

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Friday, August, 1, 1997/Sharavana, 10, 1919 (Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock*

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Tea Cultivation in North-Eastern States

*142. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

- (a) the total area under tea cultivation in the North-Eastern States;
- (b) whether the Government propose to expand the area of tea cultivation in these States; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) The total area under tea cultivation in the North Eastern States is 234789 hectares.

(b) and (c) In order to bring more area under tea plantations, Tea Board has been operating a number of developmental schemes which inter-alia provides financial assistance in the form of long term loan, capital subsidy, interest subsidy on bank loan and grants in aid to the producers. Among other developmental schemes, a scheme viz. New Tea Unit Financing Scheme is also in operation specially for the non traditional areas of the North Eastern States. The Scheme inter-alia provides loan and subsidy to the tea growers in the region.

A special thrust has been given to North Eastern Region during the ensuing 9th Plan period. In this connection, Tea Board proposes to take up a new scheme namely Tea Development Scheme for the North Eastern States for the control of jhum cultivation with a total proposed outlay of Rs. 75.80 crores. Over 25% of the total outlay for the 9th Plan period of the Tea Board has been proposed to be allocated for tea development schemes for the North Eastern States.

SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir,

tea and crude oil play a vital role in the economy of Assam. Although Assam is blessed with natural resources, it is into economically developed to the desired level.

The hon. Minister, in reply to my original question has stated, *inter alia*, that the total area under tea plantation in the North-Eastern States is 2,34,789 hectares. In this connection, I would like to know from the hon. Minister the break-up of the total area, namely, 2,34,789 hectares spread over each State, particularly Assam.

I welcome the measures adopted by the Government in order to bring more area under tea plantation; some measures are in operation, especially for the non-traditional areas of Assam. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the details of these schemes, especially for the small tea growers who produce green leaves.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member wants a detailed break-up of area in the various States that are now being used for tea plantation.

I agree with him that Assam is the major producer of tea. Out of 2,34,789 hectares, Assam itself covers 2,27,120 hectares, Tripura 5,928 hectares, Manipur 343 hectares, Arunachal Pradesh 1151 hectares and Nagaland 237 hectares. The total comes to 2,34,789 hectares.

Now I come to the other part of his supplementary. He suggested that we should give a lot of thrust to the North-Eastern States. In fact, we are also working out a plan for giving a subsidy of nearly Rs. 55.8 crore and a financial outlay of loan up to Rs. 20 crore in order to encourage more than 20,000 hectares to be developed in this area.

SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Sir, I congratulate the Government for taking up a new Scheme, namely, Tea Development Scheme for North-Eastern States for control of jhum cultivation which has a total proposed outlay of Rs. 75.80 crore. Out of this amount, 25 per cent will be spent during the Ninth Plan period. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether fifty per cent of that amount will be allotted to Assam because Assam produces fifty per cent of the tea in this country. The All Assam Students Union is sitting on *dharna* today at Guwahati to press their demand for solution to the various tea related problems. I would request the Government to respond favourably to this also.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I will examine the proposal put forward by the hon. Member that we should be able to provide substantial amount of assistance to Assam. While examining it, we should also keep in mind that we have to develop other States also. You please look at the data which I have given now. It shows that Assam has the largest developed area. The other States also require some development. But we will definitely examine the proposal of the hon. Member.

SHRI DWARAKA NATH DAS : Sir, there is sufficient scope for tea plantation in the hilly States of North-East, like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram. What special steps are being taken by the Government to extend tea plantation in these States?

In southern Assam there are several sick and weak tea gardens of which some have already been abandoned. The tea Gardens under Tea Trading Corporation of India are totally mismanaged. The condition of tea labourers of such gardens are lamentable. What measures are being taken by the Government to revitalize such sick and weak tea gardens? What measures are being adopted by the Government to improve the conditions of the labourers of such sick and weak tea gardens?

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, we have taken all the necessary measures in order to improve the development of these areas because, as I said, these are backward areas. Whatever help that is required, whether loan or technological assistance, will be provided. We are keeping our entire Tea Board to work and see that they get maximum support.

Regarding the problems of labourers, in these areas there are some problems like insurgency etc. But security arrangements have been made. In spite of that, this area will get maximum support from the Tea Board and the Government.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, my hon. friend could not just explain the position.....(Interruptions) These tea gardens, as you must be aware, were bought by the Government of India. They were functioning well. Then, for some other reason they went back. I do not want to go into the details. Today labourers are facing starvation. The tenders were called and the parties were selected. Somebody went to the court. Now that court case is also over.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): When was that over?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : it was over about two months back. I do not want a reply from you. But kindly take action on the decision taken by our erstwhile colleague, Shri P. Chidambaram.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Why don't you put it in the form of a question ?

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : So, I would like to know whether the Government is prepared to implement the decision taken by the previous Commerce Minister, if all the hurdles in the way have been removed.

Secondly the Tea Research Association is one of the oldest tea research centres in the country which is being run by donations from Tea Board and others. There is a move to close it down. May I get an assurance from the Government that the Tea Research Association which serves the tea industry to produce better tea and make more production will not be closed down ? You have written me a letter that it is

having your consideration. So, you kindly assure us that this Association is not going to be closed down.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : I will definitely examine the request of the hon. Minister and we will look into the matter sympathetically.

SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY : This is a vague reply. The hon. Member has asked a definite question.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : He asked me whether I will be able to implement the decision taken by the previous Government(interruptions)

SHRI DWARAKA NATH DAS : The Government has been examining it for the last ten years.....(interruptions)

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : We will examine it today. We are having a meeting today...(Interruptions)...We will invite hon. Members also. We are trying to resolve the whole issue to make things proper. The meeting is still continuing and we are going to finalise it.

SHRI UDDHAB BARMAN : Tea is cultivated in more than two lakh hectares of land. Will the Minister tell the total production during the last three years and productivity in that area ? I am told that productivity is going down in that area.

The second part of my question is, to increase the productivity of tea in the entire North-East, whether the Government is trying to improve the Toklai Research Centre in that area. It is reported that the Toklai Research Centre at Jorhat is going to be closed down and the workers are agitating for a long period. Will the Minister take definite steps to see that the Toklai Research Centre is not closed down, rather it is further improved so that the Toklai Research Centre which played a pioneering role in the cultivation of tea, is maintained and improved ?

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : The hon. Member wants the productivity of the area. The productivity of Assam is quite good but other States are still to improve in this regard. That is why, our research people are also looking into that area and we will give a lot of support.

Coming to the research station, we have recently appointed what is called, the Restructuring of Toklai Research Station Committee. They are examining the possibilities of how it could be strengthened and what type of support is required from the Government. As soon as the report comes, we will examine it and try to take action.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Mr. Deputy-Speaker Sir, Assam contributes more than 50 per cent of the total tea produced in the country and the quality of tea produced in Assam is one of the best and there is lot of demand for Assam tea in the export market. Till today, most of the tea produced in Assam has been auctioned outside the States despite the State of Assam having all the required infrastructure facilities for augmenting export. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the action initiated by his Ministry to augment export activities from Guwahati.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Assam tea is also exported substantially. The prices of tea has also gone up very high this year. About the auction which the hon. Members has mentioned, we are having auction at Calcutta, Guwahati, Silliguri and other places. There are auction centres at different places. If there is a need to have further places of auction, we will also have some more places.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : But the facilities in Assam are sufficient to have the auction there. Why is tea being shifted to other parts for auctioning? This is my question.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : No, no. We are putting it on the basis of its availability and the people's participation. We have it even at Cochin, Kunoor and Coimbatore. That meets our production and the position of facilities available. If there is more demand, we will also provide more facilities.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : It is because the headquarters of the tea gardens are located outside the State and they are not willing to shift. That is the reason why auction is held outside the State. Most of the prime lands are with the tea gardens. Because of this reason, the State is deprived of its legitimate revenue.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : At Guwahati also, we have a station. At Silliguri there is a station where facilities are available, Probably, they have to take it. If there are facilities, we would do it again.

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Hon'ble Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of great pleasure that tea is mostly cultivated in North-Eastern States of the country and the Government is making continuous efforts to increase its production. But through you, I would like to draw the attention of the Minister of Commerce to this fact that tea production is continuously declining due to constant increase in the incidents of terrorism in Assam or North-Eastern States, kidnapping of the owners of tea gardens and increasing tendency of threatening the labourers working in tea gardens. Result of all this is that the export of tea is also being affected. I would like to know whether attention of the Government has been drawn towards protection of the tea gardens, the persons engaged in its cultivation and those financing therefor?

[English]

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : As far as security arrangements are concerned, whatever is possible within our limits, we are taking all precautions. We have also requested the State Government to give us some more assistance to develop the area. We are prepared to invest more money. We are prepared to develop that area. But from the security point of view, the States Government should also come forward to give us assistance.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : It is also an important factor. It is creating obstacles in production.

SHRI ISWAR PRASANNA HAZARIKA : Sir, there is no

doubt that there is an urgent need to increase the land under tea cultivation in the North-Eastern States. But a peculiar situation has arisen. Both rubber and tea are competing for lands in the States in the North-East India. For tea and rubber, you require similar kind of high land with certain amount of rainfall. Tea required land with slightly higher rainfall. And rubber requires slightly lower rainfall.

Now, there is no doubt that tea is more lucrative plantation crop. It is much more lucrative than rubber. The North-Eastern States are eminently suitable for tea cultivation. Both the Tea Board and the Rubber Board are under the Ministry of Commerce. There is a need for a coordinate approach, so that there is no competition which may prove to be counter-productive in the matter of land under these two plantation corps.

I would like to know from the Minister whether there is a policy for a coordinated approach between the Tea and the Rubber Boards for land in the North-Eastern States because, other things being equal, priority has to be given to tea crop. Land has to be allotted for tea plantation much more than for rubber plantation. Therefore, there is a need for a coordinated approach without which land suitable for tea may go towards rubber. It would be a loss not only to the North-Eastern States but also to the entire country.

I would, therefore, like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is coordination between the two Boards. Is there a demarcation of land suitable separately for tea and separately for rubber in the North-Eastern States? How does he propose to increase land under both these crops in a coordinated manner in the North-Eastern States?

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Sir, the hon. Member has brought forward a very important and useful suggestion. As far as tea is concerned, as he has suggested, it has a major export thrust. As it is, we have about 2,35,000 hectare under this crop.

We are still trying to encourage more and more tea export. But in the case of rubber, right now we have rubber plantation in an estimated area of 40000 hectares.

I would also like to bring to the notice of hon. Member that there are also about 10,000 hectare of coffee plantation in this area. I am trying to coordinate between the Tea Board, the Coffee Board and the Rubber so that they could work jointly and see which area is better suited for the cultivation of which crop and where the productivity could be more and where there could be improved productivity as well and also to find out which of the three crops should be encouraged in this area.

SHRI ISWAR PRASANNA HAZARIKA : At present there is no coordination between these Boards.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, there are three tea gardens of TTCl in Assam and one in the Duars region of West Bengal. The workers of these tea gardens as well as the staff of the Head Office of TTCl are not getting their salaries since May, 1997. I would like to know from the hon. Minister

whether he would take steps so that these workers and employees get their salaries within one week.

They have not received their salaries since May, 1997. As per the Payment of Wages Act, the Government of India is bound to pay the salaries to its employees, staff and workers within one month. But the workers of TTCL are not getting their salaries. I would like to know whether the hon. Minister would take steps to release the salaries of the employees or not.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH : Sir, the hon. Member and myself had a discussion this morning on this in my office. We are making an arrangement for all these things. We would have another discussion and, I think, this would be sorted out.

Foreign Collaboration in Automobiles

*143. SHRI PRAKASH VISHWANATH PARANJPE:

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether some Auto-Companies which have been

granted licences to manufacture motor cars in India with foreign collaboration have failed to meet their export obligations;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the names of the companies;

(c) the total number of motor cars manufactured by them during each of the last three years;

(d) the number of motor cars sold in India and exported; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to enforce obligations undertaken by these Companies ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Government has not fixed any formal export obligation on the joint venture Automobile Industries signing Mou with Government for import of CKD/SKD Kits. However, the six car manufacturer companies have projected their exports for five years in their respective Mous signed with DGFT. Their export projections and actual exports during last two years are as under :-

(In value)

	1995-96		1996-97	
	Projected Export	Actual	Projected Exports	Actual
1. DCM Daewoo	14 (Millions US\$)	NIL	19 Mn. US\$	NIL
2. Pal-Peugeot	11-do-	NIL	33 Mn. US\$	NIL
3. Mercedes Benz	NIL	NIL	NIL	1.20 Mn. DM (export of cars)
4. PAL (UNO)	NIL	NIL	5.50 Mn. US\$	NIL
5. General Motors (Components & other items)	28.64 Mn. US\$	28.64 Mn. US\$	17.50 -do-	NIL
6. Mahindra Ford	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL

(c) The total number of motor cars manufactured by them during last three years are as under :-

	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
DCM Daewoo Motors	NIL	9155	17514
Pal-Peugeot	NIL	10306	8887
Mercedes-Benz	NIL	1051	1649
PAL (UNO)	NIL	NIL	1531
Mahindra Ford	NIL	NIL	3606
General Motors	NIL	NIL	7482