

[Shri Faridul Haq Ansari.]
ings of the 9th December, 1963, of this House? The hon. the Home Minister made a statement about the unfortunate incident in the Tibbia College. On that occasion the hon. Mr. Chandra Shekhar made certain observations and those observations have been absolutely misreported in a daily newspaper of New Delhi called the 'Patriot' in its issue of December 10, 1963, on the front page, under the caption 'Support'. If you will go through the official proceedings of this House of that day you will also find that the comments and the way these things have been published in that newspaper give an absolutely distorted version of his observations. Besides, it seems that they indulge in a very malicious way of giving a report of this House. It is not for the first time that these people have done this. Their weekly magazine 'Link' did it some time ago, in the beginning of this year, when our late lamented Secretary, Mr. Mukerjee was alive, and I brought it to his notice. That was another malicious report about our proceedings, and action was taken against the person concerned. I leave this matter in your hands and you may take whatever action you think fit and proper.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Ansari, for bringing this to my notice. I hope the press will be more careful in future in reporting the proceedings of this House, and see to it carefully that the privileges of this House are in no way injured.

SHRI B. D. KHOBARAGADE (Maharashtra): What about this particular case?

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has left it to me and I shall see.

MOTION RE. FOOD SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY—continued

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister will now reply to the debate.

شری عبدالغنی (پنجاب) : مجھے اس پر بولنے کا وقت نہیں ملا کل میں نے درخواست کی تھی تو مجھے سے کہا گیا تھا آج تمہیں وقت نہیں مل سکتا - تو کیا آج مجھے وقت ملے گا ؟

†[श्री अब्दुल गनी (पंजाब) : मुझे इस पर बोलने का वक्त नहीं मिला। कल मैंने दरखास्त की थी तो मुझ से कहा गया था आज तुम्हें वक्त नहीं मिल सकता। तो क्या आज मुझे वक्त मिलेगा ?]

श्री सभापति : मेरे खयाल में तो अब नहीं मिलेगा।

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have been discussing for two days the food situation in the country with particular reference to rice and sugar. As was quite natural, the hon. Members who have participated in this debate have given a great deal of thought to the problem of food in general, and to the problem of rice and sugar in particular. They have also made very valuable suggestions of a long-term nature about food production, and agricultural production as a whole. The Mid-term Appraisal, which was an important document produced by the Planning Commission, has been copiously referred to when the hon. Members made references to the important question of food production, and the general question of agricultural production. In fact, in connection with many of the arguments that had been advanced to criticise the Government, to point out the shortfalls and failings, and also to highlight the action that is required to be taken, the Appraisal which was made by the Planning Commission has been cited by many hon. Members.

†[] Hindi transliteration.

I welcome such a discussion because it gives me an opportunity to know how the hon. Members feel about the specific food problem in relation to rice and sugar, and it also shows that the hon. Members have been giving a great deal of thought to agricultural production as a whole, and they have got their ideas and suggestions to make, so that agricultural production in the country could increase. By and large, Mr. Chairman, the approach of the hon. Members has been helpful in throwing up valuable suggestions, and I have greatly benefited by this discussion.

I have, Mr. Chairman, an advantage and, perhaps, a disadvantage, in the sense that I took over charge of this portfolio only about two or three months ago. I have not got any preconceived notions except in a general way; because I have been associated with Government for a long time I stand by the policies that have been pursued, but in the actual implementation thereof, or in examining the whole problem, both short-term and long-term, from a fresh angle I have, if I may in all humility say, some advantage, because I have not got any preconceived or pre-set ideas, and it was in that spirit that I have heard with very great attention the contribution that this august House made to grapple with this problem.

I would now try to deal very briefly with some of the points of immediate interest, and depending upon the availability of time I will, a little later, deal with the long-term problem of agricultural production as a whole, and of food production in particular. The short-term problem, the immediate problem, the problem which has created a great deal of interest amongst various sections of our population—consumers, producers, cultivators, workers, factory owners, and so on—is the question of sugar. I would try to place very objectively my assessment of the situation. Sir, I have tried to collect the latest information about production trends of

the current year and I would try to relate it with the production trends of last years so that the House may judge the present production trends in relation to our requirements and also in relation to our targets.

Sir, the latest information that is available indicates that till 10th December, that is, yesterday, 160 factories out of 189 factories have already gone into production. This, Sir, in comparison to last year, is an encouraging feature because on 10th December, 1962, last year, 148 out of 187 factories had gone into production. So as many as 12 factories more have already gone into production till yesterday.

Now, Sir, I will give some information, factual again, with regard to the production that has been achieved till the 7th December. That is the latest that we have got because the factories are expected to send their production figure at the end of each week. This year, Sir, the production till the 7th December, has been 3.51 lakh tons. Now, as compared to 1962-63, this is 1.12 lakh tons more. As compared to 1961-62, it is 1.65 lakh tons more. Even compared to 1960-61, the year when we had the highest production in the recent history, namely a figure of about 30.3 lakh tons, it is about 13,000 tons more. This will show that we have made a reasonably good start. Now, Sir, the House will, therefore, naturally expect me to indicate as to what are the factors which we should take into consideration in having some hope that the production this year is likely to be substantially higher as compared to the last year.

In this connection, I would like to mention that the acreage of sugarcane in U.P. and Maharashtra is about 77,000 acres more as compared to last year. The crop condition is reported to be distinctly better as compared to last year. In fact, in a matter like that it is not possible to give a very exact percentage but

[Sardar Swaran Singh.] various estimates indicate that the minimum improvement in the quality of crop is about 15 per cent. In some areas it is as much as 25 per cent, and this has been mentioned to me by several hon. Members who come from different parts of our country and who have intimate knowledge of the conditions in the various parts of the country.

One other factor I would like to give in this connection is the licensed capacity. The licensed capacity now is 28·6 lakh tons which, when we compare it to 25·2 lakh tons in 1961-62, that is, the year when we produced sugar which was substantially higher, namely 27·14 lakh tons, indicates that if sugar-cane availability to sugar mills is assured, then there is a very bright prospect of our achieving high production targets this year. Along with this we have to keep in mind the various steps that we have taken to ensure a more steady supply of sugar-cane to the mills. It is not my intention to give any catalogue of that, but broadly, action has been taken on two fronts. Firstly, we have given distinct incentive to the grower. Now, it is not theoretical. In terms of money there has been an increase in the price of sugar-cane as compared to last year which is 18 nP. per maund all over the country. Six nP. was announced sometime, I think, in May this year and, then in October there was another general increase of 12 nP. all over the country. Now, in addition to this we had to take into consideration factors which were relevant and which were important in the matter of availability of sugar-cane for sugar mills.

Now, our experience had shown that there was a very substantial competition in gur in two or three areas in the north, particularly in U.P. and Bihar and also in Punjab. We had therefore, to take a practical view and to take a decision that this competition, if anything, remains a fair one and one sector of the economy is not

overloaded as opposed to the other. Therefore, we had to balance the various factors and take a decision. We came to this firm conclusion that the prevalence of unduly high prices of gur in the main sugar producing area creates a condition where the supplies to the mills remain much below their average requirements. These again were not some theoretical figures but the actual figures that were thrown up were rather startling.

In U. P., for instance, Mr. Chairman, in 1960-61 both in East U. P. and West U. P. there was a total production of 14·3 lakh tons. In 1962-63, this dropped to 8·52 lakh tons. It is a very large quantity. Again, in Bihar it is still more disquieting. We had a production of 3·85 lakh tons in 1960-61 and this fell to 1·72 lakh tons practically a fall of about 50 per cent. In Punjab, again in 1960-61, there was a production of 1·22 lakh tons which fell to about 62,000 tons, again a fall of about 60,000 tons. This indicates that in these three States alone there was a total fall in production in a matter of two years to the tune of about 8 lakh tons. This was a very serious situation. When our total production in the country is of the order of about 30 to 31 lakh tons even in the best year, then a short-fall in production to the tune of 8 lakh tons creates a very, very serious situation. Therefore, we had to take a practical view taking into consideration the place where these factories existed, the availability of sugar in that area and the competition between sugar-cane and gur. And, therefore, we had to take other steps. Now these other steps are two. One is to make a serious effort to ensure that the prices of gur do not prevail at an unduly high level and for that we had to impose control on movement of goods where we have banned the movement of goods from these surplus gur producing States and the movement can take place only under a permit. The other step that was taken was to give an increase in the price of sugar-cane that is payable to the grower.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM (Madras): May I request the hon. Minister to enlighten us whether the fall in the production of sugar was due to the fall in the growth of sugar-cane or increase in the production of gur?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It was really due to both the factors. In normal times, when the acreage is large and the crop is good, then the sugar-cane is available both for gur as well as for khandsari and also for the sugar factories. When the crop is bad, then the competition becomes more intense. From the very nature of the functioning of the gur manufacturer, the khandsari manufacturer, he is in a better position to corner large supplies and therefore the supply of sugar-cane to the factories gets very much reduced. So it is really a combined effect of both the circumstances.

SHRI K. SANTHANAM: Will he give the respective figures?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: The figures with regard to gur production really are based only on the acreage because each one makes gur in his own field or in his own kohlu and there is no correct statistical analysis available of the actual production of gur. I would be quite frank with the House. It is done more or less on the basis of approximation, for example, this is total acreage of sugar-cane in a particular area and therefore this is the likely production in sugar and gur. Sugar-cane production we have with certainty and by that approximation, we arrive at a figure with regard to the manufacture of gur. As to what value we can place on that, it is for the House to judge but this is the basis upon which these figures are determined. Therefore, we had to take action on two fronts—to give more attractive prices to the sugar-cane growers in these areas where competition was intense and also to take steps which might bring down the price of gur to a reasonable level.

An impression was sought to be created in the House that gur prices have been depressed to a point which makes it uneconomic, have made the latest enquiries about the prevailing gur prices and I would like to give this information to the House. The prevailing price yesterday of gur in many of these markets in the U.P. ranges from Rs. 22 to Rs. 24. This compares very favourably with the price of Rs. 2 per maund for sugar-cane which is payable to the grower if he takes the sugar-cane to the factory. Therefore the argument that we have not taken into full consideration the circumstances that face the grower is not quite correct. I venture to submit that along with the rebate on excise duty on additional production over certain periods, these are the factors which have contributed to the significant increase in production till 7th December and this shows why the additional production has already been secured. There is this incentive for additional production in the form of rebate on excise duty though at a reduced rate even for the optimum period and a still higher rate of rebate when the crushing season trails off towards the end. These are the factors which are definitely conducive to additional production. On these expectations now I would like to mention the requirements for the current year. Many hon. Members have voiced the feeling that we should do our utmost to step up the exports because we badly require foreign exchange for the developing economy in the country. Now, I share that view but at the same time, others have gone to the other extreme and have suggested that we should ignore exports altogether and we should look to our requirements first. Between these two extreme views we have to strike a balance and the balance that we have struck is, which to a certain extent was inescapable, that we propose to honour the commitments that have already been made. In the matter of exporting sugar or in fact in the export of any other important item there is generally a long-

[Sardar Swaran Singh.] range programme and the countries that import from other countries generally assure themselves on a long-term basis as to the availability of the materials that they wish to import. To a certain extent, therefore, the commitments have already been made. Last year during the last sugar-cane season, which was from 1st November 1962 to 31st October 1963—that is the duration of the sugar-cane season, it does not coincide with our financial year—we exported about 5 lakh tons of sugar and there was a commitment for the current year 1963-64, that is during the year from 1st November 1963 to 31st October 1964, for export of 3 lakh tons. Therefore, this is inescapable. It suits us also because we are badly in need of foreign exchange and it is a contractual responsibility which we must honour and we should honour and it is our intention to honour.

Judged from this point of view, our minimum requirements during the current year are 3 lakh tons for export commitments which we have already made plus an outgoing of 23 lakh tons, if we maintain our present rate of distribution. We are at the moment distributing 1.9 lakh tons a month and multiplied by twelve, this gives a figure of 23 lakh tons. We should have at least one lakh tons more to meet what are called the festival requirements. That takes us to 24 lakh tons and we must at least have one lakh tons more to meet the expanding requirements like increase in the population and the like. So, I place the figure of 25 lakh tons as our requirement for distribution more or less on the current basis with a little more easy availability of sugar. Twenty-five plus three comes to 28 and so 28 lakh tons are our minimum requirements to keep the thing going more or less on the level at which we are at the moment going

I might give another information to the House. We started the current year, from 1st November 1963, with a carry-over of 1.5 lakh tons. At one

time it was feared that we would not have any sugar with us. And now this answers partially the pertinent point made by the hon. Member, Shri Sri Rama Reddy. We had on 1st November 1.5 lakh tons. This 1.5 lakh tons I am not taking into consideration at all to meet the requirements of the current year, because this is the minimum holding that we should carry over on 31st October, 1964. Therefore, keeping this figure aside, we must produce a minimum of 23 lakh tons to keep the thing going at the present rate and to meet our export commitments of 3 lakh tons. Last year we produced only about 21 lakh tons. So even for this we must produce a minimum of 7 lakh tons more. It is, therefore, necessary that in those areas where the capacity exists and where the sugarcane is there, we should create an atmosphere and a climate where more sugarcane is made available for the sugar mills. It is in this context that we should view the various steps that I have ventured to place before this august House for its consideration.

It may be recalled that we have a target of 33 lakh tons. If we look at the capacity of 28.6 lakh tons that has already been created, if we look at the additional acreage that we have got this year, if we look at the better prospects of sugar-cane crop, and if we take into consideration the lead that we have already taken in the matter of additional production even during the first five weeks of the sugar year, I think, that we will very definitely cross this minimum requirement figure of 18 lakh tons, and any additional sugar that we produce will ease our internal distribution position and also, depending upon the production, we should not hesitate to undertake even the export of sugar, because it gives us valuable foreign exchange and there is also the market abroad. There is an overall world shortage of sugar and naturally those countries which imported sugar from us last year, do look upon us as a natural source of

supply. We should take into consideration all these factors and we should not take a rather paricky view of the situation. It is easy, or shall I use another expression and say that perhaps to be gloomy might indicate some cleverness? It is always easy later to indicate: "We said so, you will never produce 27 lakh tons. You had too high a target." Well, this 'I told you so' policy might be good from the argument point of view, but it does not take us far.

This target of 33 lakh tons is a difficult target, and I am not unconscious of the fact that it requires a real effort on the part of all concerned to achieve it, including my friends on the opposition benches and their parties which are functioning in the field. And if we succeed in creating the proper atmosphere which, I claim, has already been created, the additional production is definitely within sight and with even reasonable effort—not even a Herculean effort—we can easily touch the figure of 30 to 31 lakh tons which will make the position reasonably comfortable so far as the next year is concerned. The situation that we had to face this year has also taught us. It has taught us that in a surplus year we have to build up stocks which we can carry over for the next year. In fact, the surplus stocks built up during the previous years preceding the last year did help us to tide over the last year which was a particularly bad year. In the same manner, if there is surplus in sugar and if we can build up a large stock, we can use it at the right moment either to meet internal requirements or for export for which, I am sure, the markets will be there, at any rate, for some years to come. This, Sir, is the position so far as the available sugar is concerned and these are the prospects for the next year.

[THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

With regard to gur, I have not much to say, except that I am myself very

conscious of the present difficulties that are being faced by some of the States which depend upon imports or movement of gur from certain States where gur is in surplus. Rajasthan and Gujarat are the two States which are very much concerned in this connection. We have already made allocations for movement to those States. There was some bottle-neck in the matter of actual physical movement. But steps are being taken to ensure that whatever is allocated, moves quickly, and after reaching those States, it is quickly distributed to the consumers. There is no reason why the position even in those States should continue to be as bad as it unfortunately happens to be now. With the availability of gur at lower prices here, its movement can be effected and if proper distribution arrangements are made at the other end, the consumer should derive benefit rather than be faced with hardship. This is a matter which is receiving very careful and constant attention and I have every reason to hope that over the next few weeks the position will significantly take a turn for the better.

In this connection, a subsidiary point, Ma'am, was raised about the Delhi Cooperative Stores. The version of this Cooperative Stores has been given by another hon. Member of this House—Kumari Shanta Vasisht. So far as I am concerned, the position is quite clear. The Delhi Administration has already started an enquiry and according to the latest information in my possession, they have cancelled the outstanding quota that stood in the name of this Cooperative Society, and they will take appropriate action. So, I think, the House will forgive me if I do not go into all the details of it, because it will depend upon the result of this enquiry. Therefore, I should not be called upon to comment upon the merits of the case. Whether it is a cooperative society or any individual, a private individual or a corporate

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body, if they transgress the law, then they have to face the consequences. If they transgress the limits of propriety, then also they have to face the consequences, even though they may not be legal. But I would humbly plead with all sections of the House that let not this example be taken as a stick to beat the co-operative movement as a whole. I feel that the very fact shows that when this thing was done by a co-operative society, then all these discussions could be raised and all this criticism voiced on the floor of the House. There may be hundreds and thousands of such transactions which are done but this House does not know of them. Our attitude, therefore, should be to take the necessary corrective action whenever there is a lapse. But the co-operative movement as a whole is such that it is in the interests of all concerned, including the consumer and we should not criticise it unduly. If there are any lapses, by all means we should look into them. We should look into them and we are looking into them. The Delhi Administration is seized of the matter. Let us not lose sight of the basic issues involved and let us not jump to hasty conclusions. It is unfortunate that insinuations of a political nature were imported into this. It is not my intention to go into detail in dealing with them but these are matters which should be discussed on merits without importing any other sort of consideration from one side or the other.

The other point that I would like to deal with, before I pass on to the general question of agricultural production, is the question of rice because the motion particularly relates to rice.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA (Uttar Pradesh): Before the hon. Minister goes to the other point, may I seek one clarification?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Please let me finish because there are only twenty minutes. After I finish, you can ask questions. I cannot enter into this running sort of discussion.

So far as the rice position is concerned, my colleague, Shri Thomas, gave very valuable information about the crop prospects, price trends, indices and the like. It is not my intention to go over that field again. The House would definitely be interested to know about the prospects of the current year. The reports that have come from the various States are very encouraging—even from a State like West Bengal which incidentally is the largest producer of rice—I think many of us forget that quantitatively the largest quantity of rice is produced in West Bengal itself. It is larger than any other State but because of the high concentration of industrial population and the presence of a big city like Calcutta the requirements are also large and hence they have to depend on the movement of rice from other States. The prospects there are good and in a State where the total production is large, of the order of anywhere between five and six million tons—that is their expectation of crop, between five and five point five, five and five and half million tons. The report from other States also are encouraging.

So there is, I feel, a much brighter prospect for the next year. I do not want to take credit for a good year, as some people say that Government and Ministers wax eloquent if there is a good year. I can give all that eloquence and all that credit to this House; may be by the combined exertion of pressure, moral and the like, the season is good, the weather is favourable but there it is and let us be happy over that rain though we make that also as an argument against the Government or against anybody. We are starting luckily this year, I should say, on an optimistic note, on a note of encouragement, in a mood of encouragement. This is a year when

we should take very definite and concrete steps to build larger quantities of buffer stock. That is the objective towards which we are working.

Some steps have been already indicated by my esteemed colleague, Shri Thomas, that is, procurement of various types depending upon the conditions prevailing in the various States. I do feel that more has to be done in this connection both in the matter of procurement of paddy as well as in the matter of procuring rice. Apart from this, there has to be a very purposeful exercise of control at strategic points and it is very necessary to see that people, particularly, the wholesalers do not create a situation where scarcity conditions prevail, particularly, towards the lean period of the season thus resulting in prices being pushed up. Therefore, action has to be taken on both fronts, in stepping up procurement both of paddy and rice and also in strengthening controls at strategic points particularly at the wholesale point so that the margins that are charged are reasonable and there is no undue hoarding. Even with the limited powers and limited scope of the exercise of those powers where State Governments have acted with purpose, they have produced results. In this, particularly, I would like to mention the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They did take some steps and kept the prices more or less under reasonable check and even in West Bengal—about which my friend, who is not now present to hear the reply to his argument, mentioned and where he wanted to create the impression as if the West Bengal Government was responsible for creating those difficulties. I would very strongly refute that—they took all possible steps and at a crucial moment it was the intervention of the Chief Minister that brought down the prices at once from Rs. 55 to Rs. 35 and this type of action has to be on a continuing basis, not that we step in and try to rectify the position when it assumes alarming proportions. This contact with the situation and willingness and anxiety

to take action on more or less a continuous manner is the objective that we intend to pursue this year so that there may not be a tendency either to push up the prices or to sit over the stocks to the prejudice of the consumer.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA (Orissa): Madam, at this stage I want to ask for clarification.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Please wait.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: After he finishes you can ask for any clarification.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: If I have understood the criticism correctly, it boils down to this. If I may use another phrase, it was not a criticism but it was a fear expressed that although the position now is reasonably good, it is yet feared that in September, 1964 or October, 1964 or November, 1964 the position might again deteriorate. Now, this is based upon our unfortunate experience of many years, where proper action was not taken as a result of which the position did unfortunately deteriorate but even then, the position was not bad in all the States, as I ventured to point out earlier. Certain States did take necessary action at the right moment and the position was kept under control and in certain other States where the action was not taken early enough there the position somewhat deteriorated and when the regulatory measures were taken and executive action was taken the position was brought definitely under control. The additional quantity that would be available both to the States and the Centre as a result of this stepped up procurement would be used as hitherto for distribution to fair price shops and this would have a very salutary check on prices and would meet the needs of the vulnerable sections of our community. I have got very short time at my disposal and my intention is not to ask

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for the indulgence of the House for staying long.

Now, I will come, Madam, to agricultural production as a whole, the larger subject, and I am very glad that a great deal of thought has been given by hon. Members to this important question. They have listed various points requiring action, some at the States level and some at the Central level. Hon. Members have mentioned about incentives for increased production, have laid stress on irrigation, major and minor, improved seeds, improved machinery and implements, reclamation of waste land, resettlement of landless peasants etc. All these and many other points have been mentioned and, in this connection, I will be failing in my duty if I were not to mention that the suggestions made by Shri Govinda Reddy, Shri Avinashilingam Chettiar, Shri K. S. Santhanam, Shri A. D. Mani, Prof. Wadia, Dr Siddhu, Shri T. Pande and Shri N. Sri Rama Reddy are particularly important. They have to be examined and action has to be taken. Let us not forget that when we face a difficult situation there can be a temptation to suggest, let us take more powers and let us centralise the whole thing. That is a trap which we have to avoid.

Let us not forget that it is a federal constitution in which we are working in which agriculture is the responsibility of the State Governments and the State Governments are answerable to their legislatures which have people's representatives and these points which bother and cause concern to hon. Members here are matters of equal concern to the legislators in the State Assemblies and to those Governments. The Centre's attitude in this agricultural production has to be one of providing the necessary help and giving them the assistance to step up the input factors, both organisational as well as material. The actual implementation has to be left to the State Governments. Any attempt at greater centralisation of actual implementa-

tion in a country of our size and of our population will, I venture to submit, not be a very practical proposition.

SHRI AKBAR ALI KHAN (Andhra Pradesh): More co-ordination.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Mr. Akbar Ali Khan is quite correct when he suggests that there should be greater co-ordination. We have recently taken distinct steps to ensure this co-ordination both at the Central as well as at the State level. At the Centre hon. Members would be no doubt aware that the responsibility of the Minister of Food and Agriculture has been extended. He is also responsible for the Departments of Community Development, Co-operation and Irrigation and Power so far as agricultural production is concerned. The Agricultural Production Board where the Planning Commission and the Ministers concerned are there is another forum which spotlights the points upon which decision is required to be taken and a decision is quickly taken and implemented without any long noting and the like.

At the State level, Madam, more or less similar Co-ordination Committees have been constituted and even below the State level, that is, at the District level, at the Block level, steps have been taken administratively and the like to ensure complete coordination between the various agencies that are concerned with agriculture. I feel that so far as the Centre is concerned, it will be a distinct achievement if we could ensure coordination between the various agencies functioning here and if we could also ensure that similar coordination takes place at the State level. I have every reason to hope—I am not unduly optimistic but I am not a pessimist either by temperament and so having sized up the situation it is my considered opinion—that the measures that have been taken for coordinating these various agencies, governmental and even non-governmental in certain cases, do hold out a hope of distinctly stepping up

the production programme in the country. This is a matter which will have to be constantly pursued. There is no short cut. It is a hard way, strenuous way, and constant vigilance and constant work and action are required to ensure that these bodies actually do function and produce results. If we succeed in doing that I have no reason to doubt that on the agricultural front we will make a distinct improvement.

There are other important factors. There are some inherent things which have to be done which I would broadly describe as input factors, input factors of a material nature were fertilisers, good implements, better seeds, etc. are concerned, and input factors of an organisational nature where the various people who are functioning should function in coordination. They should also function with that sympathy which is due to the farmer. It causes distress to everyone when we hear that in the disbursement of seeds or in the matter of making credit available the farmer is not treated with the sympathy that is due to him; I do not use the expression the sympathy which he deserves. Those are things about which there is no difference in approach or in policy. That has to be done and it is proposed to be done and the State Governments are fully seized of this position. It is my own intention to discuss specific issues concerning various States in a sort of regional meetings of the Ministers concerned instead of having the Ministers from all the States because the problems in the various States are different from each other in this matter of agriculture. The jute problem is entirely different from the millet problem; similarly the rice problem is different from the wheat problem. So also the sugarcane problem is different from the problem of cotton or any other commodity. It is my intention therefore to have discussions on a regional level with the Ministers concerned to make sure that these various organisational steps that are being taken are being properly implemented and if there

are any difficulties to take concrete steps to ensure that those difficulties are removed.

With regard to material input factors, there have been shortfalls. For instance, in the fertiliser programme, there has been a shortfall. We have to take agricultural production as a whole and make an advance on all fronts. Sometimes in our enthusiasm or when we are facing a difficult position we are prone to highlight one aspect and forget the others. Let us not lose sight of the central idea that agricultural production must advance on all fronts. By all fronts I mean, in the matter of foodgrains, in the matter of raw material for industry, in all the various sectors. There is some validity in the suggestion that was put forward by certain hon. Members from West Bengal that they divert part of their paddy fields to jute growing and, therefore, there is an inevitable reduction in the availability of rice. Now, I know of many countries, predominantly agricultural, which concentrate more on the so-called cash crops, earn foreign exchange and with that foreign exchange they purchase foodgrains and distribute it among the people who require that. So one has to take an overall view. Even in the case of an important country like Egypt which is predominantly agricultural and which has a civilisation, thousands of years old, based primarily on agriculture and on the benefits that Nile has been giving to that country, it might interest the House to know that forty per cent. of their food requirements are imported. Now I do not say that we should copy that. Far be it from me, but they feel it is more profitable to grow cotton, to grow tobacco and other things which give them a lot of money which they can use to purchase foodgrains. Now, in a country of our size we cannot undertake operations of that type, but let us not lose sight of the fact that our additional requirements of foodgrains and which we have to meet inevitably by imports is of the order of

[Sardar Swaran Singh.]

4 or 5 per cent. of our total production. Now, 4 or 5 per cent. of the total production can surely be stepped up by the people if only they do not lose nerve and if only they do not import considerations which are absolutely extraneous.

I must confess that I was greatly amused to hear the long speeches from two sections. According to my Communist friend, the reason why production is not being stepped up is because land legislation is either half-hearted or is not adequate. According to the spokesmen of the Swatantra Party, we are not able to step up production because of this rather progressive land legislation. Now, neither of these two positions is correct. Whatever be the land legislation or other agrarian reforms—those are social objectives—they are also in the interests of additional production. I am not at all apologetic about them either to the Swatantra Party or to the Communist Party. We have taken a deliberate decision because we feel that it is the correct decision, both from the social angle as well as from the long-range economic angle, for stepping up agricultural production.

We are now reaching the end of time. I have already taken a good deal of time. Where there are failings, we should examine them and take corrective steps. Where there is lack of co-ordination, we have to ensure co-ordination. All these mechanisms are really means to a particular objective and the means can always be altered if the situation so warrants. So, let us start on this great task of stepping up agricultural production, which means really changing the face of India. India is essentially rural and stepping up agricultural production means really changing India and improving the living conditions of the people of India. And in this great enterprise let us try to take a balanced view, a purposeful view, so that we do not lose sight of the objectives when we are faced with short-term difficulties

Thank you, Madam.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: It is not my intention to annoy you in any way or take the time of the House, but I would like to know from the hon. Minister what he has to say in regard to the discriminatory treatment that has been given to the factories and cane-growers in eastern U.P. and Bihar by not increasing their price to Rs. 2 a maund. I would like to know his views on that.

SHRI FARIDUL HAQ ANSARI (Uttar Pradesh): The same thing I wanted to ask. As you know, the hon. Minister has given an assurance in the other House, during his reply to the debate, that the Government was considering increasing the price of sugar-cane to Rs. 2 per maund as a uniform price all over India. May I know whether he still holds out that promise and when he is going to fulfil it?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: I think it will not be quite correct to say that I have held out any promise of that kind. What I said in the other House was that I had noted the feelings that had been expressed on the floor of the House. I have also to take into consideration the impact of that on the price to the consumer, a factor which significantly enough has not been mentioned by any hon. Member, who asked for an increase in the price of sugar-cane. After taking all facts into consideration, if any alteration is considered necessary or proper, then some announcement will be made. So long as no new announcement is made, the existing position prevails.

RAJKUMARI AMRIT KAUR (Punjab): May I just ask one question? I am very glad that the Minister has taken such an optimistic view and I trust his optimism will be fulfilled. There is one aspect which he has not referred to and that is the large-scale destruction of our crops, whether by pests, whether by wild animals or by the continuous lack of storehouses. I do

hope that he will take that also into consideration because it is terrible to produce and then lose a large percentage of our production.

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: It is a very important thing and I am glad that Rajkumariji has drawn our attention to that.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: Just one question regarding price. I hope the Central Government knows about the statement that the Chief Minister of Orissa made during his visit to Delhi. It got published in all the newspapers and it was boxed. He said that Orissa was supplying rice to West Bengal at the rate of Rs. 16 and I listened to speeches here which indicated that it was being sold at Rs. 55 even. The normal price in West Bengal is supposed to be Rs. 36. Who took away the middleman's profit of Rs. 21? Has there been an enquiry into it? Would the Minister kindly enquire into it?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: Whether the rice is procured from Orissa or Madhya Pradesh or Andhra or Punjab, it is always distributed at a price which is not the so-called ruling price in the market. So far as market prices are concerned, I think the traders' attitude is known more to the Swatantra Party than to me.

SHRI LOKANATH MISRA: Was it not at the Government to Government level?

SARDAR SWARAN SINGH: There is no such thing.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There is Mr. Vajpayee's amendment before the House, I shall put that to vote. The question is:

"That at the end of the Motion, the following be added, namely:—

'and having considered the same, this House recommends that the minimum price of sugar-cane be fixed at Rs. 2 per maund for

all sugar factories in U.P. and Bihar.'"

The motion was negatived.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned till 2.30 P.M.

The House then adjourned for lunch at seven minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at half-past two of the clock, the **VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI M. GOVINDA REDDY)** in the Chair.

MOTION RE REPORT OF THE CENTRAL EXCISE REORGANISATION COMMITTEE.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA (Uttar Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, I beg to move the following Motion:

"That the Report (1963) of the Central Excise Reorganisation Committee, laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on the 10th September, 1963, be taken into consideration."

Sir, excise is a tax on goods produced in the country as against customs duty on goods imported into the country from abroad. So, excise duty is imposed on goods either produced in factories or produced through agriculture. This tax has been in existence in this country ever since the Moghul rule. During the Moghul times also, as has been mentioned in this Report, excise was levied on certain commodities. The British Government also levied excise but only on salt or some one or two or more commodities. I will give the figures to show how this excise duty has progressively increased from time to time:

In 1920-21, the amount of Central excise realised was Rs 2.85 crores and it was on two commodities only. This was out of the total tax revenue of