

been a bumper rabi crop this year; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to bring down the prices of foodgrains, especially wheat, to a reasonable level as quickly as possible?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI D. R. CHAVAN): (a) After the harvesting of the last kharif and rabi crops, the prices of cereals showed a downward trend. The all India index number of wholesale prices of rice which had risen to 146 in September, 1964 came down to 128 in January, 1965 and remained steady at that figure till June, 1965. Similarly, the index for jowar came down from 225 in October, 1964 to 190 in March, 1965. The index number of wheat which stood at 151 in January, 1965 came down to 131 in June, 1965. The prices of pulses also showed a tendency to ease. The index for pulses which stood at 196 in January, 1965 came down to 152 in June, 1965. The index number of cereals which stood at 150 in September, 1964 came down to 137 by June, 1965.

With the onset of the lean season, the prices have shown a tendency to rise from July, 1965. The index number of cereals for July is 144 against 137 in June, 1965. This seasonal tendency has been further aggravated by the delay in the setting in of the monsoon and the tendency on the part of the farmers to hold the stocks in expectation of higher prices later. This tendency will continue until the foodgrains start coming to the market again after the monsoon.

(b) Following are among the important steps which the Government has taken or proposes to take to stabilise the prices of foodgrains: —

- (1) Fixation of statutory maximum prices or "paddy at which such stocks could be requisitioned.

- (2) Stepping up of imports of foodgrains and internal procurement and distribution of larger quantities from Central Stocks.
- (3) Opening of fair price shops to serve the vulnerable sections of population.
- (4) Informal rationing throughout the State of Kerala and statutory rationing in Calcutta.
- (5) Introduction of statutory rationing in all urban areas having a population of 10 lakhs and above and areas having a heavy concentration of industrial workers.
- (6) Tightening up of restrictions on bank advances against foodgrains.
- (7) Promulgation of anti-hoarding measures and strengthening of the administrative and enforcement machinery in the States.
- (8) Introduction of summary trials for contravention of food laws.

AFRO-ASIAN CONFERENCE ON RURAL RECONSTRUCTION

36. SHRI KRISHAN DUTT: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an international organisation, called "The Afro-Asian Conference on Rural Reconstruction", has recently been set up with headquarters in New Delhi;

(b) if the answer to part (a) above be in the affirmative, whether it is a Government sponsored body and if what is the extent of financial assistance which this organisation will receive from Government; and

(c) what are the advantages which the country can expect to derive from the activities of this organisation in the matter of increasing its agricultural production?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN): (a) The organization with its Head-office in Delhi was set up in 1962.

(b) The organisation has not been sponsored by the Government of India. It is an international body set up at a conference held in Cairo in March, 1962 in which representatives of 18 Afro-Asian countries including India participated. India's contribution to the budget of the organisation for the current year is Rs. 1,57,876.57.

(c) The problems confronting the developing countries of Africa and Asia in the matter of rural reconstruction are similar. By pin-pointing such problems and pooling experience gained in tackling them, the organisation is expected to assist member-countries in solving them.

INCREASE IN PORT CHARGES AT CALCUTTA

37, SHRI RAM SINGH: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Calcutta Port Commissioners have decided to increase the port charges to meet the deficit in 1965-66 budget;

(b) whether it is a fact that port charges in Calcutta are the highest in the country and have been increased by over 70 per cent, during the last eight years;

(c) whether the ICC have suggested that any further rise in the port charges will seriously affect the trade and price structure and have urged for a downward revision of the rates; and

(d) if the answer to part (c) above be in the affirmative, what is Government's decision in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT <SHRI RAJ BAHADUR> : (a) to (d). The Calcutta Port Commissioners anti-

pated a deficit of Rs. 56-6 lakhs in their revenue budget in 1965-66. In addition, a liability of about Rs. 80 lakhs arose on account of implementation of the recommendations of the Wage Board for Port and Dock Workers granting interim relief and increases in dearness allowance. It, therefore, became necessary for the Port Commissioners to increase the charges for the various services rendered by them to meet the deficit.

The charges levied at the Port of Calcutta are higher than the charges levied at other Indian Ports on account of the river due levied by them to cover the cost of Hooghly River conservancy, which amounts to about Rs. 4-5 crores every year. If the river due is ignored, the charges would compare favourably with the charges at other major ports. The other major ports have not to incur any river conservancy charges like Calcutta. The average of the percentages of increases in the various port charges over the last eight years is about 52 per cent.

Only the Oriental Chamber of Commerce represented to Government against the increase in the port charges. The Port Commissioners, including those representing the various Chambers of Commerce, approved the increase in port charges.

The increase in port charges has been sanctioned by Government and is effective from the 1st August, 1965, except that the increase in the charges on railways is effective from the 8th July, 1965.

DISCONTINUANCE OF AIR SERVICE BETWEEN DELHI-BHOPAL-INDORE-BOMBAY

-8 /SHRI CHRUDEV GUPTA: \ SHRI SYED AHMED:

Will the Minister of Civil Aviation be pleased to state: