

RAJYA SABHA

*Wednesday the 24th April, 1974/the
4th Vaisakha, 1896 (Saka)*

The House met at eleven of the clock,
Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Use of Imported Saccharine

*61. SHRI LOKANATH MISRA :†

SHRI P. K. KUNJACHEN :

SHRI SHYAMLAL GUPTA :

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G.

KULKARNI :

DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN :

SHRI K. P. SINGH DEO :

SHRI NIREN GHOSH :

SHRIMATI SUSHILA SHAN-

KAR ADIVAREKAR :

SHRIMATI RATHNABAI

SREENIVASA RAO :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE
be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a huge quantity of saccharine imported in 1968-69 is lying with the Food Corporation of India;

(b) whether any enquiry has been made for not disposing it during the last four-five years;

(c) if so, what are the findings of the enquiry made; and

(d) in which manner Government propose to dispose of it ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
(SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE) :

(a) A quantity of about 3.2 tonnes of saccharine is at present available with the Food Corporation of India.

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Lokanath Misra.

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(b) to (d) As per procedure laid down for disposal of imported saccharine, the Corporation tried to sell it to the actual users by inviting tenders thrice during 1971, 1972 and 1973. As there was no response, a relaxation for its open sale was obtained in July, 1973. The stocks are now being disposed of by the Corporation by open sale.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA : May I know whether this huge stock of saccharin was imported from France under a scheme called the "Bal Aahar Scheme" and whether it was felt not desirable to feed the children with saccharine for nutrition because there were adverse side effects ?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE : Sir, it is true that this saccharine was imported from France. What happened was, immediately after the import there were some changes in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and the rules thereunder. In the past, there was no ban on using saccharine in foodstuffs. But with the change in these rules, a ban was put on its use in foodstuffs. Therefore, this could not be used for "Bal Aahar" and that is why it is lying with the Food Corporation. But in order to dispel any wrong impression in this House, I may say that saccharine prices have gone up now and the Food Corporation is not likely to lose anything as a result of this.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA : May I know whether it is not a fact that India has been manufacturing sufficient amounts of saccharine even from 1968, if not earlier? So, when there was indigenous production available in the country, what was the special need to import a stock to the tune of about Rs. 10 lakhs, which is still lying idle and which cannot be sold in the market? When

the price of saccharine is going up sky-high in other countries and there is a great demand in the international market for saccharine, our stock is lying idle in the FCI godown. Who is looking after these things?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : Sir, the hon. Member is right in asking these questions, but his presumptions perhaps are not correct. First of all, this was not imported at the cost of indigenous production. The availability from indigenous sources was assessed at that time and it was found that the indigenous production would not be in a position to meet this requirement because what was produced indigenously was also being used in the country. So the estimate of requirement was made at seven tonnes, out of which two tonnes were to be procured indigenously and five tonnes were to be imported. So it is not that the indigenous production was not taken into consideration. Secondly, according to the rules, the import was permitted for the Food Corporation as actual users and actual users are not permitted to sell any quantity to anybody. If they have not used it, they have to seek the permission of the Import Controller to sell it. When the permission was sought, it was given on the condition that it should be sold only to actual users and not in the open market. This took some time. When actual users did not come forward, we took recently permission to sell it in the open market.

SHRI P. K. KUNJACHEN : Before importing this, did the Government find out how much quantity would be needed? When was the actual decision taken to import so much quantity? When did it arrive here? And after its arrival here, how much time has been taken for its disposal? When did the

Government find out that it was not possible to dispose of it?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : Sir, I have replied to his queries earlier. The hon. Member will kindly look into the reply which I have given and also my earlier statements. It was actually imported in 1967-68 and it has been with the Food Corporation of India. It is quite safe. It is very well maintained. There is no loss to the Food Corporation of India because the prices have gone up. We are likely to make some profits.

SHRI P. K. KUNJACHEN : Even then it is lying with the Government for the last six or seven years. Let us know...

MR. CHAIRMAN : No other question please.

MR. NIREN GHOSH : The hon. Minister has said that two tonnes were procured indigenously and 5 tonnes from abroad. No users were using it. Therefore, it follows that the indigenous supply was sufficient to meet the needs of saccharine. How did the Ministry come to the conclusion that two tonnes will be procured indigenously and five tonnes from abroad when the entire demand for the use of saccharine could be met indigenously? These five tonnes have never been demanded. They were stocked in the godowns. What is the price differential between the indigenous saccharine and the imported saccharine? It seems that some officers have made the Government waste a large amount of money and some sort of scandal has taken place.

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : I have great respect for the hon. Member. I think the inferences that he is drawing are totally baseless and without any

foundation. As I was explaining earlier, an assessment was made as to what would be available from the indigenous resources. There was a large programme of production of 'Balahar' at that time and it was a question of a sweetening agent. If sugar was to be used, almost 20 or 30% of the total quantity in terms of sugar would have been required and the Government would have been compelled to incur a huge expenditure. Keeping this in view, it was decided to import this quantity of 5 tonnes. Then, Sir, as I said, later on it was not used because there was some change in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act. We are disposing it now and there will be no difficulty because the prices have gone up.

SHRI SHYAMLAL GUPTA : Could the hon. Minister give me the figures of the indigenous production during the last three years and whether they have received any enquiry from abroad for the export of this product?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : I have not got these figures with me. It should be possible for me to furnish the information with proper notice. The appropriate Ministry can also give the figures.

SHRI SHYAMLAL GUPTA : Did you get any export orders for it?

MR. CHAIRMAN : No second question please.

SHRIMATI SUSHILA SHANKAR ADIVAREKAR : After assessing the demand of the actual users for saccharine, it was imported. Then what was the reason that this amount of saccharine was lying idle and was not lifted by the actual users? Even though the tenders were invited, it was lying in the godowns for so many years. Did we not have any proper assessment before importing this material?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : I am sorry if I was not clear to the hon. lady Member. As I said earlier, this was to be used in 'Balahar' which was meant for school children. Later on, there was some change in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and saccharine was prohibited from being used. Therefore, we could not use it. We wanted to sell it. But there is a general restriction. If a person is given a licence as actual user for importing, then he is not allowed to sell it openly at his discretion. This is permitted only with the permission of the Import Controller and to the actual users. There was no offer from the actual users. Now we have got permission to sell it in the open market and we shall be in a position to dispose it of without any loss to the public exchequer.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : The hon. Minister has just now said that the price of saccharine has gone up and therefore there will not be any loss to the exchequer. I would like to ask two points on this. First of all if there is no loss to the exchequer, it is not due to the efforts of his Administration or organisation. The prices have gone up and that is the reason. For that we need not congratulate him. My problem is what has he been doing all these years for stocking and what has happened to the overhead? Has he done any costing? My suggestion is that the prices will not be able to meet the loss that we have incurred by way of stocking. This is one point. The other is...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Only one question. There are other Members.

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI : How many years does it take for a Government organisation to obtain

this permission for selling it in the market? For four years what were they doing?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are repeating.

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: It is so difficult to satisfy intelligent Members...

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: Are you yourself satisfied?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: I can ask the hon. Member herself. For stocking 3 tonnes of any commodity with so much storage facility with the Food Corporation, what would be the overhead cost? When I made the statement that we will not incur any loss I said it including the overhead costs.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि 68 में निर्यात कितना हुआ ? जब अपने यहां मुल्क में सेक्रीन बनती है तो इसको बाहर से मंगाने की जरूरत क्यों पड़ी । जब हम अपनी सेक्रीन को निर्यात कर रहे हैं तो इसको बाहर से मंगाने की जरूरत क्यों पड़ी ? इसका कारण बताएं ।

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: At that time it was found out that indigenous production would not be in a position to meet the requirements. So, as I said a total quantity of 7 tonnes was to be procured. Two tonnes were purchased indigenously and five tonnes were purchased from outside.

श्री राज नारायण : हमारा यह सवाल नहीं है । हमारा सवाल यह है कि निर्यात हम क्यों करते हैं । जब हम अपनी सेक्रीन को निर्यात करते हैं तो हमें आयात करने की आवश्यकता क्यों ? अगर हमारे यहां कमी है तब तो बाहर से मंगाएं । इस सवाल का जवाब होना चाहिए ।

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: At that time in 1967 indigenous production was not in a position to meet this requirement.

श्री मेरो सिंह शेखावत : फूड एडल्टरेशन एक्ट में एमेंडमेंट कब हुआ ?

SHRI ANNASAHEB P. SHINDE: This was actually on 24th August, 1968.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shrimati Saraswati Pradhan. Next question.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: I wanted to ask one question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On what question?

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: On 61.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then why did you not raise your hand?

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: I raised my hand and I thought you saw it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right. You may ask now.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: What is the procedure?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He says that he raised his hand which I did not see. I will call one or two Members more.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: On which question?

MR. CHAIRMAN: On the first one. Let him ask a question.

SHRI HARSH DEO MALAVIYA: In view of this question and other questions arising from time to time about the Food Corporation of India, the Government of India in its wisdom had appointed a Committee of Secretaries to go into the question of costs etc. of the working of the Food Corporation. May I know if the said Committee of Secretaries has submitted its report, and, if so, what are its recommendations?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : Sir, I seek your protection. This supplementary does not relate to this Question. But if you agree I am prepared to reply. Sir, with your permission I would like to say that the report has been submitted. It is available in the Library. The hon'ble Member can take the trouble of going through it.

SHRI S. P. GOSWAMI : Will the hon'ble Minister tell us whether saccharine is essential to maintain health? If it is a chemical product and it has no food value, why should we import it? What is the necessity of importing it?

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE : As far as the health aspect is concerned, I would just request the hon'ble Member to put this question to the appropriate Ministry.

*62. [*The Questioner (Shrimati Saraswati Pradhan) was absent. For answer vide cols. 32-33 infra.*]

Sale of Wheat Seed sold by National Seeds Corporation of India

*63. **DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN :**

SHRI NIREN GHOSH :†

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA :

SHRIMATI RATHNABAI

SREENIVASA RAO :

SHRIMATI SUSHILA SHANKAR ADIVAREKAR :

SHRIMATI SUMITRA G. KULKARNI :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact 300 quintals of wheat seed were sold recently to a Gauhati Flour Mill by the Calcutta Branch

of the National Seeds Corporation of India; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken against the officials responsible for the sale?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE) : (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the table of the Sabha.

Statement

Out of a total quantity of 9210 quintals handled by the Regional Office of the National Seeds Corporation at Calcutta, only 150 quintals were allocated for distribution in Assam. Information on the number of dealers to whom this quantity was allotted is being collected. The Corporation has decided to order a departmental enquiry to determine whether any quantity of wheat seeds allotted to dealers in Assam had been converted into atta.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : The statement has not answered the question which asks whether it is a fact that 300 quintals of wheat seed were sold recently to a Gauhati Flour Mill by the Calcutta Branch of the National Seeds Corporation of India. The statement in reply says that only 150 quintals were allocated for distribution in Assam. It does not say how 300 quintals of wheat seed were sold to a flour mill which converted it into floor. Seeds are distributed in Assam for growing wheat and not for being converted into floor. He has completely evaded the question. I want to know if this particular quantity of wheat was sold to the particular flour mill and whether they converted it into flour? Was it the best quality of seed? What advantage did they get out of it? What is the number of officials involved and has any action been taken against them?

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Niren Ghosh.