

(b) Do the female labourers get any stipend?

The Minister of Labour (Shri V. V. Giri): (a) Eighteen centres, a list of which is placed on the Table of the House.

(b) No.

I may add, Sir, that no stipend is paid, but female workers joining the centres are paid knitting and other charges at certain specified rates. The material is supplied by the Fund and the articles so prepared are sold to the coal-miners.

STATEMENT

List of places in Bihar coal-fields where multi-purpose welfare centres have been opened.

Patherdih, Bhuiyanbarree, Bhowrah, Jeetpur, industry, Bastacola, Kustore, Kankanee, Bansjora, Sijua, East Bhagatdih, Bhull, Deep-Leikdih, Bokaro, Kargall, State Railway Colliery at Giridih, Bhurkunda and Relligarha.

Shri N. P. Sinha: May I know, Sir, if only the women labourers are entitled to make use of these centres or even those females residing in the vicinity can make use of them?

Shri V. V. Giri: I think it is only for the female labourers, but I am not certain.

Shri B. S. Murthy: What is the total expenditure on these centres?

Shri V. V. Giri: I have not got the information here, but if the hon. Member is anxious I can give it to him later.

Shri B. S. Murthy: May I know, Sir, whether any share is borne by the employers?

Shri V. V. Giri: Employers are Government? It is maintained from the Coal Mines Welfare Fund.

Shrimati A. Kale: May I know, Sir, whether the women labourers get any maternity benefits or whether the Act is a dead letter?

Shri V. V. Giri: They do get.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: What are the activities undertaken by these multi-purpose centres?

Shri V. V. Giri: The report has been supplied to every Member of the House and I request the hon. Member to go through it.

Shri Namadas: May I know, Sir, whether the Government contemplate starting such multi-purpose welfare

centres for mica mines, and if so, is there any programme for Gudur mines?

Shri V. V. Giri: They have, Sir.

Shri Baghavaiah: May I know, Sir, whether there is any such scheme started for the female workers in the Kothagudem Coal Mines?

Shri V. V. Giri: I am not sure.

Shri Nambiar: May I know, Sir, whether this scheme will include the contract labour also or it will be confined to only those who are on the pay-rolls of the management?

Shri V. V. Giri: I think it includes contract labour also.

Shri Abbas Satter: May I know, Sir, whether any such welfare centres exist in any other coal-fields, especially in West Bengal?

Shri V. V. Giri: Yes, in other coal-fields also.

HYDROPONIC CULTIVATION

*833. Shri Dabhi: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that experiments in hydroponic cultivation have been made in Kalimpong in West Bengal;

(b) if the answer to part (a) above be in the affirmative, whether the experiment has been successful; and

(c) if so, to what extent?

The Minister of Agriculture (Dr. P. S. Deshmukh): (a) Yes.

(b) and (c). It has been demonstrated that plants can be successfully grown to maturity through this technique but the expense is far too high.

Shri Dabhi: May I know, Sir, if it is a fact that 'hydroponics' is useful in deserts and stony places, and if so, whether Government contemplate making any experiments in that direction?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: It is nowhere demonstrated that this can be done cheaply. The only thing that can be found from the experiments is that there is a possibility of doing it, but the cost is very heavy.

Shri S. C. Samanta: May I know Sir, the technique—how it is done?

Shri V. P. Nayar rose—

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Hon. Members must look around before putting questions.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: There is nothing new about the technique of hydroponics or soilless agriculture. Plant physiologists discovered it almost a century ago that it was possible to grow plants successfully without soil with their roots in water in which salts had been dissolved or in pure sand watered with a solution of certain salts. This technique, known as water culture, is still found very useful in investigating the requirements of plants for mineral nutrients. In fact, this technique may be regarded as the basis of modern fertilisers.

Shri V. P. Nayar: May I know, Sir whether as a result of experiments in hydroponics, it is possible for agricultural crops also to be raised that way in our country?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: Yes, Sir. It is possible to do that, but the experience everywhere is that the cost is prohibitive.

Shri V. P. Nayar: May I know, Sir, the inland water area available in India for soilless cultivation?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I could not say, Sir.

HEAT AND SOUND INSULATING MATERIAL

*886. **Shri Raghavaiah:** (a) Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state whether it is a fact that a process has been invented for the production of heat-and-sound-insulating material from a waste product of sugar manufacture?

(b) If so, what is the process and what is the average cost of production of one pound of the material under factory conditions?

(c) Have the Government of India any steps under contemplation for starting or encouraging the starting of a factory for the production of the above material?

(d) What are the main sources of sound-and-heat-insulating material that is consumed in India at present?

The Minister of Agriculture (Dr. P. S. Deshmukh): (a) Yea.

(b) A description of the process of manufacture is laid on the Table of House. [See Appendix V, annexure No. 24.]

The present cost of production is, however, not known.

(c) Not from bagasse. The Government have, however, under contemplation and is encouraging setting up of a hard and insulating board factory using bamboo as raw material.

(d) Major portion of the demand is met by imports from U.K. and Scandinavia. Part of the requirements of heat-insulating material is available from indigenous production also.

Shri Raghavaiah: May I know, Sir, what is the post-war cost of manufacturing 7/16" thick bagasse fibre?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: As I said in the reply, that cost has not been made available.

Shri Raghavaiah: In the statement laid on the Table of the House only the pre-war cost of manufacture has been given and not the post-war cost of manufacture.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I have not got the information.

Shri V. P. Nayar: It is seen from the statement that 500 lbs. of boric acid will be required for preservation of one stack of bagasse. May I know, Sir, whether any experiments have been conducted to reduce the cost of storage of stacks of bagasse?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I do not know, Sir, if any experiments were conducted.

Shri B. S. Murthy: Have Government received any information from the "Vuyyur" sugar factory whether this experiment is going on?

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Have the Government got any information that in the "Vuyyur" sugar factory—in Madras State—this experiment is going on?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I am not aware.

Shri V. P. Nayar: May I know, Sir, what is the total quantity of bagasse available?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: I want notice.

Shri V. P. Nayar: What is the total cost of storage of bagasse per stack?

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh: The total cost is known to the mills, Sir. I do not think I can reply to that.

HOSPITALS RUN UNDER COAL MINES WELFARE FUND

*888. **Dr. Rama Rao:** Will the Minister of Labour be pleased to state:

(a) how many hospitals are run under the Coal Mines Welfare Organisation, in which centres, how many beds