिर गई। नंबर दो, सडनली आपने तब एक्सपोर्ट भी बंद कर दिया था। वे दो ही बड़े मेज़र्ज़ हैं, अगर आप यह नहीं उठाएंगे किसी एक क्लास की मदद करने के लिए और किसानों को कोई नुकसान नहीं होगा तो यह एशोरेस हम आपसे चाहते हैं?

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Sir, our main intention is to see that we protect the interests of the farmers at any cost.

SHRI SURESH A. KESWANI: Sir, we invariably seem to be conducting ourselves in a manner which is prejudicial to the commercial interest of this country. Whenever we want to export cotton, we make too many announcements, as a result of which the international price of cotton in anticipation of our selling in the international market goes down.

Eventually whatever quantity we offer, it doesn't produce requisite remunerative realisation for us. Therefore, will the Minister give us an assurance that the Government would be able to plan these things well in advance and release only that much quantity which is really available? This is one.

Number two, we have a very large cotton textile sector which is lying in a sick condition. Many people are without jobs. Such a huge cotton textile industry is waiting for the Government's decision to renovate it or rejuvenate it. We have gone back to a century old system by exporting cotton leaving this industry high and dry. I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government would come out with some kind of a scheme so that we can achieve the value addition and provide employment opportunities to the teeming millions. Thank you.

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it will be the endeavour of the United Front Government to see that only value-added items are exported, instead of exporting cotton. We have been trying to do it. Just for the information of hon. Members, I would like to say that 80 million kgs. of yarn of 1 and 40 counts were allowed to be exported during the last year. When we came to power, we gave them additional 30 million Kgs. of yarn. Keeping in view that export of yarn is more beneficial to our country than cotton, this year we have given 120 million Kgs. of yarn to be exported. We have got our own limitations. As far as the spinning is concerned, we are quite all right. But as far as processing is concerned and as far as weaving is concerned we are lagging behind. As far as garment manufacture is concerned, we are lagging behind. We know those problems.

I have already gone to the Finance Ministry and requested them to give us some concessions during this Budget. We are trying to get some concessions. Our intention is to see that we export only

value-added items so that our people are also provided with employment opportunities and the Government gets enriched to some extent.

PROF. RAM KAPSE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister has specifically told us that the interest of the cotton growers would be safeguarded. As far as cotton-growers are concerned, I would like to tell the Minister that the Government of Maharashtra is taking special interest for years. So, I would like to know from the Minister whether the scheme which has been extended to Maharashtra every two years would be given to it permanently. I would also like to know from the Minister whether a special quota would be allotted to Maharashtra taking into consideration the interest of farmers of Maharashtra for the export purpose.

SHRI R.L. JALAPPA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I do not want to go into the merits and demerits of the scheme attended to Maharashtra. I would rather suggest to the Government of Maharashtra to see that both the quality of cotton and the production of cotton per hectare are also improved. Sir, I cannot assure the hon. Member that this scheme would be extended to the Government of Maharashtra on a permanent basis. We have extended the scheme by two years. We would watch their performance. If necessary, we would certainly extend it.

Last year also we allowed exports for Maharashtra. This year also we have already given 1,00,000 bales to be exported. In addition to that, we have also allowed Maharashtra to export the backlog quantity till the end of this month.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Q. Nos. 64 and 67 would be taken up together because both the questions deal with the same subject.

भूमध्य सागर में समुद्री जहाज में यात्रा कर रहे भारतीयों का मारा जाना

\$*64 श्री ईश दत्त यादव: †

श्री मती मालती शर्मा:
क्या विदेश मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार को 25 दिसम्बर, 1996 को ग्रीस के निकट भूमध्य सागर में हुई दुर्घटना की जानकारी है जिसमें कुछ भारतीय मारे गये थे;

(ख) यदि हां, तो कितने भारतीय मारे गये और उसके क्या कारण थे और उन व्यक्तियों के नाम क्या हैं जिनका इस घटना में हाथ था;

(ग) क्या सरकार ने इस दुर्घटना की कोई जांच कराई है और दोषी पाये गये व्यक्तियों के विरुद्ध कोई कार्यवाही की है; और

(घ) सरकार ने इस दुर्घटना में मारे गये व्यक्तियों के आश्रितों/परिवारजनों की मदद करने हेतु क्या कार्यवाही की है ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) (a) to (d): A statement is laid on the table of the Rajya Sabha.

Statement

Our Ambassador in Athens reported on 7th January, 1997 of the sinking of a ship on Christmas night, carrying Indian nationals amongst others, in the Malta-Sicily channel. The number of Indians reportedly drowned is about 175, though no trace of bodies or wreckage of the boat has been recovered so far. Estimate of those drowned including their identification is based on the evidences given by 22 survivors who were apprehended and deported to India. 39 Indians are reported to have escaped arrest. Their whereabouts are still not known.

The names of persons who are believed to have been perished in the accident is at statement-I (See below). On receipt of the list of persons who are believed to

\$ तारांकित प्रश्न संख्या 64 तथा 67 को साथ-साथ लिया गया।

† सभा में यह प्रश्न श्री ईश दत्त यादव द्वारा यादव द्वारा पूछा गया।