

Project being started early in the Fourth Five Year Plan.

(b) The proposal is at present being considered for inclusion in the Fourth Five Year Plan.

(c) The cost of a canal which can take ships of 30 ft. draft is estimated at about Rs. 22 crores.

SHRI RAM SINGH: May I know if the project has been delayed by five years and, if so, how much loss has been incurred?

SHRI N. KANUNGO: It was not delayed at all. It has not started.

PROF. M. B. LAL: Delay in starting.

SHRI N. KANUNGO: It has not started. It is being studied.

SHRI GOPIKRISHNA VIJAIVAR-GIYA: May I know what kind of scheme is thought of and is it some cutting of the rocks, through which ships can pass easily and avoid circuiting via Ceylon? ....

SHRI N. KANUNGO: That is the idea, passage through Adam's Bridge, so that ships can come directly from the West Coast to East Coast and vice versa.

SHRI M. RUTHNASWAMY: In view of the fact that the prosperity of the projected Tuticorin harbour will depend on the completion of the Sethusamudram project, will the Government consider the advisability of pursuing the Sethusamudram project *pari passu* with the building of the new Tuticorin harbour?

SHRI N. KANUNGO: That is being done. At present there is a technical committee which is going into it.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: May I know by what length this scheme will shorten the nautical miles that a ship has to cover in their journey? What length will be reduced?

SHRI N. KANUNGO: The saving in time will be about 15 hours and, of course, it will be a straight-cut to the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, without going round Ceylon.

SHRI N. SRI RAMA REDDY: What are the main advantages? Are there any defence advantages to be derived by the Sethusamudram project? Why was the Prime Minister insisting on the completion of this?

SHRI N. KANUNGO: Because it will be of great help to the coastal shipping of India.

#### FOOD SHORTAGE

\*283. SHRI RAM SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether serious shortage of food supply has been reported from various parts of the country; if so, what steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken by the Government of India to overcome this shortage;

(b) whether it is a fact that several people have died as a result of shortage of supply of foodgrains; and

(c) if so, the details of the casualties?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI D. R. CHAVAN): (a) Some shortage of foodgrains is being experienced in certain States. To overcome this shortage programme of import of foodgrains has been stepped up and large quantities are being supplied to deficit States from Central stocks.

(b) No, Madam.

(c) Does not arise.

SHRI RAM SINGH: Is it a fact that in certain parts of the country because of shortage some people have been eating grass instead of wheat?

**SHRI D. R. CHAVAN:** No, it is not correct.

**SHRI DEOKINANDAN NARAYAN:** Madam, the kharif crops have already come. May I know from the Government in what States paddy purchases are going on and up to now how far purchases have taken place? The kharif crop has already come, and paddy, jowar, bajra, they are all coming in the market. May I know if the State Governments are making purchases on behalf of the Central Government and how far they have already made purchases up to now?

**SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM:** Rice is being purchased in all the surplus States like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and also Madras. But Madras crop is yet to come, and as far as coarse grains are concerned it is only in a few States that Governments are undertaking purchase like U.P. and Maharashtra. I am not in a position to give the exact quantities which have been purchased.

**SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA:** Having regard to the very serious shortage of supply of rice in Kerala, may I know what steps recently in the course of the last few days the Government have taken in order to augment the supply and make larger quantities of rice available to the consumers? I should like to have some details about the steps taken in the course of the last few days.

**SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM:** We are moving rice from Andhra Pradesh at the rate of nearly 1000 tons per day, and in addition to that movements are taking place from Madhya Pradesh and Punjab to Kerala. Regarding imported rice also ships are being diverted to Kerala ports and they are in the process of being unloaded now. Recently I was at Cochin, the day before yesterday, and I had discussions with the officials. We are taking all possible steps to see that sufficient quantities are moved to Kerala for the purpose of maintaining the supply position.

**SHRI S. C. DEB:** May I know whether any State has offered foodgrains for the Central stocks?

**SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM:** We have drawn up a commitment by the various surplus States for the purpose of procurement being made to the Central pool, and that is, Andhra Pradesh has agreed to give 8 lakh tons; Madhya Pradesh 4 lakh tons; Punjab 2.5 lakh tons; Orissa 3 lakh tons; Madras 2 lakh tons; on the whole 19.5 lakh tons of rice.

**SHRI FARIDUL HAQ ANSARI:** May I know whether the Minister has read in this morning's papers that there is no rice or wheat available in the Allahabad market? If the news is correct, what is the Government doing to remove this difficulty?

**SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM:** As far as U.P. is concerned, we are delivering to them 1,05,000 tons of wheat every month, and this month also the order of despatch has been to that extent, and we have stepped up the despatches particularly during the last one week so that there may be greater availability. In addition to that they are having a bumper crop of rice and very soon the coarse grains also would be harvested. This is likely to ease the position.

**SHRI B. K. P. SINHA:** May I know if it is a fact that the normal requirements of rice in this country have been during the last decade in the region of 33 million tons, while the production last year of rice according to Government estimates was in the region of 36 million tons and this year it is supposed to be about 40 million tons. In view of this excess production over normal requirements may I know why we are feeling such an acute shortage of rice?

**SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM:** But during this decade we have increased our population also to the extent of 10 crores.