

other country. We have to look to our own essential defence requirements and have to organise our defence accordingly. It is not necessary for us to compete with any country.

श्री रबी राय : सभापति महोदय, मेरा सवाल था कि चीन ने हमारी एक लाख वर्गमील भूमि हड़प ली है। इस सिलसिले में खोज की जरूरत नहीं है हम से कितने गुना ज्यादा शक्तिशाली वह है? यह नहीं बता रहे हैं।

सरदार स्वर्ण सिंह : बिल्कुल बता रहा हूं कि इस किस्म के हिसाब से, अरिथमेटिक से उसका प्रपोर्शन निकालना कि उसकी ताकत कितनी गुना ज्यादा है, मिलिटरी असेसमेंट में अरिथमेटिक नहीं चलता। वह बहुत कंप्लेक्स सब्जेक्ट है।

It is not like two into two being equal to four.

Stevedore system at Calcutta Port

*92. SHRI B. K. MAHANTI:

SHRI KALYAN ROY:†

Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of various malpractices by the stevedores in the Port of Calcutta;

(b) whether any investigations have been made in this regard;

(c) whether Government have taken steps to gradually abolish the stevedore system in this port; and

(d) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Kalyan Roy.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI):

(a) and (b) Complaints regarding certain malpractices by the stevedores in Calcutta Port have been received from time to time. They have been looked into in consultation with the Calcutta Dock Labour Board and steps have been taken to enforce the Dock Labour Board Regulations.

(c) and (d) Suggestions for changing the existing stevedoring system in all the major ports including Calcutta have been received from time to time. A Committee is being appointed to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing decasualisation Schemes, working of the Stevedoring System and other allied matters. Further action would be taken in the light of this Committee's findings.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: This question came up on the 21st January, 1973 and Mr. Reddy, Labour Minister said that it was a matter of policy. These stevedores are a bunch of thugs and looters. They make no investment. They utilise the services of the ports. They have no factory. The labour registers are maintained by the Dock Labour Board. They make the appointments. Sir, the Minister is aware that the Commission on Major Ports observed that in Calcutta port, the majority of the stevedores seem to function as mere middlemen rather than stevedores. Further, this Commission stated in very categorical terms that "another aspect to which we would call attention relates to the employment of monthly paid workers by the stevedores which have not registered any increase over the years, especially in Calcutta." You will be surprised to know that these stevedores, according to the report of the Study Team of the International Association of Ports and Harbours, have a completely negative approach to modernised methods. They are unwilling to invest in equipment. The team further said that the continuance of the pre-

sent stevedores system will not work to the advantage of the Indian ports. What are the reasons for keeping this medieval and feudal institution which is leading to accumulation of black money in the hands of hundreds of stevedores?

SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI: Sir, without referring to the first part of the allegation I would say that the facts stated by the hon. Member in respect of the functions being performed by the stevedores are generally correct. There is a distinction between the functioning of the stevedoring system at Calcutta and the stevedoring system at other ports. As far as all other major ports are concerned, the decasualisation schemes of the dock workers are functioning fairly regularly. As far as Calcutta is concerned, one feature of the decasualisation scheme which is a historical legacy, is that the stevedores have been permitted to maintain a certain number of monthly gangs. They are their employees and their wages and emoluments are paid by them. It is in relation to the employment of the monthly gangs while avoiding the employment of the pool workers that the major malpractice has developed in Calcutta. I would not agree that the stevedores do not perform any function at all. As far as the other major ports are concerned, they perform what you might call—it is true that they are middlemen but they perform—essentially managerial and supervisory functions. All labour is actually drawn from the Dock Labour Board pool, paid according to the scheme and stevedores only provide supervisory and managerial functions. But in relation to Calcutta, as I have said, the major practice, which has been objected to, is that they have been using their monthly workers on double booking so that the reserve pool workers are kept idle and paid only the minimum wages. The other complaint is that the stevedores are employing their monthly workers for more shifts than are prescribed in the scheme. Now in relation to both

these, following a recent visit by myself to Calcutta, we have insisted that the Dock Labour Board regulations in relation to the extent to which the monthly gangs can be employed—there are regulations but they are essentially, in fact, violated—be rigidly enforced. So, some of the alleged malpractices are likely to disappear. As far as the major question of stevedoring system is concerned, that, Sir, is a major question which relates to all ports, not only to Calcutta. And secondly, all its features have to be considered in entirety after this Committee has submitted its findings. There is one more point which, I think, the hon. Member might know. Stevedores come into the picture only for the discharge of cargo from ship to shore. All shore labour is employed by the port authorities. So, the question of malpractice does not arise. But an organic link between discharge from ship to shore and on shore does not exist. So, we have really to consider what should be a better system, even if we have to consider that an amendment is necessary to it.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: I would like to know whether the Minister is aware that the direct handling cost per tonne of stevedore labour inclusive of pool rate of levy for general cargo is about Rs. 18 and the liners' rates given by some foreign companies for general cargo stevedoring is about Rs. 52 per tonne plus levy on actuals which comes to about Rs. 65.50 per tonne, and the margin of profit is about Rs. 47.50 per tonne. In the same way, they are charging very high rate for the Food Corporation of India and as a result, the FCI is losing and the stevedore company is gaining. The difference between their handling cost and the price paid is about 200 per cent. In view of these two specific malpractices which I am pointing out, would the Minister consider that the time has come, without making any further delay, to abolish the system?

SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI: Sir, I would not agree that the margin of

profit of the stevedores is necessarily the arithmetical difference between the rate paid by the shipowners and the rate paid to the Dock Labour Board. I cannot agree with that. But the point is valid in terms of the fact that the stevedores recover from the owners a rate per freight tonne while, in fact the Dock Labour Board schemes operate on a rate per weight tonne. Therefore, this is also one of the major features which the Committee has to examine as to how a link can properly be established.

SHRI KALI MUKHERJEE: Sir, is it a fact that the Union Labour Ministry recommended last year the taking over of the stevedore system by the Port authorities as the Port authorities have done this with regard to the Bird & Co. a few years ago and the Shipping Ministry refused to consider it in league with the stevedores?

SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI: Sir, I refute the allegation made in the last part of the question. But to come to the merit of the question, the Shipping Ministry has not rejected it. The Shipping Ministry wants a complete review of the decasualization schemes because they are not operating only at Calcutta but they are operating at all major ports. It wants a complete and detailed review of the manner in which the de-casualisation schemes are actually functioning. The primary purpose of amending the system would be to introduce better productivity of labour and turn round of all ships and that is not a thing which can be done overnight merely by the abolition of the existing system. We, therefore, want a fairly detailed and precise review.

DR. R. K. CHAKRABARTI: Sir, from the hon. Minister's reply it appears that on the shore all the jobs are being done by the labour employed by the Port authorities. It is only for jobs between the ship and the port that labourers are being employed by the stevedores. I want to

know from the hon. Minister why this system and this state of affairs should continue any further. Why should not these labourers be employed by the Port authority itself? Why should not open tenders be invited so that many more people may compete for these jobs of loading and unloading and carrying goods from ship to the shore just as we call tenders in the case of public works or irrigation projects? Why should they not call for open quotations from all those who are capable of doing this job and handling this job from the ships to the Port? Or, else, they should be employed by the Port authority itself.

SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI: Firstly, Sir, I think the hon. Member is aware that stevedore is a contractor of the shipowner. In other words he is an employee of the shipowners.

So far as the licensing of stevedores is concerned, the Port authorities have never followed a restrictive policy. In other words, if a person is able to perform the functions of a stevedore, has the necessary financial credibility, can command availability of labour, etc., licence is always given to him. But, again, coming to the merit of the question it is a suggestion which we will consider along with the report.

Indo-Soviet shipping services

*93. **SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA:**

SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA MENON:†
SHRIMATI PRATIBHA SINGH:

SHRIMATI SUSHILA SHANKAR ADIVAREKAR:
SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Leela Damodara Menon.