

last week of May or the first week of June, and how can the hon. Minister now take the plea that since the summer has set in they cannot hold 14 or 15 bye-elections in the country?

SHRI C. R. PATTABHI RAMAN: The Election Commission has recommended that with which we agree.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: The Election Commission has also recommended that general election should be held in Orissa.

SHRI M. M. DHARIA: May I know whether it is a fact that recently there was a conference of Chief Electoral Officers from various States and whether it has been decided to hold the general elections in the third week of February, 1967? If so, may I know whether these elections will be held in the country on the same day or whether they would be on two or three different days?

SHRI C. R. PATTABHI RAMAN: That does not arise out of this question. We can get the information if he wants.

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY: In view of the fact that there is no Indo-Pakistan conflict now, may I know whether the Government would reconsider the question of holding bye-elections particularly in view of the demand that the Prime Minister should be from the Lok Sabha? (*Interruption*). I would like to know whether the Government would advise that the Prime Minister would seek an election and therefore the elections would be held.

SHRI G. S. PATHAK: Government has no intention of reconsidering its decision. The decision really rests with the Election Commission. The Government holds the view that the Election Commission's view is right.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: Then do not blame the weather.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: The decision to continue the suspension of bye-elections is being justified on the ground that the summer has set in and that the rainy season is coming. I should like to know why the suspension was not done

away with immediately after the cessation of hostilities and particularly after the signing of the Tashkent Declaration. There was no summer, no rain, then. Is it because some Members of the Treasury Benches are afraid to face the election?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No insinuation.

SHRI G. S. PATHAK: The reason given by the hon. Member is not correct. No Member of the Treasury Benches was afraid of contesting any election. It was the decision of the Election Commission in which the Government concurred.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: What about the first part of my question? Why did the Election Commission not decide to resume bye-elections immediately after the cessation of hostilities and particularly after the signing of the Tashkent Declaration? Did the Government tender advice to the Election Commission and, if so, what is the nature of that advice?

SHRI G. S. PATHAK: The Election Commission, as the hon. Member knows, is an independent body. There is no question of giving any advice to the Election Commission. The Commission holds its own views independently.

TESTING OF ATTA SOLD THROUGH RATION SHOPS

*250. **SHRIMATI TARA RAM-CHANDRA SATHE:** Will the Minister of FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION be pleased to state whether the atta for sale in Ration Shops in Delhi is tested before it is released from the Flour Mills, if so, where and at what point?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI P. GOVINDA MENON): Roller Flour Mills are regularly inspected by authorised Officers in pursuance of the provisions of the Wheat Roller Flour Mills (Licensing and Control) Order, 1957. These Officers draw samples of atta, as also of other wheat products, which are analysed in the Central Grain Analysis Laboratory. Besides atta, as also other wheat products, produced by the Roller Flour Mills, should conform to the speci-

fications laid down under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955, and the Municipal Health Staff are empowered to draw samples and get them tested in pursuance of these Rules.

SHRIMATI TARA RAMCHANDRA SATHE: Sometimes we suspect the atta to be adulterated. But, as you know, it is very difficult for a housewife to go to the laboratory and get it tested. And there are very few laboratories in the country. So, will the Government label the atta where it is ground, at the very mills? Will the Government do it? Secondly, will the Government order the *chuk kies* to give the facility of grinding one kilo of wheat? We would rather prefer wheat to atta.

SHRI P. GOVINDA MENON: These suggestions can be borne in mind. But I should like to emphasise that presently, occasionally—rather frequently—tests are made, checks are made and the atta selected is tested in those laboratories.

SHRIMATI TARA RAMCHANDRA SATHE: May I know what the Government feels? Is it more beneficial to get this atta rather than wheat? Why is the floured wheat dumped on the consumer? Why should we not get wheat because the atta gets many times adulterated and it is not possible for the Government to check it at every stage?

SHRI P. GOVINDA MENON: Wheat also can be sold

AN HON. MEMBER: It is being sold.

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM: In the beginning we did not have the indigenous wheat. Therefore we were supplying atta and the other wheat products. Now we sell wheat also.

SHRI T. V. ANANDAN: Has the attention of the Food Ministry been drawn to the latest editorials of the Madras weeklies that in the rice bags white sand is purposely added by the traders and, if it is so, has the Government any proposal to avert such malpractices?

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM: There is already provision for punishing adulteration of foodstuffs and I am sure the Madras Government is competent enough to take the necessary steps to prevent this. But I do agree that there seems to be a good deal of adulteration not only in respect of foodgrains but in regard to other things

also. That shows the deterioration in our standards with regard to business and particularly the distribution of essential articles to the community.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: Is it a fact that the price of wheat and atta has been increased by seven paise per kilo in Delhi and, if so, what is the justification? Is the hon. Minister aware of this increase?

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM: I do not have the facts here. I shall look into it; if the hon. Minister is interested, I will do so.

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY: The hon. Minister has said that a great deal of adulteration is there in Madras now . . .

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM: Not only in Madras . . .

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY: The question was about Madras.

MR CHAIRMAN: He said everywhere.

SHRI S. S. MARISWAMY: He has said that there is a great deal of adulteration going on in Madras. The Madras Government has so far failed to check it. In view of its failure, what does the Government of India propose to do?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: I do not know whether the hon. Member suggests that we should take over the Madras administration. That is one of the most competent administrations that we have, I am sure.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: May I know if the Government have issued any instructions that atta should reach the consumer within a few weeks of its milling so that it does not rot because there have been complaints that atta when it reaches the consumers, is several months old and atta of several months old, he should know, is not very good?

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM: Yes, Sir. Care will be taken to see that damaged atta is not sold. But I am not quite sure about the period for which wheat products would last. We will take care to see that damaged atta is not supplied.

SHRIMATI LALITHA (RAJAGOPALAN): May I know if Government are

taking steps to prevent the adulteration of atta and many other foodstuffs?

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM That is what I have stated. We have got a very rigorous law. It is a question of implementation. As a matter of fact, this question should be put to my colleague, the Health Minister, who is in charge of the subject.

MR CHAIRMAN All practical difficulties are there.

SHRIMATI TARA RAMCHANDRA SATHE May I know whether this atta was imported or it was made in the country?

SHRI C SUBRAMANIAM Produced in the country.

WATER ROUTE BETWEEN CALCUTTA AND ASSAM *via* BURMA

*251.

SHRI CHITTA BASU †

SHRI D L SEN GUPTA

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

(a) whether the Government of India have any proposal under consideration for opening a water-route between Calcutta and Assam *via* Burma, and

(b) if so, by when the scheme is likely to materialise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND AVIATION (SHRI C. M. POONACHA).

(a) and (b) The feasibility of such a proposition has not been considered.

SHRI CHITTA BASU. May I know whether a survey is being conducted in substitution of another scheme for linking the Ganga and the Brahmaputra *via* Bengal and Assam?

SHRI C M POONACHA The question relates to a proposal made for a water route between Calcutta and Assam *via* Burma. One article appeared, published by an hon. Member of Parliament, Shri G. G. Swell. This matter was looked into and then it was found on preliminary enquiries that the River Kaladan which flows through the Mizo District does not permit naviga-

tion. It has about 50 to 70 rapids, which makes navigation a bit difficult. The other proposal is for a railway connection up to the point of Longmasu. And another one is a road construction. On preliminary examinations, both these seem to be not feasible for the reason that the railway would cost about Rs. 60 crores and the road would cost about Rs. 15 crores.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: May I know whether the Government is in a position to take up immediately the implementation of another scheme of linking the Brahmaputra and the Ganga—that is the scheme—to connect Bengal and Assam?

SHRI C M POONACHA This seems to be a totally different suggestion. We will certainly examine it if a pointed reference is made.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR. May I know from the Minister whether it is a fact that a certain proposal is put before the Government that the Mizo Hills District should be connected with the Bay of Bengal through a river which flows *via* Burma and that this proposal has been sponsored by certain foreign countries and that the blessings of the World Bank are also there for this proposal? May I know whether the Government is aware of such a proposal?

SHRI C M POONACHA No, Sir.

‡IRRIGATION THROUGH UNDERGROUND PIPES

*94 SHRI M. C. SHAH Will the Minister of FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a new method of irrigation through underground irrigation pipes is to be launched shortly in four districts of Punjab, and

(b) if so, what are the special advantages of this method of irrigation?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE): (a) The method of irrigation through underground pipes is already in vogue in some of the districts in the Punjab.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Chitta Basu.

‡Transferred from the 7th May, 1966.