

merit between the Air India Management and the Guild, resulting in cancellation of only a few flights initially.

(c) This can be assessed only after the strike is completely over.

(d) Government and the Corporation have taken all possible steps to ensure that there is least disruption of the operations of Air India.

Scheme for easy availability of essential commodities

169. SHRI NARSINGH NARAIN PANDEY: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news item which appeared in the Times of *India* dated the 28th October, 1980 under the caption "Big increase in pulse prices";

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether Government are preparing any suitable scheme to ensure that prices of essential commodities are not increased and the same remain within easy availability in the markets in rural and urban areas; and

(d) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI BRAJA MOHAN MOHANTY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Government is concerned about the rise in the Prices of some essential commodities. A continuous watch is being kept on the prices and availability of essential commodities and various remedial measures are being taken to improve the situation. Emphasis is being laid on increase in the production of various essential commodities, particularly commodities, like pulses, oil seeds, sugar and cement which are in short supply. The public distribution system is being expanded and

made a permanent feature of the Indian economy. The number of fair price shops in the country is reported to have gone up from 2.35 lakhs in January, 1980 to 2.66 lakhs in October, 1980. Foodgrains for meeting the requirements of public distribution system through fair price shops to the extent they cannot be met from the State Government's stocks are supplied to the State Governments from the Central Pool. Prices at which cereals are supplied to the State Governments from the Central Pool are subsidised. During the oil year 1979-80, 3.55 lakh tonnes of imported edible oils were lifted by the States for distribution through the public distribution system against 93,000 tonnes during the preceding oil year. Arrangements for import of edible oils for the current oil year have been made to ensure adequate supplies through the public distribution system. Credit policy continues to be restrictive. The export of essential commodities is being regulated/banned. Some essential commodities in short supply are being imported. The provisions of the Essential Commodities Act and the orders issued thereunder as well as the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980, are being enforced vigorously by the States.

Development of Trivandrum Airport

170. SHRI T. BASHEER: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 854 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th June, 1980 and state what is the progress made so far in the development work of the Trivandrum Airport?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI A. P. SHARMA): 1. The work on strengthening the existing runway is in progress and is likely to be completed by April, 1981.

2. Extension of Domestic Terminal Block will be completed by December 1980.