

GOYAL): (a) By and large, essential commodities and items of mass consumption are easily available throughout the country. There is, however, some shortage of cement, soda ash and kerosene.

(b) Apart from the effort, being made to increase domestic production, supplies of items like cement, soda ash etc. are being supplemented by imports. Steps are also being taken to remove transportation bottlenecks and to improve their distribution.

**Recruitment policy of Government
Opium and Alkaloid Factory at
Neemuch**

1786. SHRI ANANDA PATHAK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any complaint about the violation of recruitment policy by the management of the Government Opium and Alkaloid Factory at Neemuch and making illegal appointments causing wide-spread discontentment among the employees and the local people; and

(b) whether Government have enquired into the matter and if so, what is the result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATISH AGARWAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The matter is being looked into.

**Statement of Chief Minister, West
Bengal regarding tax proposals**

1787. SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA PANT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a reported statement of Shri Jyoti Basu, Chief Minister of West Bengal, threatening to launch a movement against the Central Government, if the excise duties and taxes imposed on petrol and kerosene oil are not reduced; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATISH AGARWAL): (a) The Chief Minister of West Bengal had addressed a communication on 3-3-1979 to the Prime Minister in which he had, among other things, protested against the increase in excise duties on petroleum products, including kerosene, proposed in the 1979 Budget. He had also requested that these proposals should be amended.

(b) In the context of the steep increase in international prices of crude oil announced by the OPEC and the need to restrain consumption of petroleum products, it is not feasible to reduce the current level of duties on petroleum products including petrol and kerosene.

**Proposal of the Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and Pacific for
relieving poverty**

†1788. SHRI SYED AHMED
HASHMI:
SHRI DINESH SINGH:
SHRI SWAMI DINESH
CHANDRA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has proposed a new strategy for the 1980's envisaging radical changes in the policies of the developed and the developing countries with a view to relieving poverty in the region;

(b) if so, what are the details of the strategy; and

(c) what decisions Government have taken on the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI ARIF BAIG): (a) to (c) The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in its Annual Ses-

†Previously Unstarred Question 1550 transferred from the 15th March, 1979.