

RAJYA SABHA

Thursday the 11th June, 1998/21
Jyaistha, 1920 (Saka)

The House Met at Eleven of the
Clock

Mr. Chairman in the Chair

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Agricultural Production in North-Eastern Region

*221. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the details of amount spent separately, under the Centrally-Sponsored schemes for farmers to increase agricultural production in each State of North-Eastern region, particularly in Manipur during the Eighth Five Year Plan;

(b) the number of farmers benefited in each State under this scheme;

(c) the target fixed for the purpose during this Plan period and achievements made thereunder; and

(d) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
(SHRI SOMPAL): (a) to (d) A State-
ment is laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

(a) A statement (Statement-I) (see below) of the amount released to North Eastern States including Manipur under various Central/Centrally Sponsored Schemes during the Eighth Plan is laid on the Table of the House.

(b) to (d) The Centrally Sponsored Schemes are production oriented schemes which aim at raising the agricultural production through enhanced use of latest techniques and implements. In view of the above normally plan targets are not fixed in terms of number of farmer beneficiaries. Therefore the number of beneficiary farmers is not readily available. The Ninth Five Year Plan has not yet been finalised. The details of the funds released during 1997-98 are given in the Statement II.

Statement I

*Releases of Funds for the Development of Agriculture in the North Eastern States
under various Central/Centrally Sponsored Scheme during the Eighth Plan*

(Rs. in Lakhs)

Name of State	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	Total
Arunachal Pradesh	116.60	174.31	316.21	472.85	221.08	1301.05
Assam	882.12	839.90	1251.67	861.00	1054.31	4889.00
Manipur	159.98	116.82	583.46	1033.77	1228.69	3122.72
Meghalaya	102.69	208.95	254.99	159.59	442.29	1168.51
Mizoram	128.63	537.77	724.94	501.07	515.54	2407.95
Nagaland	95.89	407.52	774.62	737.61	786.50	2802.14
Sikkim	399.89	425.69	384.81	424.90	314.72	1950.01
Tripura	156.55	250.61	307.16	308.31	379.39	1402.02
TOTAL:	2042.35	2961.57	4597.86	4499.10	4942.52	19043.40

Statement-II

Funds released to North-Eastern States under various Central/Centrally Sponsored Schemes during 1997-98

State	Amount (Rs. in crores) (Provisional)
1. Arunachal Pradesh	5.00
2. Assam	3.97
3. Manipur	11.36
4. Meghalaya	2.57
5. Mizoram	7.17
6. Nagaland	8.76
7. Sikkim	3.41
8. Tripura	5.34
	47.58

SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Sir, the question relates to the achievement of the Government under the Centrally-sponsored schemes. The Minister has stated: "The Centrally-sponsored schemes are production-oriented schemes which aim at raising the agricultural production through enhanced use of latest techniques and implements. In view of the above, normally Plan targets are not fixed..." Since the Eighth Five Year Plan has already been finalised, what is the target for this Plan period? Also, what latest techniques and implements have been used?

SHRI SOMPAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Member is very right that targets have not been fixed, and our answer also says that. It is because the Ninth Five Year Plan itself has not been finalised, the targets could not be fixed. But so far as allocations are concerned, they have been made to various States. The problem has been that these States have not been able to absorb the allocations and even the allocations which had been made have not been properly utilised. So far as the number of beneficiary farmers and the targets fixed are concerned, it is not possible for me to

say. But in the case of certain schemes, we have been monitoring how many farmers have been benefited, and the details can be made available.

SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Sir, my question relates to the details of the amount spent under the Centrally-Sponsored Schemes for farmers to increase agricultural production in each State of the North-Eastern region and specially in Manipur during the Eighth Five Year Plan. So, the question mainly relates to the Eighth Five Year Plan and not to the Ninth Plan. The hon. Minister has given his reply based on the Ninth Five Year Plan. As regards the Ninth five Year Plan, it has not been completed and, therefore, targets not been fixed. But what about the Eighth Five Year Plan? When will it be completed? When will targets be fixed? This is my first question. My second question is; what kind of techniques and implements have been used for raising agricultural production in the North-Eastern region? I would also like to know whether the report of the Working Group on Agriculture for the Ninth Five Year Plan has been published; if so, in which areas thrust has been given. This is the second question. The first supplementary answer is not related to the Ninth Five Year Plan. It is related to the Eighth Five Year Plan. Yet it is almost completed now.

SHRI SOMPAL: Sir, as I have stated, as far as farmer beneficiaries are concerned, we have done some monitoring. The details are that in the case of machinery 246 tractors as on 1st April 1998 have been distributed. Plant protection measures have benefited 11,640 farmers, including 338 farmers in field school training. Pulses development has benefited 4,03916 farmers, Oil seed development—46,286 farmers. Shipping cultivation—45,299 families. River valley scheme has benefited 29,030 hectares of land. National water shed development project for rain-fed areas has benefited 1,57,299 hectares. Jute development—2154 farmers. Women cooperatives—1177 and

in the case of Manipur—82. Weaker section cooperatives—120. In the case of Manipur—7. Extension beneficiaries are 13,383 and in the case of Manipur—2994. So the total is 5,22,924. So these are the farmers' beneficiaries and so far as special schemes are concerned these schemes are under implementation—National Water-Shed Development Project for rain-fed area schemes of horticulture, water-shed development for shifting cultivation areas, strengthening of extension schemes, river valley projects, NPDP, crop production, promotion of agricultural mechanisation schemes and other such schemes, and also promoting the latest cropping patterns and techniques and providing inputs, fertilizers and giving subsidies on fertilizers and seed distribution and adoption of new schemes. These are the schemes which we are adopting and these are known as Centrally Sponsored Schemes.

श्री मोहम्मद सलीम: सभापति महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने अपने उत्तर के अनेक्यक्षर -1 में जो लास्ट फाईव ईयर प्लान का ब्रेक-अप दिया है, इन आठ राज्यों को जितना रुपया रिलीज़ किया गया है, वह टोटल प्लान पीरियड में 190.43 करोड़ है। पूरे प्लान पीरियड का कितना ऐलोकेशन था, यदि वे यह नहीं बताते हैं तो इससे यह पता नहीं चल पाता है कि उनका एचीवमेंट क्या रहा?

दूसरी बात यह है कि अभी सप्लायमेंटरी के जवाब में उन्होंने बेनीफीशियरीज़ की संख्या बताई कि ट्रैक्टर इतने लोगों को दिए गए, वीमेंस कोऑपरेटिव्स को इतना दिया गया लेकिन जो मूल प्रश्न था उसके जवाब में उन्होंने कहा कि बेनीफीशियरीज़ की संख्या बताना संभव नहीं है। तो मैं यह पूछ रहा हूँ कि पार्ट बी से डी का जो उत्तर उन्होंने दिया है, उसमें उन्होंने लिखा है—therefore, the number of beneficiary farmers are not readily available. और जब पूरा प्रश्न पूछा गया तो मंत्री महोदय ने धड़ाधड़ यह बता दिया कि इतने लोगों को ट्रैक्टर मिले आदि। क्या वे सप्लायमेंटरी के लिए इंतज़ार करेंगे? उनको कहना चाहिए कि वे फ़िगर्स कलेक्ट कर रहे हैं। यदि अवेलेबल नहीं है तो उन्होंने अभी कहाँ से बता दिया? ज़रूर it is available with the Government, not really available. या वे देना नहीं चाहते हैं। सर, सवाल यह

है कि जो नार्थ-ईस्ट के आठ राज्य हैं, हम सब जानते हैं कि इतने भाषणों के बावजूद भी उनका जो डेवलपमेंट है, खास कर वह एग्रीकल्चर पर ही बेस्ड है, वहां इंडस्ट्री नहीं है तो वह पीछे हटता जा रहा है, वहां इम्प्लेमेंट बढ़ रहा है। पिछले पांच-छह साल से वह इम्प्लेमेंट और ज्यादा बढ़ता गया है। एक स्पेशल एग्रीकल्चर क्रेडिट प्लान है, क्योंकि यह फाइनेंस मिनिस्ट्री का मामला है, बैंक का मामला है लेकिन एग्रीकल्चर मिनिस्ट्री नोडल मिनिस्ट्री है, इसमें भी अगर आप देखेंगे तो जो टार्गेट फिक्स किया जाता है।

According to the Reserve Bank guidelines, according to the requirements made by NABARD

और एग्रीकल्चर मिनिस्ट्री के कहने के नाम पर नार्थ-ईस्ट के इन आठ स्टेट्स में वे टार्गेट पूरे नहीं किए जाते हैं।.....(व्यवधान).....सिक्किम को उसमें इनक्लूड कर लिया गया है। सात सिस्टर्स के साथ एक सिस्टर और भी जोड़ दी है। आप एग्रीकल्चर मिनिस्टर होने के नाते—बैंक तो यह कहता है कि उनकी क्रेडिट ऐंजोर्षन कैपेसिटी नहीं है—इसलिए आपकी मिनिस्ट्री की यह जिम्मेदारी है कि वहां की स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के साथ, नाबार्ड के साथ स्पेशल प्लान चॉक आउट करें, विद दी थ्रस्ट एरिया और वहां किस तरह से ऐंजोर्षन कैपेसिटी बढ़ायी जाए और इनफ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलप किया जाए? आपने जो कुछ कहा है वह प्रोडक्शन ओरिएण्टेड सैटुली स्पॉसर्ड स्कीम्स के बारे में है लेकिन जब वहां पर इनफ्रास्ट्रक्चर डेवलपमेंट नहीं होगा, रूरल डेवलपमेंट नहीं होगा, लैंड डेवलपमेंट नहीं होगा, इरीगेशन डेवलपमेंट नहीं होगा तो फिर क्रेडिट ऐंजोर्षन कैपेसिटी भी नहीं बढ़ेगी, ऊपर से मैकेनिज़म नहीं होगा। तो आप, इन कंसलटेशन विद नाबार्ड, स्पेशल सर्वे करेंगे कि नहीं कि वहां किस तरह की स्थिति है? एग्रीकल्चर सैक्टर में और हर्टिकल्चर के डेवलपमेंट के लिए क्या-क्या जरूरी है? क्या आप एक स्पेशल प्लान ड्रा करने के लिए तैयार हैं ताकि क्रेडिट का फ्लो हो और सैटुली स्पॉसर्ड जो स्कीम्स हैं, उनका फ्लोड हो? वह इन अकाउंट्स विद दी प्लान हॉ और वहां के जो फार्मर्स हैं, वह बैनिफिटिड हों।

اشتری محمد سلیم : سبھا پتی مہودے
منتری مہودے نے اپنے جواب کے اینکڑا
میں جو لاسٹ فائیو ایئر پلان کا بڑیک اپ

دیا ہے، ان آٹھ راجیوں کو جتنا وہ پیریز
کیا گیا ہے، وہ ٹوٹل پلان پیریز میں ۱۹۶۲
کر ورت ہے۔ پورے پلان پیریز کا کتنا ریکوشن
تھا، اگر وہ یہ نہیں بتاتے ہیں تو اس سے
یہ پتہ نہیں چل پاتا ہے کہ انکا اجمو منٹ
کیا رہا؟

دوسری بات یہ ہے کہ ابھی سپلیمنٹری
کے جواب میں انھوں نے یہی فیضیریز
کی سنکھیا بتائی کہ ٹریکٹرس اتنے لوگوں
کو دے گئے، فوئسن کو آپریشنز کو اتنا
دیا گیا، لیکن جو موئل پرشن تھا اس کے
جواب میں انھوں نے کہا کہ یہی فیضیریز
کی سنکھیا بتانا سمجھ نہیں ہے، تو میں
یہ پوچھ رہا ہوں کہ پارٹی سی۔ سے ڈی
کاجو جواب انھوں نے دیا ہے اس میں
انھوں نے لکھا ہے کہ نا

Therefore, the number of beneficiary
farmers are not readily available.

۱۱ اور جب پورک پرشن پوچھا گیا تو منتری
مہودے نے دھڑا دھڑ یہ بتایا کہ اتنے
لوگوں کو ٹریکٹرس ملے۔ کیا وہ سپلیمنٹری کے
سے انتظار کر رہے؟ ان کو کہنا چاہیے کہ وہ
فیکٹریس کلکٹ کر رہے ہیں، اگر او بلویل
نہیں ہیں تو انھیں کہاں سے بتا دیا؟ ضرور

It is available with the Government, not
really available.

† [Transliteration in Arabic Script

۱۱ یا وہ دونوں نہیں چاہتے ہیں۔ سر،
سوال یہ ہے کہ جو ناروق ایسٹ کے ۱۸ راجیہ
ہیں، ہم سب جانتے ہیں کہ انے بھاشنوں
کے باوجود بھی ان کا جو ڈیولپمنٹ ہے،
خاص کر وہ ایگری کلچر پر ہی بیسڈ ہے،
وہاں انڈسٹری نہیں ہے تو وہ پیچھے ہٹتا
جارہا ہے، وہاں امیلنس بڑھ رہا ہے۔
پچھلے پانچ چھ سال سے وہ امیلنس اور
زیادہ بڑھتا گیا ہے۔ ایک اسپیشل ایگریکلچر
ٹریڈ پلان ہے، کیونکہ یہ غائیٹنس
منسٹری کا حاملہ ہے، بینک کا حاملہ
ہے، لیکن ایگریکلچر منسٹری فوٹل منسٹری
ہے، اس میں بھی ان کے آپ دیکھیں گے
تو ٹارگٹ فلکس کیا جاتا ہے نا

According to the Reserve Bank
guidelines, according to the requirements
made by NABARD

۱۱ اور ایگریکلچر منسٹری کے کہنے کے نام پر
ناروق ایسٹ کے ان آٹھ ایسٹ میں
وہ ٹارگٹ پورے نہیں کئے جاتے ہیں
... مداخلت ... سسٹم کو اس میں اٹھکڑ
کر لیا گیا ہے ۱۱

سات سسٹم کے ساتھ ایک سسٹم
اور بھی جوڑ دی ہے۔ آپ ایگریکلچر منسٹری
بھرنے کے نلے ... بینک تو لہ لہا ہے کہ ان
کی ٹریڈ ایبز وریشن کیا سٹی نہیں ہے

اسٹیل کی منسٹری کی ذمہ داری ہے
 کہ وہاں کی اسٹیٹ گورنمنٹ کے ساتھ
 نابارڈ کے ساتھ اسپیشل پلان چاک
 آؤٹ کریں، ورنہ دی پھر سٹ ایریا،
 اور وہاں کس طرح سے ایگزٹیشن کیپاسٹی
 بڑھائی جائے اور انفراسٹرکچر ڈیولپ کیا
 جائے؟ آپ نے جو کچھ کہا ہے وہ پروڈکشن
 اور رینٹ سینیٹرلی اسپانسرڈ اسکیم کے
 بارے میں ہے لیکن جب وہاں برائز اسٹریک
 ڈیولپمنٹ نہیں ہو گا، مارورل ڈیولپمنٹ
 نہیں ہو گا، لینڈ ڈیولپمنٹ نہیں ہو گا،
 اوی گیشن ڈیولپمنٹ نہیں ہو گا تو پھر
 کریڈٹ ایگزٹیشن کیپاسٹی بھی نہیں
 بڑھیں گی، اوپر سے میگنیزم نہیں ہو گا۔ تو
 آپ انکلس ٹیشن ورنہ نابارڈ، اسپیشل
 سروے کریں گے کہ وہاں کس طرح
 کی اسٹنٹی ہے؟ ایگریکلچر سینیٹر میں
 اور ہارٹیکلچر کے ڈیولپمنٹ کے لئے
 کیا کیا ضروری ہے؟ کیا آپ ایک اسپیشل
 پلان ڈرائنگ کرنے کے لئے تیار ہیں تاکہ کریڈٹ
 کا فلو ہو اور سینیٹرلی اسپانسرڈ جو اسکیم
 ہے ان کا فلو ہو؟ ورنہ ان کا ڈیننس
 ورنہ پلان ہوں اور وہاں کے جو
 فارمرس ہیں، وہ بینیفیٹڈ ہوں۔]

SHRI SOMPAL: Sir, let me first put the record straight when Mr. Salim says that I have given the number of farmers.

I have said that the total number of beneficiaries is not available. Neither is it feasible for us to collect these. I have given the beneficiaries under certain schemes and I said so and I stand by each word of my statement. (Interruptions) And this is also not feasible and if at all it is feasible, this can be done by the States only.

So far as credit absorption capacity of these States is concerned, he is right in observing that the credit absorption capacity of these States is very low. There are certain reasons. There are rather a host of reasons and they are very complex. Firstly, the productivity has been stagnant and he is right in observing that the irrigation facilities are not adequate, the connectivity by road is not adequate, the reach of good seeds and inputs is also not proper and the extension system, education and awareness of farmers is also not proper. But this being a State subject, we can only give allocations. And here is a case where allocations have remained unspent. The States have not been able to utilise the allocations. So, this is up to the States. We can only give allocations. We can give schemes and we can reorient the scheme.

So far as credit absorption and study is concerned, he is right that NABARD and the Central Government can take up such studies. Certain measures have been initiated by NABARD recently to simplify the credit, to make the flows adequate and we are increasing that total flow. Total flow to the agricultural sector has been lower and in the case of North East is has been still lower. I have got the figures. It is really very low as compared to the whole of India and the total share in agriculture is hardly 0.54 to 1.30. It needs to be improved.

SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Sir, Crop Insurance Scheme was introduced in the year 1985. The last Government had extended it to 25 districts. Has this Government any proposal to extend this Scheme to the whole of India?

SHRI SOMPAL: Sir, the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme, which was introduced by the Government, was based on a contribution of 75% by the Centre and 25% by the States and it was sought to be implemented in 24 or 26 districts. I don't have the correct figure now. It is either 24 districts or 26 districts. But we are coming out with a modified Crop Insurance Scheme. The earlier Scheme was funded totally by the Government — the Centre and the States. The new Scheme will be based on premia and in the case of marginal and small farmers it will be based on an insurance charge, which will be a bit concessional and in the case of the voluntary component, that is, the non-loanee component, it will be based on actuarial premia. This scheme is under conception and the Budget has already allocated Rs. 100 crores on experimental basis. We seek to start implementation in 24 districts on experimental basis. Later on, it will be made universal throughout India. The legislative and other things are being finalised.

श्रीएस०एस०अहलुवालिया: सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से कहना चाहूंगा कि कृषि उत्पाद के बारे में जो केन्द्रीय सरकार की मंशा है कि सेंट्रली सैंसर्ड स्कीम को फाइनेंस किया जाता है, उसके पीछे कारण यह रहता है कि वहां का कृषि उत्पादन — एक तो जो उनका मुख्य भोजन है अर्थात् पूरे नॉर्थ ईस्ट में चावल खाने वाले लोग रहते हैं, वहां चावल का उत्पादन अच्छी तरह से हो सके। इसके लिए सेंट्रली सैंसर्ड स्कीम होनी चाहिए और दूसरे जो वहां की उत्पादन क्षमता है, वहां की जमीन की, उसको बढ़ाकर दूसरे इलाकों में उन चीजों को भेजा जा सके। महोदय, उस इलाके में चावल के साथ-साथ कुदरत ने जो वहां उष्णता दी है और उस भूमि की जो क्षमता दी है उसके माध्यम से विश्व का सबसे अच्छा अदरक, लहसुन और इलायची वहां पैदा होती है। चेरापूंजी में बिना किसी कृषि उद्योग की मदद से मशहूर संतरे पैदा होते हैं। और जंगलों में अनानास भी पैदा होते हैं। वहां के चावल उत्पादन के साथ-साथ इन कृषि उत्पादों को अगर मदद दी जाए तो मैं समझता हूं कि हमें फौरन रेवेन्यू बहुत अर्जित हो सकती है क्योंकि इसकी एक्सपोर्ट पोटेंशियलिटी बहुत है। अदरक की मांग सारे विश्व में

है, लहसुन की मांग सारे विश्व में है और इलायची की मांग सारे विश्व में है और वह सारा उत्पादन आज चोरी से भूटान या बंगलादेश में चला जाता है और वहां से वह एक्सपोर्ट होता है। महोदय, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूं कि कृषि विभाग ने क्या इस पर गौर फरमाकर कोई सेंट्रल स्कीम बनाने की कोशिश आज तक की है?

श्री सोमपाल: सभापति महोदय, माननीय अहलुवालिया जी ने बहुत महत्वपूर्ण बात कही है। जो परम्परागत फसलें हैं उनका उत्पादन और उत्पादकता पूर्वोत्तर के राज्यों में निश्चितरूप से दूसरे राज्यों की अपेक्षा बहुत कम है और वहां की जो भूमि का आकार है, टेरेन है, टॉपोग्राफी है और जो वर्षापात है, इस प्रकार की फसलें वहां बेहतर हो सकती हैं, आपने ठीक कहा है। बागवानी की फसलें, अदरक और संतरा खासतौर से सिक्किम और इन दूसरे राज्यों में, इस प्रकार की औषधी और सुगंधिदायक पौधे, इनका वहां विपुल भंडार है। वहां जैव विविधता की, विशेषकर इस प्रकार की फसलों की बहुत ही गुंजाइश वहां है और इससे बहुमूल्य विदेशी मुद्रा अर्जित की जा सकती है। नार्थ-ईस्ट में हम जो नई पहल करने जा रहे हैं जिसमें पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों में परिष्कृत निर्माण और कृषि उत्पादन के संबंध में जितनी भी ये योजनाएं हैं उन सबका एकीकरण करके एक समेकित योजना बनाई जा रही है जिससे बागवानी और विशेष प्रकार की फसलों पर विशेष जोर दिया जायेगा। उसके लिए विशेष आवंटन भी किया जाएगा।

अभी हमारे वित्त मंत्री महोदय ने बजट भाषण में कहा कि जिन-जिन मंत्रालयों का दस प्रतिशत से कम व्यय योजना का इन पूर्वोत्तर राज्यों में है उस शेष राशि को एक केन्द्रीय पूल में जो नॉन-लैप्सेबल पूल होगा उसमें डाल दिया जाएगा। यदि उस वर्ष में व्यय नहीं भी होगी तो वह उनके लिए उपलब्ध रहेगी और इन योजनाओं के माध्यम से जो 5.3 प्रतिशत अभी तक एग्रीकल्चरल का बजट नार्थ-ईस्ट में जाता था यह लगभग चार गुना हो जाएगा। क्योंकि 1941 करोड़ रुपया एग्रीकल्चर को-ऑपरेटिव को इस बार मिला है उसका जो दस प्रतिशत है वह लगभग 19.4 करोड़ हो जाएगा। तीन-चार गुना के करीब यह राशि बढ़ जाएगी और उनको इस विशेष योजना में लगाया जाएगा।

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is a known tragedy that the North-Eastern region is basically and agricultural area and in the last fifty years despite having all facilities for the growth of agriculture in that area, it

could not be developed. I think the major reason for that is appropriate technology transfer has not taken place so far as development of agriculture is concerned. Secondly, the question of marketing and creation of infrastructural facilities for storage was not given proper emphasis by the Planning Commission. The State Government cannot provide the matching grants to whatever Centrally-Sponsored Schemes are sanctioned for that area. That is why at the end of the year, whatever money has been sent from the Planning Commission is sent back. The Government of Assam cannot provide it because it has a lot of financial problems. Because of this, two former Prime Ministers, Shri Deve Gowda and Shri Gujral and the present Prime Minister too have visited the region and had a meeting with all the Chief Ministers to evolve a special package for the North-East. So many packages were declared. Among them is a special committee by the Planning Commission, at the initiative of the Prime Minister for having special schemes aimed at self-employment to be taken up. Now I want to know from the Minister as to what special plan for agriculture has been taken up separately. The present system did not produce any fruitful results. Secondly, what steps have been taken for having infrastructural and technological transfer projects in the current financial year?

SHRI SOMPAL: The hon. Member has rightly mentioned that there has been a lack of market facilities and other infrastructures, as has already been pointed out by other Members and also by me. We have already launched a scheme and we wish to strengthen the scheme which is known as Market Intervention Scheme. In North India this scheme was undertaken in the case of ginger. I would like to have the attention of Mr. Ahluwalia because he mentioned about ginger. We launched the Market Intervention scheme by procuring 10,000 MT of ginger in April, 1997. The Market Intervention Scheme is sought to be strengthened. Nafed and other agencies

like the Jute Corporation of India are being asked to undertake purchases; Jute Corporation of India in the case of jute, and Nafed in the case of horticulture and other produce. So far as his mention about the visit of the two Prime Ministers is concerned, I may inform the House, Sir, that while the hon. Shri Deve Gowda visited the region and announced a package, there was hardly any mention of agriculture as one of the components except saying that a Commission would be set up. There is no mention of agriculture in any detailed scheme. There is no Commission. The Shukla Committee was set up to go into this question and that committee report has just come. The recommendations are under consideration and if the recommendations are feasible, we undertake that we would see that they are taken up for implementation.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in my view the fastest and simplest way to increase agricultural production in the North-East, particularly in a State like Assam, is to move speedily from the system of mono-cropping to a system of multi-cropping. I have, as a part of MPs Area Development Scheme, taken up a project where I have shown in a block not far away from Guwahati where only one crop was grown, that given proper extension support, proper credit facility, proper seeds, one can have three crops and each crop has productivity three-times more than what it was before. I would, through you, ask the hon. Minister, if he would consider having a special Centrally sponsored scheme to increase the spread of multiple crops in States like Assam and other States of the North-East.

SHRI SOMPAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, what Dr. Manmohan Singh has just said is correct, not only in the case of North Eastern States but for the whole of India. Multiple cropping patterns are the best patterns. They provide best stability and security to farmers and they are economically very viable. In the case of damage to certain crops, other crops can

provide compensation and stability. So far as fertility is concerned, mono-crop system tends to mine particular micro-nutrients from the soil. Therefore, from that angle also, to keep the fertility intact changing multiple cropping systems are always good. It is not only in the case of the North East but in the case of the whole of India. The Agricultural Policy is under formulation and our emphasis in the Ninth Plan in the coming years will be to introduce multiple cropping pattern because some of the crops not only do not mine certain micro-nutrients, they also fix certain fertility inputs like catching oxygen from the atmosphere and fixing it like pulses and other leguminous crops.

So, he is right. This strategy is being adopted, and, more so in the case of the North-East.

MR. CHARIMAN: Mr. Parag Chaliha. Please be brief because already this Question has taken half-an-hour.(Interruptions)...

SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Sir, I am the senior most Member from the North-East. I have been refused quite a number of times. I request you, Sir, to be kind to this old and diseased man.(Interruptions)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are alive(Interruptions)... You are very active(Interruptions)...

SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Sir, only six or seven months back, we had set up an expert committee on agriculture and in that I had the good fortune of working with the present Minister. I remember that some very specific and worthy recommendations have been made by the Swaminathan Committee. I think the hon. Minister remembers it. I would like to know from him whether anything has been done with regard to those recommendations. I would also like to know whether any plan had been taken up for agricultural development of the North-Eastern Region.

SHRI SOMPAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, have also been fortunate of being associated with the same Committee. We were two members. The recommendations of the Dr. Swaminathan Committee which are only interim recommendations are available. But, because of the elections the Committee could not complete the work. Now it is up to the members, if they wish, to revive this Committee. I undertake that if the work remains, we can revive this Committee under Dr. Swaminathan and we can complete the work. Naturally, the Committee headed by an expert and scientist of the stature of Dr. Swaminathan must give useful recommendations. There is no question that the recommendations given by such a high-powered Committee, expert committee are not considered by the Government

Dialogue with Western Countries

*222. **SHRI AMAR SINGH:** Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently offered to have an early dialogue with the U.S. and other Western Countries to explain their stand on the nuclear tests; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and what is the reaction of those Countries in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHRA RAJE): (a) and (b) Government have indicated its willingness to engage in a substantive dialogue to discuss and explain our stand on the nuclear tests with a number of countries, including USA and Western countries. In this context, Prime Minister had also written to leaders of several countries. Government intends to continue to actively engage various countries, both at the official as well as the non-official level, highlighting our unique record of restraint and our seriousness to actively engage in a constructive dialogue