

RAJYA SABHA

Monday, the 16th September, 1963/
the 25th Bhadra, 1885 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

ASSESSMENT OF FOOD POSITION

*569. { SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA†;
SHRI J. H. JOSHI;

Will the Minister of FOOD AND AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of India have recently made any assessment of foodgrain production and shortage in the various States; and

(b) if so, what is the assessment and what steps Government have taken to give assistance to those States where the shortage was experienced?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (SHRI A. M. THOMAS): (a) and (b) The final estimates of production of all foodgrains during 1962-63 are not yet available. The food supply position in the different States is, however, examined from time to time in consultation with the State Governments and necessary assistance in the form of supplies of foodgrains from the Central reserve is given to the extent practicable in each case, keeping in view the availability with the Central Government and overall requirements of all the States.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: May I know, in view of the fact that the Ford Foundation Team has suggested that the minimum food requirement

of India will be 110 million tons, while the production is only about 79 million tons, what steps the Government are taking to meet the shortage and whether the research laboratories and other equipments have been provided in the deficit zones to help in augmenting production?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, the hon. Member should not be guided by the production figures of the current year and of the previous year. Of course, having regard to the internal requirements, we have fixed the target for the Third Plan as 100 million tons. We have also taken into consideration the recommendations of the Ford Foundation Team.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: May I know if any purchasing centres have been established in surplus areas so that the requirements of the deficit zones may be met and, if so, how many purchasing centres have been established so far?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, so far procurement was mainly based on the levy on the mills and traders. We have been able to procure even this year about 5 lakh tons compared with a little over 3 lakh tons last year, so that to the extent possible we have procured. We are setting up purchasing centres in the interior area. The question is under consideration. Our intention is to set up such purchasing centres.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: May I know, Sir, by what time full consideration will be given to the establishment of purchasing centres, because it may take a long time for the scheme to materialise.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: No, Sir. A decision has already been taken that there should be purchasing centres in the interior areas also. In fact there had been a Conference of the Food Secretaries of the various State Governments convened by my Secretary in the Food Ministry and tentative

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Sitaram Jaipuria.

conclusions have already been reached.

SHRI MULKA GOVINDA REDDY: May I know whether it has come to the notice of the Government that famine conditions prevail in the eastern districts of the Mysore State and whether they are going to treat those areas as famine-stricken areas and, if so, what relief measures the Government are going to take?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: It might not be correct to characterise some of those areas, which my hon. friend has in mind, as famine-stricken areas. Perhaps they can be treated as scarcity areas. Regarding those areas, Sir, fair price shops have been opened and adequate quantities of foodgrains are made available. Apart from that, relief works have been started by the State Government.

SHRI A. D. MANI: Referring to part (a) of this Question, Sir, has any State, apart from the assessment figures which might be given later, reported an impending shortage?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: No, Sir. For the next crop to come it will take about two to three months. Apart from that, an assessment has been made. The shortage in the production of rice is estimated round about 2 million tons as compared to last year's. The main States affected by this shortage are West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Assam.

SHRI FARIDUL HAQ ANSARI: Sir, the hon. Minister has just said that the Government is going to establish procurement centres all over the country. I believe he is aware of the fact that most of the villagers in the interior have no facilities at all, neither any transport arrangement. What arrangements have the Government made to make procurement from that area?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, as far as conditions in the current year are

concerned, in fact there has not been any question of the prices falling below the support prices which have been fixed by the Government. In fact, the open market prices were much above the so-called support prices and the producer was getting much more than the support prices. The question will arise only when there is a very good crop and production is normal or above normal. This year it has not risen. With regard to the communication difficulties that have been pointed out by the hon. Member, they are borne in mind and in certain cases even some rebate in the matter of transport is also given so that the producer may get reasonable prices.

SHRI ARJUN ARORA: In view of the report of the Ford Foundation Team, Sir, do the Government propose to revise the target?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: There is no question of revision of the target. In fact, even now we are exerting all our energies for achieving this target of 100 million tons. There is no question of revising the target.

SHRI N. C. KASLIWAL: May I know what is the latest position in the country with regard to the new kharif crop?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: With regard to the new kharif crop, the monsoon has been quite satisfactory in almost all the States except perhaps in certain parts of Gujarat and certain areas of Rajasthan but in those areas also, recently there have been rains, so that the general forecast is that this year's crops would be good.

SHRI N. M. LINGAM: May I know if the Government's policy is to import foodgrains indefinitely from whichever country they are available or to do away with imports altogether and, if the objective is to do away with imports altogether, what is the time by which the Government expect to achieve this objective?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, the question of imports has to be judged from two standpoints. One is the shortage of production within the country so that to meet our internal requirements we will have to import some quantities. Apart from that, the House is quite aware of our target to build up a buffer stock of 4 million tons in the matter of wheat and 2 million tons in the matter of rice. So, with that target we will also have to devise our import programme.

SHRI N. M. LINGAM: No, Sir. He has not answered my question.

SHRI BAHARUL ISLAM: May I know whether it is a fact that because of large-scale damage to Assam crops due to recent floods, scarcity of food in the coming months is apprehended in Assam? If so, how do the Government propose to meet the scarcity?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: The hon. Member is perhaps putting some question with regard to Assam. It is well known that last year Assam was affected by floods as many as three times and it was in a very bad condition. But even then, Sir, the production went down only to the extent of one and a half lakh tons. As far as Assam is concerned, although we promised them only about 45 thousand tons this year, we have reviewed their requirements and I think in the course of the year perhaps we would be supplying them about 65 thousand tons. Recently I had discussions also with the Chief Minister of Assam who is satisfied with the arrangements that have been made by the Centre. I think all their reasonable requirements will be met.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH: May I know, in view of the fact that the Government have stated that they would take steps to meet the food shortage in West Bengal and also in view of the fact that the price of rice is continuously rising there, what further steps the Government propose to take to alleviate the suffering of the people?

Secondly, Sir, in view of the recurring food shortages in the country, would the Government see to it that the poor peasants—the maximum number of cultivators—get sufficient credits in order to buy fertilisers and other things so that they can actually increase the food production?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: Sir, the question put by the hon. Member is a very large question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: They are two in one.

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: As far as West Bengal is concerned, almost every week we are assessing the requirements of West Bengal. We promised them one and a half lakh tons of rice first. Then again assessment was made and we promised them 20 thousand tons more. Apart from that, we have arranged for despatch of about 24,500 tons on trade account from Nepal and from the South also, we have arranged to move about 10 to 15 thousand tons of boiled rice—from Andhra Pradesh. As far as West Bengal is concerned, I have got a report about what the Chief Minister himself has stated. As many as 68 lakh people were drawing rations from the fair price shops as against 21 lakh people in 1961. So, Sir, the extent of the assistance, that is being given by the Centre, will be borne out by these figures. Apart from that, one fact has to be borne in mind. There has been shortage in production in West Bengal. In the case of one item, for example, jute, Sir, five years back they were getting about Rs. 24 crores but this year they would be getting Rs. 45 crores. Within a period of five years there is an increase of Rs. 21 crores. So there would be pressure on foodgrains. The purchasing power is also more. That fact has also to be borne in mind.

With regard to the other types of support which the hon. Members have pointed out, credit facilities and other things, we have already those things in view and they are being done.

श्री विमलकुमार मन्नालालजी चौरड़िया : क्या श्रीमान बतलायेंगे कि वर्तमान में जो सुविधायें खाद्यान्न अधिक उत्पन्न करने की दृष्टि से काश्तकारों को दी जा रही हैं, उसके बाद भी जो टागेट हमने फिक्स किया उसको हम प्राप्त नहीं कर पायें, इसलिये एडीशनल और क्या इन्सेटिव मेज़त हमारी गवर्नमेंट ले रही है जिससे कि काश्तकारों का आकर्षण खाद्यान्न उत्पादन की तरफ बढ़े ?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: In the absence of these incentives and the various steps that have been taken by both the Central and State Governments, I think the position would have been much worse. Last year, the year which has come to an end, for example, we had natural calamities on a large scale in several States, drought in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. In Orissa large areas have been affected. Perhaps the shortfall would have been much more but for the steps that have been taken by both the Central and State Governments.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: Sir, one question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have taken more than ten minutes on this question. But since you are insisting, I am allowing you just one question.

SHRI SITARAM JAIPURIA: In order that both the consumers and the agriculturists may be satisfied, may I know if any scheme has been launched for combining the deficit and surplus States? If so, what is the scheme?

SHRI A. M. THOMAS: The hon. Member is aware that it is the policy of the Central Government to tag on a deficit State to a surplus State so that in the surplus State the farmers would be assured of reasonable prices and also in the deficit State the consumers may be assured of supplies at reasonable prices. In fact that is the policy of the Government, and it has

succeeded largely; but because of terrible natural calamities as in the case of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, there is a little strain; but one should not be guided to judge the success of the policy because of the difficulties that we are confronting now.

COMPLETION OF BRIDGES OVER YAMUNA

*570. SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) how long it will take to complete the two proposed bridges on Yamuna at Delhi, (i) at Wazirabad and (ii) at Nizamuddin; and

(b) whether any complaint has been received by Government that the work on the construction of the two bridges is progressing slowly?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING IN THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha.

STATEMENT

(a) (i) *Yamuna Bridge at Wazirabad.*—The work on the Wazirabad bridge and its approaches has been completed. The bridge was opened for traffic on 24th August 1963.

(ii) *Yamuna Bridge near Humayun's Tomb at Nizamuddin.*—The work was awarded to a contractor in April, 1961. Due to certain claims made by the contractor, it became necessary to invite fresh tenders. Fresh tenders from the various interested parties have been received and are under scrutiny. The work on the bridge will be taken up for execution during this year and is expected to be completed in about three years of its commencement.

(b) No, Sir.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA: The statement says: "The work was awarded to a contractor in April, 1961.