

Replantation of Tea Gardens

*516. SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : Will the Minister of FOREIGN TRADE be pleased to state :

(a) whether many tea plantation owners are neglecting the replantation of their gardens; and

(b) if so, the steps taken to ensure timely replantation in future ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE (SHRI A. C. GEORGE) : (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The rate of replanting of tea has been much less than the desired level of two per cent per annum. In order to induce tea estates to undertake replanting by replacing old tea bushes by high yielding and better quality bushes, a Replanting Subsidy Scheme is being operated by the Tea Board. In addition, the Tea Board is operating a Plantation Finance Scheme under which Tea Estates can take loans for replanting, replacement and extension of tea areas.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether they have taken any step for having an all-India scheme for replantations of tea all over the country. As you know, the produce of tea plantations constitutes more than 50 per cent of our foreign exports in plantation produces and the foreign planters, particularly, the British planters are not doing replantation fearing a possible nationalisation in future. So, in the interest of our exports, I would like to know from the Government whether they have any plan, any scheme, to have an all-India programme for replantation of tea.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : I agree with the hon. Member that tea industry is a very vital sector in our export trade. At present, the Government have three definite schemes for replantations. The Tea Plantation Finance Scheme provides for Rs. 7400 per hectare in the plains and Rs. 9900 per hectare in the hills for replantation. It is given as a loan. Apart from this, under the Tea Replanting Subsidy Scheme, Rs. 3500 are given for replantation in the plains and Rs. 4500 for replantation in the hills. Over

and above this, we are giving help in the matter of tea machinery and equipment under hire-purchase scheme. As far as foreign companies and others are concerned, and the present target is that we must have replantation at least to the extent of 2 per cent every year, I do agree that foreign companies as well as Indian companies are falling short of our expectations in the matter of replantations.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : A small country like Ceylon is ahead of us in the export of tea. They have a comprehensive scheme of replantation. I would like to know whether the Government will make replantation compulsory in our country. The foreign planters are deliberately trying not to replant in the name of lack of finances. So, I want to know whether the Government will enforce replantation, and if that programme is resisted will nationalise foreign plantations and see that the interest of the country is secured.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : I believe, I have explained in detail. We have a comprehensive scheme to encourage replantation by giving loans, subsidy and other help. As far as the suggestion of nationalisation is concerned, at present, we do not have any programme in mind.

SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : In view of the fact that tea industry which earns substantial foreign exchange is now facing crisis due to uneconomic working results, will the Government come to the aid of this tea industry by reducing the excise duty on tea ?

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE (SHRI L. N. MISHRA) : The tea industry is not facing crisis at the moment. As a matter of fact, last year was a good year and this year is also going to be good year. There is no proposal to reduce excise duty or to give any tax relief to the tea industry. It is picking up market. Last year's performance of tea exports has been really quite good.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. George, you have asked one question already.

SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : One more question, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER : No, please. I am sorry.

श्री रत्नलाल बाबुलाल : जितने चाय बागान अभी तक बन्द हुए हैं उनको कुलवानों की व्यवस्था आपकी तरफ से क्या की जा रही है ?

जितने नये बागान मालिक होते हैं और इन बागान को खरीदते हैं वे एक दफा मुनाफा करके चले जाना चाहते हैं और बागान को नष्ट कर देना चाहते हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या इसके ऊपर भी आपने ध्यान दिया है ?

श्री एल० एन० मिश्र : मेरे साथी ने बताया है कि जिस बाग की हालत खराब होती है उसको हम सुधारने की कोशिश करते हैं, कर्ज देते हैं, सबसिडी देते हैं, मशीनरी देते हैं, सिंचाई की व्यवस्था करते हैं। दो परसेंट गार्डनज को हर साल उनको नया करना चाहिए पुरानी झाड़ियों को हटा देना चाहिये। जहाँ तक दार्जिलिंग इलाके का सवाल है, यह सही है कि तीन गार्डनज वहाँ बन्द हैं। एक तो रक्षा के काम में आया है और दो अनइकोनामिक होने की वजह से बन्द हुए। उसको कुलवानों का इरादा नहीं है क्योंकि अन्यत्र इसको हम बढ़ा रहे हैं, दक्षिण भारत में भी और बंगाल में भी।

SHRIMATI JYOTSNA CHANDA : Whether the Government is aware that in my District of Cachar, tea is not replanted ? May I know whether the owners of the tea-gardens have taken up schemes to replant tea ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA : It is a general question about Cachar District. I will find out the position.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR : In view of the fact that good tea is not available for people in India and for people outside as tea is always given there as a mixture of so many teas—Indian tea, Chinese tea and Ceylon tea—may I know whether the Government intends to go forward with their scheme of packing tea in India and distributing it so that the replanted areas will find proper market in the world ?

SHRI L. N. MISHRA : It depends upon the taste. Some people like me

coming from Eastern India like good-flavoured tea. Some people from Southern India go for Ceylon tea. Good quality tea is available but we make our endeavour to export good quality tea to earn the hard currency.

SHRI R. S. PANDEY : Is it not a fact that whatever scheme we have formulated, the tea plantation owners have taken the money from the Government and not utilised it for development ?

MR. SPEAKER : I was allowing members from the tea-growing areas. But I thought you might add something new.

SHRI R. S. PANDEY : Madhya Pradesh also grows tea, Sir.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : Our information is that whatever money has been taken, has been well utilised.

SHRIMATI LAKSHMIKANTHAMMA : Apart from the replantation by the individual, there is a vast area under forests and there is a place like Arakkur Valley in Andhra Pradesh...

MR. SPEAKER : There is no new plantation. It is about replantation.

SHRIMATI LAKSHMIKANTHAMMA : I am asking whether in view of the national importance of tea, the Department concerned will be asked to take up coffee and tea plantation.

MR. SPEAKER : Replantation of M.P.'s. in this House is also taken up.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB : Whether there is any scheme of giving loans to the tea plantation owners of Tripura ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : This will definitely receive our attention.

SHRI DASARATHA DEB : If it was given, whether there is any check on the tea garden owners to see if they executed those schemes ?

SHRI A. C. GEORGE : We have not received any complaints so far.

PROF. S. L. SAKSENA : Have the Government any machinery for the supervision of the tea gardens to see that they are not destroyed by hostile tea planters ?

MR. SPEAKER : He has already replied it earlier. That was the first question he replied.