

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

and other facilities each of them possess;

(b) whether Government have been receiving regular reports of the working of these hospitals;

(c) whether Government have received any reports regarding behaviour on the part of the staff of any of these hospitals, towards the Workers and their families and what steps have been taken in this connection; and

(d) whether Government have received the report of the non-admittance of a miner's wife at the Dhanbad Hospital, resulting in her death and what steps have been taken in this connection?

The Minister of Labour (Shri V. V. Giri): (a) One Central Hospital at Dhanbad, Four Regional hospitals and child welfare centres at Tisra, Katras, Chora and Searsole and one dispensary at Bhull. For other details attention is invited to the printed Memorandum on the activities of the Coal Mines Labour Welfare Fund for the year 1950-51. Copies of this report are available in the Library of the House and have also been supplied to all Members.

(b) Yes.

(c) No

(d) No specific complaint was received by Government but the attention of Government was drawn to a report published in local newspapers. An investigation has been ordered and is in progress.

I may add that the moment the report is received, I shall be prepared to answer. If necessary, a Short Notice Question on this subject, if admitted.

Dr. Rama Rao: May I know, Sir, whether the Labour Welfare Advisory Committee have received any reports about the treatment accorded at these hospitals, and if so, are they considered at the quarterly meetings of the Committee?

Shri V. V. Giri: The reports are received and the treatment accorded is good.

Dr. Rama Rao: Have the Government any inspection or supervision over these hospitals?

Shri V. V. Giri: There is a tripartite Committee representing the workers, employers and Government.

Shri B. S. Murthy: Who are the persons in charge of this investigation, Sir?

Shri V. V. Giri: We have directed the Coal Mines Welfare Commissioner to investigate and send a report.

Shri Raghavaiab: May I know, Sir, whether the Government is aware that these hospitals are closed during working days?

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

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: The Question-hour is over.

Short Notice Question and Answer

FAILURE OF MONSOON IN RAYALASEEMA

Dr. Gangadhara Siva: Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Rayalaseema has been affected by drought this year also;

(b) whether it is a fact that the millet crops and other crops in Rayalaseema have withered to a great extent;

(c) how many fair price shops have been opened in Rayalaseema and are working to-day; and

(d) whether the stock of foodgrains in the fair price shops in Rayalaseema is adequate to meet the shortage of foodgrains in the said area?

The Deputy Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri M. V. Krishnaappa):

(a) to (d). Four out of five districts of Rayalaseema depend on the South-West monsoon rains whereas the 5th viz., Chittoor, depends on both the South-West and North-East monsoons. During the South-West monsoon period from June to September, rainfall in all these districts was much below normal. The North-East monsoon has also been deficient so far and this has adversely affected the standing crops. But showers even now will partially retrieve the position and are anxiously awaited.

The Government of Madras have arranged distribution of foodgrains in all the districts through 1,579 fair price shops. These shops are well stocked with foodgrains and further supplies will be made by the State Government as and when necessary.

Dr. Gangadhara Siva: Sir, may I know how far the Government has implemented or is going to implement, in view of the deplorable financial condition of the Madras State, to meet the sudden crisis that has befallen the most unfortunate part of the country?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri Kidwai): What is the question, Sir?