

Release of Sugar for Diwali Fortnight

111. SHRI SHIV KUMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government released 90,000 tonnes of sugar for free sale for the Diwali fortnight;

(b) if so, the extent to which it will meet the requirements of the consumers keeping in view the September and October release of 75,000 tonnes each; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to bring down the price of sugar in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) and (b) Under the voluntary price regulation scheme operative from 1st September to 15th November, 1980, 3 lakh tonnes of free sale sugar (indigenous and imported) was released for allocation to the State Governments for both the months of September and October 1980—1.35 lakh tonnes for September and 1.65 lakh tonnes for October. On this basis the quantum of release for the first fortnight of November worked out to 75,000 tonnes but as against this higher quantity of 90,000 tonnes was released for the said 15 days for meeting the increased demand on account of Diwali festival which fell on 7-11-1980.

(c) Sugar industry's voluntary offer for sale of free sale sugar at the agreed price of Rs. 450 per quintal exclusive of excise duty for 2-1/2 months period from 1-9-1980 was accepted by the Government with a view to make available free sale sugar to the consumers during festival season at fixed prices. The scheme has expired on 15-11-1980 and free sale sugar is being sold through normal trade channels as per practice obtaining prior to 1st September 1980. Government would keep a watch on the trend of sugar prices in open market and would take necessary corrective measures if prices tend to increase beyond reasonable levels.

Delay in Relief Operations in Orissa

112. SHRI N. E. HORO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have seen press reports that Government machinery had completely failed to take timely rescue and relief operations and there was nobody to help the hungry and homeless even three days after the calamity in the State of Orissa;

(b) whether the people were not informed and warned of the possibility of the floods which came in the night and they were caught unawares in their beds; and

(c) if so, the facts thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) to (c). The inhabitants of the riparian towns and villages on the banks of the river Vansadhara were warned on time through flood messages. Three warnings were given on the 17th at Gunupur and each time people were evacuated to safer places. The last wireless message from Gunupur on 18th September was received from the Circle Inspector of Police at Gunupur at 7.00 A.M. reporting inundation of flood water at Gunupur and disrupting communications from all sides of Gunupur. These warnings also helped villagers across the border in Andhra Pradesh.

In coastal Orissa affected by the river Mahanadi almost hourly warning messages were relayed by All India Radio. The areas likely to be submerged and the weak points in the embankments were identified and duly published so as to caution people likely to be affected to move to safer places well ahead. Round the clock guard of the weak points in the embankments was ensured.

Rescue and relief operations were taken in all flood affected areas on war footing. Rail and road communication having been snapped the State