

[17 December, 1999]

RAJYA SABHA

Import of Sugar

1690. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government allowed import of sugar when India had a stock of about 70 lakh tonnes, the sugar mills were paying 15 per cent interest on this stock to banks, and they were not allowed to dispose of this stock as per their need; and

(b) if so, what were the circumstance under which this import was allowed which adversely hit the interest of sugar industry and consequently interests of sugarcane growers were jeopardized?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) Imports of sugar have been allowed under Open General Licence (OGL) in March 1994 when the month end stock of indigenous sugar was 57.92 lakh tones. Since then, imports of sugar have continued to be on OGL. The sugar factories pledge their sugar stocks for borrowing working capital from the banks. The rate of interest on such borrowings varies from bank-to-bank, year-to-year and mill-to-mill based on the Bank's commercial prudence. While fixing the ex-factory levy sugar price for 1993-94 sugar season, the rate of interest on working capital was considered at 17.25%. So far as the release of free-sale sugar is concerned, the same is decided having regard to production, Stocks, requirement, availability of other alternative sweetening agents like gur, khandsari etc. There have been no representation from the industry associations regarding increase of the monthly free sale releases by Government.

Rationalisation of Customs Duty on sugar

1691. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:—

(a) whether Government are thinking of rationalizing customs duty on sugar to reduce its import;