

SHRI S. MAHANTY: I want to know if the regional headquarters at Bilaspur is going to be split up and located at Waltair, Kharagpur and Bilaspur.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister has stated that the whole question is under consideration and no final decision has been reached. On the other side, hon. Members go on to suggest that steps are already being taken, without a final decision being reached at top level. Hon. Members should accept what the Minister says. Next question.

RISE IN THE PRICE OF RICE IN MALABAR DISTRICT

*97. SHRI E. K. IMBICHIBAVA: Will the Minister for FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the price of rice has gone up steeply in the Malabar District of Madras State;

(b) whether Government are aware of the strong protests voiced by the people and leading news papers of Malabar during the last week of January; and

(c) if the replies to parts (a) and (b) above be in the affirmative, whether Government propose to take any steps in the matter; if so, what?

THE MINISTER FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI RAFI AHMED KIDWAI): (a) There has been a slight rise in the open market price of rice in Malabar District. The issue price of rice from Government shops has been slightly raised by Rs. 1-14-9 per maund in the case of first sort rice; while actually the second sort has been reduced by Rs. 0-6-6 per maund.

(b) I have not received any representation but have seen reports in the Press about the rise in the rice prices.

(c) The fixation of prices for issue from Government shops is a matter

for the State Government to decide, taking into account their availabilities and the prices. However, the Central Government will address the State Government to explore any possibility of a reduction in the price of the first sort rice.

SHRI E. K. IMBICHIBAVA (in Malayalam): "What is the rate of increase of the price in ration shops?"

SHRI M. V. KRISHNAPPA: The increase in the price in ration shops is due to the revised price policy of the Madras Government...

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants to know the rate of increase.

SHRI RAFI AHMED KIDWAI: It has actually been reduced in the case of second sort rice; from Rs. 19-2-6 to Rs. 18-12.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about first sort rice?

SHRI M. V. KRISHNAPPA: I have already stated that the price of that rice has been increased by Rs. 1-14-9 per maund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is for the rich man. Mr. Imbichibava is satisfied. Next question.

TRANSPORT OF Bidis

*98. SHRI E. K. IMBICHIBAVA: Will the Minister for RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that adequate railway facilities do not exist for transport of bidis to Ceylon from India; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take in the matter?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS AND TRANSPORT SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: (a) No, there is