

tures of wood and timber, cutlery and hardware, machinery, books and printed matter, coir and coir manufactures, tobacco other than cigarettes, cigars and bidis, sugar, glass and glassware, paints and painters' materials, paper and paste-board, soap and gunny bags.

### Prices of Imported Foodgrains

THE Madras Food Minister is credited with the curious statement that Soviet Russia had made a generous offer of foodgrains to India last year and that the Central Government had been trapped into paying for it through their nose in the end. Since he also made the statement that China had refused to part with even a single ton of rice this year, it should be mentioned in fairness to China that she not only came to our rescue last year by supplying 50,000 tons of rice at a time of our greatest need—the total imports of rice from China during 1951 was 61,000 tons—but also that she refrained from extracting a high price for it as she could easily have done.

China supplied rice at the lowest price among all the exporters to India, at an average of Rs 19 per maund when Burma demanded and received a price of Rs 22 per maund. True enough, this year China has clearly indicated that she has no surplus to export but this does not detract from her generosity in the past.

What the Madras Food Minister probably had in mind was the proposed big deal with the Soviet Union which apparently did not come off. The *Food Bulletin* > May 14, 1951, issued by the Press Information Bureau, reported that the Soviet Union had shipped 50,000 tons of wheat to India in anticipation of a barter agreement involving 2,00,000 tons. It denied, at that time, that the shipment had been bought by the Government of India on a cash basis. As the Commodity Exchange Agreement did not come through, it is possible that at a later date payment had been made in cash and the price paid was very high. The actual quantity of wheat imported from Soviet Union last year was 1,00,000 tons. It is not likely that any wheat would be imported from this source as Russian prices are high and the Soviet Union has already contracted for the disposal of its surplus with other countries.

China helped us in our hour of need by selling us rice at a very

low price. The USA helped by loaning wheat. We did not receive any special consideration from the Soviet Union, neither from Burma for the matter of that. Selling at the best price, however, is the accepted commercial practice which one cannot fairly complain.

### Super-priorities for Britain

SINCE priority means a scale of preference in which some things come first and others follow in descending order of importance, why talk of overriding priority and super-priority? The idea sought to be conveyed by these terminological monstrosities is simple; it is the manner of expression which is hysterical. There has been a shift in emphasis in the programme for rearmament in Britain. The Labour Government was opposed to giving a priority to armaments over export industries, from the justifiable apprehension that such a course would be "ineffective and dangerous" when all resources were greatly strained.

The present Government has decided to give priority to a limited part of the armament programme, only about a sixth of it, to be exact. The products chosen for this purpose are six key types of aircrafts with their ancillaries and supplies, chains of radar stations for reporting hostile aircraft, Centurion tanks, guided missiles and certain items of the anti-mine programme. This is the list of the 'super-priorities', all of which involve great technical complexities and would require much detailed, difficult and often not very remunerative work by sub-contractor. They would not get through official precedence, for the firms which alone can handle them have more paying orders on hand to be willing or able to take them up except under pressure.

Needless to say, the weapons chosen are those on which will fall the first impact of a war.

### Brazil's Jute Output

JUTE production in Brazil increased by 40 per cent in 1949 and 52 per cent in 1950, totalling 20,000 tons during the latter year. Local consumption now amounts to 26,000 tons annually, excluding similar fibres which are employed to make up the deficit. The actual requirements are much higher and are going up with the rapid increase in population and expanding agri-

cultural production which is creating a big demand for bags.

During the first half of 1951, the latest date for which official statistics are available, Brazil imported 7,282 tons of jute as compared with 523 tons at £115-18-0 during the corresponding period of 1950, according to the Indian Central Jute Committee.

An Executive Jute Commission has been set up recently to increase national production by modernising methods of cultivation. Harvesting in the Amazon marshes is still carried out under primitive conditions, which are bad for the fibre and injurious to the labourers.

Brazil is now developing a new fibre plant which produces ten times more fibre per stem than jute. The method of treatment for extracting this fibre is a close secret but it is known, however, that the operation is carried out on a type of card completely immersed in water and that the spinning processes are also different. The resulting yarn is heavier than jute and its cost is 40 per cent lower. This fibre is regarded as ideal for manufacturing combined sacks.

### Revisions to the Colombo Plan

IT will be sometime before the progress report on the Colombo Plan which was unanimously adopted at Karachi is made public. While one will have to wait for it to get a clear picture of the revisions made, all that is known now is that the magnitude of India's Six Year Development Plan has been raised from Rs 1,840 crores to Rs 2,500 crores; and that the additional expenditure covers an extra allotment of Rs 50 crores for river valley projects, and an as yet unspecified amount for community development projects. The increase of Rs 660 crores in total outlay cannot, however, be clue to these two items only. Considerable confusion is caused by the fact that the revised plan is presumably based more on the Planning Commission's Five-Year Plan than on the original Six-Year Plan. It will be remembered that the total outlay in the first and second parts of the Five-Year Plan comes to Rs 1,793 crores. This is exclusive of the current depreciation expenditure of the railways, amounting to Rs 150 crores over the five years 1951-56. Public outlay in the Five Year Plan, taken on a comparable basis with the Colombo Plan, thus amount to Rs 1,943 crores, or about Rs 100 crores more than the six year outlay of the