

श्री जगजीवन राम : राज्य सरकारों को भी बताया है। इसके साथ साथ हम आशा करते हैं कि राज्य सरकारें उन व्यापारियों से कड़ाई के साथ पेश आयें जो मुल्क की इस तकलीफ की हालत को भी एकसप्लायट करके मुनाफा कमाना चाहते हैं, और मैं यह आश्वासन देना चाहता हूँ कि राज्य सरकारें इस मामले में जो भी कठोर कदम उठाएंगी उनमें उन्हें केन्द्र की सरकार का पूरा सहयोग और समर्थन प्राप्त होगा।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: Sir, I have been getting up to put a question. If we can get an opportunity only by shouting, I can also do that. This is not the way. I seriously protest; I got up three times and I did not get a chance.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am giving opportunity to all sides of the House. It is a serious reflection that you are making on the way the Chair functions. It is very wrong on your part to make such a reflection. I am sure all Members will agree with me that I am trying to give opportunity to all sides of the House.

AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE BANK

*343. SHRI K. DAMODARAN;}
SHRI BALACHANDRA
MENON:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state-

(a) whether it is a fact that the Reserve Bank of India has carried out a study on the service and interest charges levied by agricultural

tTransferred from the 7th June, 1967.

JThe question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri K. Damodaran.

co-operative banks on the loans advanced to peasants in- various States;

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

(c) what are the rates of interest charged by the Reserve Bank of India on its loans to agricultural cooperative banks; and what are the rates of interest charged by agricultural co-operative banks on their loans advanced to peasants?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY): (a) to (c) A statement laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) and (b) This is engaging the attention of the Reserve Bank in order to ensure that the rates charged on agricultural credit to ultimate borrowers are not disproportionately high.

(c) The Reserve Bank provides accommodation to the State Cooperative Banks as follows for agricultural credit:—

- (i) Short-term—2 per cent below the bank rate (this, works out to 4 per cent as the effective rate).
- (ii) Medium-term—1-1/2 below the bank rate (i.e. the effective rate works out to 4-1/2 per cent).

As regards the rates of interest charged by cooperative banks and societies, these vary from State to State. A statement giving the information is attached.

STATEMENT

(Per cent per annum)

State	Short Term			Medium Term		
	Interest (usual rate) charged by			Interest (usual rate) charged by		
	State Coop. Bank	Central Coop. Bank	Primary Credit societies	State Coop. Bank	Central Coop. Bank	Primary Credit societies
Andhra Pradesh	5.00	7.25	9.00	5.25	7.27	9.00
Assam	6.00	8.00	9.50	6.00	8.00	9.50
Bihar	5.00	6.50	8.50	5.50	7.00	9.00
Gujarat	4.50	6.75	9.25	5.00	7.00	9.25
Jammu and Kashmir	5.00	6.25	9.00	5.50	7.00	9.00
Kerala	4.75	6.50	8.75	5.25	7.00	9.25
Madhya Pradesh	4.75	7.50	10.50	5.25	8.00	11.00
Madras	4.50	6.70	8.40	5.25	7.95	9.60
Maharashtra	4.25	6.00	9.00	4.75	6.50	9.50
Mysore	4.50	6.75	9.00	5.00	7.25	9.25
Orissa	5.00	7.50	10.00	5.50	8.00	10.50
Punjab and Haryana	4.60	7.00	10.00	5.00	7.50	10.50
Rajasthan	5.19	7.00	9.00	5.44	7.00	9.00
Uttar Pradesh	4.75	6.75	9.25	4.75	6.75	9.25
West Bengal	4.75	7.25	10.00	5.25	7.75	10.00

SHRI K. DAMODARAN: The figures supplied make interesting reading. The Reserve Bank provides credit to the State Co-operative Banks at 4 per cent. The State Co-operative Bank gives it to the Central Co-operative Bank at 5 per cent or so; actually it varies from State to State and the Central Co-operative Bank provides credit to the Primary Credit Societies at rates varying from 9 per cent to 10.5 per cent; again it varies from State to State. Ultimately, therefore, the borrower, that is, the peasant, gets the money from the society at 10 to 11 per cent which is far more than the rate at which the industrialists borrow. Does not the Government think that this rate at which the peasant borrows money is exorbitantly high and that this is one of the main reasons why our agriculture is stagnant? The peasant does not get any incentive; he is not able to borrow money at a cheap rate. Is this not one of the main reasons for the stagnation in our agriculture and

if so what are the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to remedy the situation?

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: I share the concern of the hon. Member but may I say that the rate has got to be realistic and it has got to take into consideration the condition of the prevailing money market? It is true that there are variations in the rates charged from State to State and from area to area and this is engaging our attention. But may I say that the rates that have been charged are not very abnormal except in one or two cases? In the case of Madhya Pradesh the rate charged is 10 per cent. In other areas the rates charged are less than nine per cent. Various committees have gone into this question. They have said that the rates may be in the neighbourhood of 8 to 9 per cent. That is also our view. I agree with the hon. Member that we should keep this in

view and it would be our endeavour to see that the rate structure is rationalised.

SHRI K. DAMODARAN: The money market should be taken into consideration when loans are given to the industrialists also. Our industrialists are able to borrow at much cheaper rates, while agriculturists are forced to borrow money at 10 per cent and 11 per cent and there is also a penal rate of 12 per cent. Due to failure of the monsoon and the crop suppose the peasant is not able to pay, then he is forced to pay 12 per cent or more than 12 per cent as penal charge. Will the Government take steps to reduce the partiality shown to the industrialists and be impartial to the peasant and take steps to make some drastic changes in the whole agricultural credit structure, so that the peasant is able to borrow money at a cheaper rate, at least at the rate at which the industrialist is able to borrow?

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: There is no bias or partiality shown to anybody. Now, the hon. Member does not seem to be a businessman. An industrialist who borrows money today, has got to pay a very high rate of interest —

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.

DR. M. M. S. SIDDHU: What is the rate?

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: Let me answer it. He borrows at more than 9 per cent. I am saying that the rate of interest charged is related to the money market essentially and in the case of agricultural co-operative credit, there is also another element. These co-operative societies have themselves got to borrow money and nearly 40 per cent of the amount is supplied by the Reserve Bank. The rest of it is raised by the co-operative societies. The rates of these borrowings vary from place to place. Therefore, on the whole, the margin that is

being charged is higher, in the neighbourhood of five per cent, and it is our endeavour to see that, as far as possible, these rates are checked and kept within limits, so that there should not be any disproportionate rise in the interest charged to the ultimate borrower. I am going into this question and this matter is receiving our earnest attention. We will see that something is done to bring about rationalisation.

SHRI BALACHANDRA MENON: Considering the disproportionately high rate of interest charged by the primary credit societies, will the Government be able to see at least that the peasants get their credit facilities from alternative sources like the Reserve Bank branches and State Bank branches all over the block areas, so that we can do away with these co-operatives? Will at least that be done as an alternative source of help to the peasants?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: The question is two-fold. Two basic factors have to be considered. One is whether we should encourage the co-operative movement in the country and if we have to encourage the co-operative movement, we will have to support the State Bank, the Central banks and the primary banks. That is a basic thing which has to be taken into consideration. There is no doubt that there is a wide gap between the rate of interest at which the Reserve Bank advances the loan and the rate of interest which the primary banks charge from the cultivator, but that is with a view to sustaining the three tiers of the co-operative Banks. I have been examining whether one tier from these three tiers can be eliminated and up till now I have found that it will not be possible to do that. Another question is whether we should create some alternative agency to finance the agricultural sector. So far as the big agriculturists are concerned, we can induce the commercial banks to enter the agriculture sector to meet the credit

requirements of the big agriculturists. But we have to take into consideration a very large number of small agriculturists and I think the co-operative is the best possible method through which we can reach the small agriculturist and provide the necessary credit to him. I would again say that we are seized of the problem. I am examining whether it would be possible to reduce the rate of interest charged from the agriculturist to some extent.

SHRI BALACHANDRA MENON: May I know whether the Government are aware that even penal provision is made by the co-operative banks and the peasants are asked to pay 12 per cent and 14 per cent if they fail to pay interest by the stipulated period and that too for short-term loans?

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: The most important aspect of agriculture credit is that the farmer should get credit in time and in adequate quantum and that is exercising our mind. We always keep in view the difficulties that are caused to the agriculturists in this regard and we shall certainly look into the question whether the penal clause has got to be revised and give further relief to the ultimate borrower.

SHRI C. D. PANDE: The Reserve Bank has made a special grant and provision for lending to the State Apex Banks at 5 per cent, and at every successive stage the practice is to charge one rupee more. The State Co-operative bank adds Re. 1. The primary cooperative society adds Re. 1. At every stage Re. 1 is added and the rate goes on increasing. Will the Government consider that this charging of Re. 1 at every stage for certain benevolent service is too much and it is bringing the co-operative movement into disgrace? Secondly, may I know from the Minister whether the Reserve Bank of India has advanced huge sums of money and that Rs. 97 crores are overdue and not traceable? The Government has suffered a loss on this account. Somewhere, either at the apex level or

district level or at the lower level it has been misused.

SHRI SYED AHMAD: Somebody must have stomached it.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: The hon. Member should know that the cooperative movement in our country is still, in many parts of the country, in a state of infancy and when it is trying to grow there may be lapses here and there. I do agree that, as I have said, the gap between the rate of interest charged by the Reserve Bank and by the primary society from the cultivator is a big one and I am examining the question whether this gap can be further reduced.

SHRI D. THENGARI: In the case of the agricultural credit bank, which is the final authority, is it the Reserve Bank or there are other authorities that prescribe the rate at different levels? Is the Government aware that at the level of the Apex State Co-operative Banks various political pulls and pressures are at work and therefore the Jctsans are suffering? Will the Government be very clear on this question that monetary authorities should be free from political pulls and pressures?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I shall be happy if all the political parties will decide that they will not bring in politics in the co-operative movement ...

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Including the Congress.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Including the Congress. I have said all the political parties. Now, I do not think any such provision can be made by law to rule out political influence there, but I shall be happy if the co-operative movement is kept aloof from* political influence.

श्री राजनारायण : क्या सरकार को इन आकड़ों की जानकारी है कि 1962-63 तक किसानों पर 23 अरब ६० का कर्जा था

जिसमें सरकारी और कोआपरेटिव का ऋण कुल 15 फी सदी के अंदर है, बाकी तमाम ऋण बड़े-बड़े व्यापारी, बड़े-बड़े महाजन, बड़े-बड़े पूंजीपति और किसानों पर लदा है, एक बात। दूसरी बात, 55 साल पुराना कोआपरेटिव मूवमेंट भारत में हो चुका है, फिर भी सरकार कहती है कि अभी यह शैशवावस्था में है। तो मैं जानना चाहता हूँ, प्रौढ़ावस्था में यह कोआपरेटिव मूवमेंट अपने पुल्क में क्या होगा?

श्री जगजोवन राव : गायद सदस्य महोदय ने नहीं समझा। मैंने यह कहा था कि बहुत से हिस्से में अभी भी कोआपरेटिव आंदोलन शैशवावस्था में है, और यह सही है कि कहीं कहीं वह 55 साल की अवस्था में है लेकिन वहाँ भी पूरी बुजुर्गी हासिल नहीं कर पाया।

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Question Houi- is over.

12 NOON

SHORT NOTICE QUESTION AND ANSWER

WINDING UP OF RIVERS STEAM NAVIGATION CO. AND CLOSURE OF RAJABAGAN DOCKYARD

1. SHRI NIREN GHOSH: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT AND SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken a decision to wind up the Rivers Steam Navigation Co. and to float a new Company;

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

(c) whether the Rajabagan Dockyard is not working at present and if so, the reasons thereon;

(d) whether the employees of the Dockyard are conducting a sit-in demonstration; and

(e) if so, what are their demands and what decision Government have taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND SHIPPING (PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO): (a) to (e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

The management of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company closed down its business including the Rajabagan Dockyard on the afternoon of the 3rd May, 1967. The Company had filed an application on the 13th December, 1966, before the Calcutta High Court under section 391 read with section 394 of the Companies Act, for the approval of a scheme of arrangement between the Company and its creditors and share-holders. Under one of the provisions of the scheme of arrangement approved by the High Court on 3rd May, 1967, it was provided that the Company would close down its business.

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The Central Inland Water Transport Corporation Limited which was set up by the Government of India on the 22nd February, 1967 will employ such of the employees of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company as are considered suitable and necessary for its business on appropriate terms and conditions. The Corporation has commenced operations both in Assam and in the Calcutta area.

Out of about 7500 employees of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company, it is expected that about 5,000 will be provided employment by the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation and only 2500 or so will be surplus to their requirements. The employees who are found surplus to the requirements of the new Company will be paid compensation and other dues.

In order to further mitigate the hardship to those whose services are not found suitable and necessary for employment in the new Company, a Committee has been set up under the

Chairmanship of the Deputy Chairman, Calcutta Port Commissioners and with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, the Calcutta Port Commissioners and the Governments of West Bengal and Assam, to examine and suggest possible measures which can be implemented immediately for increasing employment opportunities including the Rajabagan Dockyard and the Calcutta Port. The Committee will also examine the ways and means of suitably relaxing the educational qualifications of employees rendered surplus with a view to their absorption in the various public sector undertakings and will also formulate retraining programmes to assist in the absorption of surplus employees in allied or other occupations in public sector undertakings requiring the services of such persons.

In view of the closure of the river route through Pakistan and the fact that some vessels of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company were impounded during the Indo-Pakistan hostilities, the operations of the Corporation will necessarily have to be on a limited scale with consequent loss of employment opportunities.

In Assam traffic is offering only at the major ghats at Jogigopa, Gauhati, Tezpur, Desangmukh and Dibrugarh. The other five major ghats at Dubri, Pandu, Gamiri Ghat, Bishnath Ghat and Singri Ghat have been closed down for want of traffic. The Central Inland Water Transport Corporation will make an assessment of the traffic available at the different Ghats from time to time and maintain river services from these Ghats as and when traffic becomes available. As far as the Calcutta area is concerned, the Corporation will undertake lighterage services and warehousing in addition to shipbuilding and ship-repairs at the Rajabagan Dockyard.

A section of the employees at the Head Office of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company, the Ghat Establishment at Calcutta and employees at

Gauhati have been squatting in the premises of the Company since the evening of the 3rd May, 1967. Their demand is that all the employees of the Rivers Steam Navigation Company should be absorbed in the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation.

The Rajabagan Dockyard which was also closed down when the Rivers Steam Navigation Company closed down on the 3rd May, 1967 has resumed working.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: Is the hon. Minister aware that since the R.S.N. Company was taken over by the Government the total personnel was reduced to an extent of 22.5 per cent already, that is, it was 3171, and on 14th November 1966 it was 2471, and that the former Minister of Transport and Shipping said in effect, this is the answer he gave: "The Government of India is intending to divert its present capacity and to specialise in building up pontoons, various types of tugs, vessels, tankers, etc."? So, the Government gave a definite promise that they will undertake those activities in the Rajabagan Dockyard. The personnel has already been reduced to the extent of 22.5 per cent. If these activities were undertaken, the Rajabagan Dockyard is quite able to provide employment to the personnel who are still working there and even employ extra personnel. In view of all these facts, will the Government reconsider their decision and employ the full personnel?

There is also another thing. While there was the lay-off at the Rajabagan Dockyard, a neighbouring concern, the Garden Reach Workshop, was working overtime. It is also a Government concern. The work could have been diverted there and the employees kept on employment. In view of all these facts, may I know whether Government would consider the matter and say that at least they would give employment to those personnel and not drive them out on the streets?

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: I think the hon. Member also is aware that I deeply sympathise with the problems that have been created, but as far as the suggestions that have been made by him are concerned, I shall find out whether the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation in the new programme that they have got (or employment in the Rajabagan Dockyard have taken all these things into account or not. My information is that ship-building and ship-repairing activities are going to be extended in the Rajabagan Dockyard. That is the reason why they have been able to offer employment to something like 3500 people or so in the Calcutta area and about 1500 people or so in the Assam area. I am afraid, much as I would like to say "yes", it is not possible for me to give an assurance that all these people who are now surplus to the requirements of the company could be re-employed by that company. But I can tell the hon. Member if, as and when the work of the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation becomes greater and they are able to take on more work and if the old and retrenched employees are willing, they should get the first chance in the new employment that may be offered by this company always assuming that they are suitable and willing to work.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: I will put two more questions. Sir, the different unions of the establishment have met the Minister for a number of times and they have submitted written proposals regarding the diversification and extension of its activities. I have personally met the ex-Minister, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy and other MPs also did so from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. They gave definitely reasonable proposals. They pointed out that a number of ships which were river-worthy were put aside and were reduced to junk because of the deliberate policy of neglect of this company. And then they suggested different river routes for inland

steam navigation in and around Calcutta. The Government could not say that all those proposals were not reasonable proposals. If these proposals were accepted or even kept open, all the employees would have been kept in employment.

Further, the Ghat employees, almost two thousand of them, are being thrown on the streets. It is not a matter of joke; not one or two or three but two thousand. Now, they were protected by the assurance about the agreement that up to 1968 their employment would be kept intact. This agreement is being violated; despite this written agreement, they are now being thrown on the streets. So, I want a categorical answer why this agreement has been violated, why those reasonable proposals have not been gone into and acted upon because no Minister could say that they were not reasonable as they were not profitable at the same time.

Further, the Government should also remember that the river route through Pakistan perhaps will remain closed for ever.

So, in view of all these things, I would like to know whether they would give those personnel or employees employment on whatever basis it may be—on a reduced pay or anything—till they get absorbed into the new undertaking that has been floated by the Government.

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: Sir, I would take up his point about the possible reopening of the Pakistan river route which is about 560 miles or so. Nobody is in a position to say at this moment—I think the hon. Member is also aware of that as to when, if at all, that route is going to be reopened for traffic between India and Pakistan. Obviously, one could not take that as the basis for con-

unemployed people in employment without their having work to do.

Regarding the other point about the various schemes to which the hon. Member referred, I can tell him, Sir, that I myself met the deputations of several unions. I also met a deputation at Calcutta. I was told that I should meet them for ten or five minutes, actually, I met them for two hours. There was a deputation commended to my notice by Mr. Jyoti Basu who asked me, "Will you kindly meet it for five or ten minutes?" I said "Certainly." But actually I met them for two hours and had a full discussion with them on the whole subject as to what could be done. They suggested so many schemes by which employment could be increased and so on.

Therefore, it was decided by my Ministry that simultaneously with the closure of this company, a Committee should be set up with instructions to complete its work in three months precisely for the purpose of finding out what were the possibilities of increasing employment, over and above what had been thought of by the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation. Many of them said, "We are clerks, we are non-matriculantes. Our being non-matriculantes will not be recognised elsewhere. But we have so much of experience." So, I said that this Committee will also consider the relaxation of the educational qualifications to find out if any recommendations were necessary so that they can be absorbed in other places. Then, I also thought of a retraining programme for those who can be capable of employment. So, the Committee has been set up with the Deputy Chairman of the Port Commissioners of Calcutta as Chairman, with a representative of the Labour and Employment Ministry here, who knows about retraining programmes and the representatives of the West Bengal and Assam Governments and a representative also of the Calcutta Port Trust.

I would like to assure the hon. Member that we want to take the most human approach possible. Sir, after the company's business fell down after the Indo-Pakistan hostilities, something like more Rs. 20 lakhs a month on an average have been spent just to keep the company going and the total loss incurred, the total expenditure incurred, by the Government runs into crores of rupees. That was because we did not want to liquidate it. We could have got it liquidated and it would have thrown out all the 7,500 out of employment. Instead, we went before the court. We wanted to organise a company. We set up the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation even before the company was going to be organised so that they could draw up a scheme for employment and so on. And we have also found employment for five thousand out of 7,500. And I may also tell the hon. Member that the bulk of the unemployed is now confined, as far as the Calcutta area is concerned, to the clerical staff and the headquarters staff. As far as the Assam area is concerned, the bulk of the unemployed is the handling, labour staff. This is the position as far as the unemployed are concerned. I do not think it will be possible in the public interest nor can the new company be in a position to keep people on employment till such time as new employment becomes possible for them.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: Sir, this is an important matter affecting the lives and future of those people. That is a very old company having extensive dockyard facilities for repairing boats and vessels. Their union also suggested that perhaps automobile repairing workshop should come under the dockyard administration, that all Government vehicles should be repaired by the workshops and that various structural and general engineering works from Bombay and from the private sector should be undertaken because these things can be

undertaken by this concern at the 1 dockyard itself. Further, the Government, the Minister concerned, has not given a categorical reply about the suggestion that inland transport in and around Calcutta, In addition to lighterage work, can be immediately undertaken and the Ghat employees can be employed.

In view of all these facts and also of the fact that all these people, some of them, are 40 or 59 years of age, that they have put in years of service and that now they cannot find employment elsewhere, and since also the Directive Principles enjoin on us that they should be assured of adequate means of livelihood, if the Government itself sets an example that the workers can be retrenched and that they cannot be kept on employment would it not be a green signal to the private employers to do as they please? Are all the laws for the workers? Are there no laws, nothing for the employers no curbs on them? Can workers be taken in and thrown out at their sweet will without security of service? Then how can you prevent unrest among them? So, considering all those facts, the Government can do this. They say that there is a Committee, that within five or six months it will finish its work. And for that period, on some basis, with negotiations with the unions, these two thousand people can be kept on employment so that such a bad precedent need not be set. Otherwise, I do not know—the demonstration is bound to continue. What are they to do?

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: I am sorry, Sir. I thought that the hon. Member would express the opinion that he would use his own very substantial influence to see that the sit-down demonstrations are terminated so that the office staff can get hold of the records, make arrangements for the payment of the leave salary and the other dues that are to be made to the retrenched workers. As far as that particular instance is concerned—I am not talking in general terms—I think

Government have a good record, Government have tried their very best from the start to see that all those persons are not thrown out of employment. They have tried to start a new company. They have tried to maximise employment for the old personnel and they are also trying to see what more can be done to increase employment.

I do not think it is possible, under the present financial circumstances—in fact, I am in great difficulties even to get money to run the new company—for me to give an assurance that the 2,500 odd people who are in Calcutta and Assam or who have now been retrenched will be kept on employment for a period of six or seven months. But what I can say is this that this company, this Committee, will try its best to see what can be done. The suggestions made by the hon. Member, whatever are on record and also any further suggestions that he has to make, will be placed before the Committee. I am also in touch with the Chairman of the Committee and the Chairman has agreed that all the 18 unions—Sir, there are 18 unions—are welcome to place their suggestions before the Committee. If necessary, the Committee will also meet them and discuss their proposals. I think, Sir, this is one instance in which the Government has tried its best to follow the liberal and human policy which the hon. Member wants the Government to follow.

SHRI J. P. THENGARI: Sir, before asking the question about those who are not to be absorbed, I should like to have a clarification. May I know, Sir, if those who are to be absorbed will be guaranteed continuity of service, not fresh appointment? That is one question.

Another question that flows from the statement is: Are we to presume that even after the Indo-Pak conflict the Rivers Steam Navigation Co. was working with surplus staff;—otherwise there is no question of surplus being created now—or whether the pattern

of internal working of the original company is going to be altered under the new company? If it is so, what is the nature of such a change?

Then, the Government has said that five ghats in Assam have closed down because there was no traffic. Have the Government conducted enquiries into the reasons for this decline of traffic and have they explored the possibilities of reopening these ghats by removing those reasons?

Lastly, a Committee has been appointed. It may take....

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: Four questions.

SHRI D. THENGARI: . . . quits some time, it is obvious, for finalising their recommendations. In the meanwhile, why does the Government hesitate to assure that while the manner of absorption may be worked out in course of time, the fact of absorption is already assured?

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: Sir, the hon. Member has asked a number of questions. I will try my best to answer them. Regarding the first question whether those who are re-employed will have continuity of service, I do not exactly know what is the connotation of "continuity". I think it means same grades, same scales of pay . . .

SHRI D. THENGARI: And their previous service is taken into account.

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: . . . they start with the same salary. I am afraid I can give no such assurance. As a matter of fact, the court's judgment is completely clear. The court has ordered that the new company shall employ such of the old staff on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit in the light of the work before the new company. What precisely it means in actual terms, I do not know. I will call for information and find out

in actual effect what has been the substantial difference between the old emoluments of the re-employed persons and the new emoluments of the re-employed persons.

Then, Sir, regarding the second question, it is a fact that the Rivers Steam Navigation Co. was working with surplus staff. One of the reasons, if I may venture to express the opinion—I do not know whether I should express or not—for the frustration, which has been created was the people were getting salaries but they did not have work. That is why I said the Government went on keeping a number of persons. In the meanwhile we were trying to find out how the company should be reorganised. We were hoping perhaps this river steam navigation traffic between Calcutta and Assam through Pakistan will reopen because of the Tashkent Agreement. We had some hopes for that. We were keen to see that the Company works. We went to the High Court with a scheme. The High Court took its own time. Unions made their representations. Therefore, I do not know whether it is the change in the pattern of the working that is responsible for the declaration of surplus personnel. At the same time, to be accurate for the record, the new company has got every authority to change the pattern of working because the old company was running at a terrific loss. From 1962 onwards it has been running at a terrific loss and we are anxious to see that this public sector enterprise will not start and go down making terrific losses and, therefore, the new company has got every authority to change the pattern of working if it wants. But whether it has done so or not, I do not know.

Then, the third question was about the ghats in Assam having closed down. These ghats have been closed down because after the Emergency—I am sure the hon. Member is aware—the Government took steps to increase transport facilities in Assam because the river transport came to a standstill, and a broad gauge-eum-metre gauge I line has been opened. And also roads

have been increased. This is the reason for the closing down of the ghats. In fact, as far as the northern bank stations are concerned, it is the opening of the broad gauge-citm-metre gauge railway line that has reduced traffic. At the same time we are anxious to see that inland water transport services continue to play an important part in Assam transport even if it means a certain amount of loss. We are in correspondence with the Assam Government whether we can conduct a quick survey to find out the various transport facilities and to see what could be the permanent place we could give to inland water transport in Assam.

The last question was that this Committee will take time, and in the meanwhile can we not employ these people who are retrenched? First of all, Sir, I hope the Committee will not take much time. We have instructed them to finish their work in three months. I hope three months will mean three months and not 15 months. Anyway, I shall try my best to see that the report of the Committee is expedited. But I must make it quite clear that I am not going to give an assurance—that all the people retrenched are going to be re-employed. I do not know. All the assurance that I am giving is that the Committee will go into it in a full and thorough way, seek the co-operation of all the parties concerned. All the Unions are at perfect liberty to give their ideas to this Committee, meet them, if necessary, and we will try to see how many more of the retrenched persons can be offered employment or can be facilitated in getting employment. But this does not mean we are giving an assurance of employment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I feel we had sufficient discussion on this matter.

SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: (West Bengal): Only one question, Sir. I am vitally interested in it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only one?

SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: Because I am the President of the Rajabagan '

I Dockyard Mazdoor Sabha, I am interested in the interests of the workmen there. So please allow me a couple of minutes. The hon. Minister has stated . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Put the question.

SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: Before I put the question I have to preface it. The hon. Minister said that this is at least one case where the Government has endeavoured to keep the organisation running. How? By spending about Rs. 4 crores in an unproductive manner. Since September 1965, after the Indo-Pak conflict, they have spent about Rs. 20 lakhs per month for nothing. I myself met Mr. Ashoka Mehta, the planning Minister, and I also met the Defence Minister and told him, why not let this Rajabagan Dockyard be used for Defence purpose^ for production of defence materials. The dockyard is meant for ship-building, steamer-building, etc. I told them that they did not do anything during these las 20 months and they had gone in for liquidation. Sir, what business this Government has to spend Rs. 4 crores in this unproductive manner? This is a bankruptcy of imagination. May I know from the hon^l. Minister whether the Government has taken any decisions so far and forgotten the High Court judgment? The High Court has nq-thing to do. You are the employer and the workmen are going to be employed.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: Question?

SHRI D. L. SEN GOTTA: This is the question. May I know whether you are going to give them the benefit of their long years of service? You have said that those who may not be taken back will get compensation. What about those who will be taken back? May I know whether their previous service will be taken for the purpose of their retirement benefits in furture and whether they will be paid the wages?

PROF. V. K. R. V. RAO: I am not able to follow.

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. SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: Do not answer without understanding.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sen Gupta, please take you seat.

SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA: My preamble to the question was that you have spent Rs. 4 crores and have done nothing. That was a bankruptcy of the Government . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. The whole matter has been discussed fully.

SHRI D. L. SEN GUPTA; The question is whether he is going to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your question is on record. I would like the Minister to go into that question and try to understand it. Next item.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

GHOST RATION CARDS IN DELHI

*410. SARDAR RAM SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a very large number of ghost ration cards are still being utilised in Delhi;

(b) whether any steps have been taken by Government to cancel them;

(c) if so, how many cards have been cancelled so far; and

(d) what steps have been taken against those utilising such cards?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SHRI D. ERING): (a) It is quite possible that rations are being drawn against some "ghost" ration cards though their exact number is not known.

(b) An appeal was made to the public for voluntary surrender of ghost cards by 10th April, 1967 adding

that after that date penal action would be taken. A regular programme for intensive house verification to unearth ghost ration cards has also been launched.

(c) 10912 cards.

(d) Cases against 24 persons were filed out of which 12 cases ended in conviction.

EMERGENCY 'EXIT' DOOR IN CARAVALIE AIRCRAFT

*411. SHRI K. SUNDARAM: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the international regulations governing the Emergency 'Exit' doors in an aircraft like caravalié;

(b) whether it is allowed to arrange the seats with fixed backs obstructing Emergency windows; and

(c) whether it is a fact that seats are arranged in the Caravalié services of the Indian Airlines Corporation with fixed backs obstructing exit for the Emergency window?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (DR. KARAN SINGH):

(a) Annex 8 to the Convention of the International Civil Aviation specifies international standards for airworthiness of aircraft. In these standards a general provision has been made concerning emergency exits in transport aircraft so as to ensure rapid evacuation of passengers and crew in the event of emergency. However, every country stipulates the precise conditions that must be complied with for certifying the airworthiness of the aircraft. The emergency exits in Indian aircraft are fitted according to the regulations framed by the Director General of Civil Aviation.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The type of seats fitted in the Caravalié aircraft are such that their backs can be folded forward so as to give clear access to the emergency exit window to all passengers.