

REPLY BY THE MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY, MR. J.M. JUMABHOY, IN THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON TUESDAY, APRIL
22, 1958.

In reply to Mr. Goh Tong Liang:

As a result of Government's vigorous drive to increase food supplies, the prices of poultry and eggs have as compared to last July declined now by about 10% in the case of poultry and about 20% in the case of eggs. Of course compared to April 1955 prices of poultry and eggs have come down by about 30%. Prices of chicken feed, on the other hand, have declined on the average by about 10% between August 1956 and March 1957.

There has lately been unfair dumping of eggs from China which has hit our poultry rearers and in order to give a chance of survival to our farmers I have ordered that all egg imports be placed under specific licensing and that as from 15th June all imported eggs, except from the Federation of Malaya, be required to bear an indelible stamp impression to show that they are imported eggs.

There is no danger at present of shortage of rice in Singapore. Merchants today are holding large stocks in their godowns, a considerable quantity of which was imported for re-export.

The Government is always alert to the necessity of maintaining adequate stocks in the colony for local consumption and therefore not only is a day-to-day check maintained on imports and re-exports of rice to ensure that adequate stocks are retained in Singapore but also, as the Honourable Member is well aware, Government, in spite of strong trade and also political opposition from the Honourable Member himself, maintains a rice stockpile so that the people of Singapore are safeguarded from a sudden shortage of their staple food.

The price of rice is beyond the control of Government. It is dependant on the surplus available in rice producing countries and on the demand from consumer countries. The indicated exportable surplus available for this year in rice producing countries in the east is less than last year and as a result prices of all types of rice have increase .

In reply to Mr. Seah Peng Chuan:

The Trade Advisory Council, on which are represented the various Chambers of Commerce, manufacturers, banking, rubber and overseas Chinese import/export interests, are unanimous in advising me that they do not consider it necessary or advantageous at present to establish a Trade Mission in China.

Since it is the Chinese people's Government's express policy to trade on a basis of bilateral agreements, thus purchasing direct from producing countries rather than through an entrepot, and since we have no products of our own in which we could expand our sales to China, Government considers that no useful economic purpose would be served by the establishment of a Trade Mission in China at present.

In reply to Mr. Lee Choon Eng:

Yes, I am aware that such a Committee has been set up in Singapore by the Australian Apple and Pear Board. The Committee now comprises twelve members, one member having resigned some time ago.

I am satisfied that the existence of this Importers Committee not only causes hardship to the dealers who are not on the Committee but is also not in the best interests of Singapore consumers. In fact the Committee is designed to serve the interests of Australian producers.

Government thoroughly dislikes such monopolistic cartels and has made repeated representations to the Ministry of Trade in Australia with a view to its early dissolution. In spite of the Ministry's repeated representations the Committee is still in being and the only concession made so far by the Australian Board was to remove ceilings on imports in 1956. At present I am discussing this matter with the Australian Trade Mission.

APRIL 22, 1958.

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