

REDUCTION IN PRICE OF PETROLEUM

*42. SHRIMATI YASHODA REDDY: Will the Minister of STEEL, MINES AND FUEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the oil companies in India have agreed to reduce the price of petroleum and petroleum products; and

(b) if so, to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF MINES AND OIL (SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA): (a) Not yet.

(b) Does not arise.

SHRIMATI YASHODA REDDY: May I know, Sir, whether there were any recent talks between the companies concerned and the hon. Minister regarding this?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: Yes, Sir. The negotiations are going on these days.

SHRIMATI YASHODA REDDY: May I know the reasons, if any, for the failure of the talks between the companies and the Government?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: I have not said that there is any reason to presume that there is any failure.

DR. R. P. DUBE: What is the reaction, I am asking?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: The negotiations are still continuing. Therefore, it will not be in the public interest to report these things.

SHRI B. M. CHINAI: May I know, Sir, whether the Government are not in a position to impose their will because it is a one-sided agreement?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: I have no offer comments to at the present stage.

DR. R. B. GOUR: Have the prices been reduced by these very companies in foreign countries, and if so, by how much they have reduced the prices?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: That question has to be investigated properly.

SHRI P. S. RAJAGOPAL NAIDU: May I know whether the agreement is such that the Government of India cannot interfere with the reduction of prices of petroleum products?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: As I said, Sir, it is very difficult to answer this question at this stage.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: May I know, Sir, what is the disparity between the cost of production of these companies and the prices that they charge for the various products?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: That is a matter of calculation.

SHRI M. M. SUR: How do the prices of oil in the U.S.A. and Japan compare with those in India?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: They all differ due to different circumstances.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: The hon. Minister has said that it is a matter of calculation. Have the Government calculated it?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: Sir, calculations are based on so many factors.

SHRI B. K. P. SINHA: What is the calculation?

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: Sir, there is a definite question and there should be a definite answer to it.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: The definite answer is that we are just in a state of negotiations, and therefore it will not be in the public interest to ask so many details as are being asked today.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE: What are the difficulties that the Government are facing in the matter of enforcing their views with the companies? That is the point that is being asked.

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: Sir, I have nothing to say about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That will do.

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: Last question, Sir. May I know, Sir, whether the Government is aware that because of these negotiations for reducing the prices, the companies have asked their dealers to increase their payments to the companies, and if so, what the Government proposes to do about it? They have increased the rent of the petrol pumps etc. Is the Government aware of it, and what are the steps taken by the Government in this matter?

SHRI K. D. MALAVIYA: We are not aware of this. But if the hon. Member so wishes, I am prepared to make necessary enquiries.

MANUFACTURE OF SYNTHETIC OIL AND SULPHURIC ACID FROM ASSAM COAL

*43. SHRIMATI PUSHPALATA DAS: Will the Minister of SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to the reply given to Starred Question No. 524 in the Rajya Sabha on the 19th December, 1957 and state:

(a) whether economic aspects of the manufacture of synthetic oil and sulphuric acid from Assam coal have since been investigated; and

(b) if so, what would be the capital cost for starting a plant for synthetic oil in Shillong from Khasi coal and sulphuric acid plant in Marghe-rita from Ledo coal?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS (SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR): (a) and (b). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI V. PRASAD RAO: May I know whether any such proposal is there to erect a synthetic petrol plant at Kothagudam using the low grade coal?

SHRI HUMAYUN KABIR: Sir, this question relates to Khasi coal. I cannot understand how this supplementary question arises out of this main question.

SHRI V. PRASAD RAO: Coal is almost available, Sir, in Kothagudam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: When the question is put about coal in Assam, you wish to have the answer about coal in Kothagudam also. Questions are over.

WRITTEN ANSWER TO QUESTION

NON-AVAILABILITY OF ONE ANNA GOVERNMENT PETITION PAPERS IN THE DELHI TREASURY

*27. SHRI JUGAL KISHORE: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Government petition papers, priced at one anna per sheet, are not available in the Delhi Treasury for the past several months;

(b) whether it is a fact that Government are suffering great loss on account of the non-supply of such paper; and

(c) if so, what action Government are taking in this connection?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI GOVIND BALIABH PANT): (a) There was a general shortage of 'petition paper' during the year 1957-58 and supply of it to the public was irregular. The paper has now been made available by releasing the reserve stocks.

(b) Government have suffered some loss but it is not possible to assess the exact amount of loss as the sale of 'petition paper' varies from time to time.

(c) Efforts are being made to secure the necessary supply from the Controller of Printing and Stationery.