

## SHORT NOTICE QUESTION

**Failure of Crops in Mizoram**

S. N. Q. No. 8. DR. R. ROTHUAMA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have detailed information regarding the widespread failure of crops in Mizoram due to Thingtam Famine;

(b) if so, the concrete steps taken by Government to meet the situation so as to avert food riots and starvation deaths ; and

(c) definite steps taken or proposed to be taken to meet food shortage in the remote places where there are no communications whatsoever except on foot ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA) : (a) As per information furnished by Mizoram Administration, there has been partial failure of crops in some parts of Mizoram due to Thingtam.

(b) (i) Two expert teams were sent this year from the Centre to assess the situation and give technical advice. Rs. 15.00 lakhs has been released by the Govt. of India in addition to Rs. 66.00 lakhs already provided in the current year's budget under the employment generation scheme for providing relief to the affected people.

(ii) A Central Government scheme for financial assistance on 100% basis of Rs. 18.13 lakhs to the Govt. of Mizoram during 1977-78 has been sanctioned for combating rodent menace. An advance amount of Rs. 4.07 lakhs has already been sanctioned under the scheme.

(iii) The Mizoram administration has taken large scale measures for destruction of rats, including free distribution of rodenticides and baiting material and cash awards for killing rats.

(c) (i) The requirement of the Mizoram administration in respect of foodgrains are being met in full by the Govt. of India.

(ii) The local administration has taken suitable steps to ensure availability of sufficient foodstuffs through fair price shops to the affected people. Necessary arrangements have also been made for transportation of essential commodities to the remote places.

DR. R. ROTHUAMA : In the past in 1959 we had a bitter experience of food crisis. At that time, the official reports indicated that the food situation was excellent. This time also, I raised the matter through an unstarred question and the reply I got is far from truth. The report that I have got from the local people living in the interior places has indicated that there is a serious food crisis as it was in 1959. In 1959 the starving masses living in the interior places did not have any food to eat and so they organised a Mizo Famine Front, which was exploited by the leaders and the Mizo Famine Front was turned into a political organisation known as the Mizo National Front. So, all the present political upheavals including the present Mizo Rebels are the product of the mismanagement and mishandling of the then government. Now also the reports which the State Government officials have furnished to the Centre are quite different from those I get from the local people. Most of the interior places which are inaccessible by vehicles are not having food. I am apprehensive because the official report is that the food situation is stated to be again excellent, but it is far from truth. Therefore, I want to know whether the Agriculture Minister will assure the House that he will take definite steps for proper arrangements for air-dropping of food supplies in those interior places which are inaccessible by vehicles, so that nobody will die of starvation and the anti-national and anti-social elements living there, particularly in the southern part after the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, do not exploit the situation ?

SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA :

There is a peculiar phenomenon in that part of the country that after every 50 years, the rat population there suddenly grows very fast because of the bamboo flowering. This year also it has been increasing very rapidly. The central teams and some scientists visited the area and found that the rat population was multiplying. So many measures were adopted in consultation with the government. As my friend was saying, the crops in some areas have been badly affected. For example, in Lunglei area there has been almost a complete loss, i.e. to the extent of 98% of the early paddy. The late paddy also was destroyed to the extent of 95%. There has also been similar damage in Saiha and Aijawl. I did not say that there has been no damage. I said, crops have been affected and we are meeting all the necessary requirements of the State Government. He asked about air-dropping I have mentioned in my answer that necessary arrangements have been made for the transportation of essential commodities to the remote places also and if my friend tells me about any

specific part where food is not being sent, we will take steps to send food there also.

**DR. R. ROTBUAMA :** Since the Minister of Agriculture has asked me about the specific areas where food is not supplied, I will give that information. In the western part of Aizawl district west of the Daleswaririu where the jeeps also cannot go, people there do not have sufficient food. Since there is no road in those areas, people have to travel a distance of 20 miles to take their rice quota from the nearest supply depot. In most of the interior areas in Chhimtuipui and Lunglei districts—which are on the Bangaladesh and Burma sides—the communication is horrible.

My second question is, will the hon. Minister be prepared to take concrete steps to sanction famine relief grants for these really poor people who cannot afford to buy rice? Otherwise, even if Government makes the food available, these poor people cannot afford to buy it.

Again, will the Minister be prepared to initiate a scientific investigation and research work to find out the real causes of bamboo-flowering? Bamboo flowering is occurring once every 50 years. The next occasion may be in the year 2001. Will the Minister take definite steps to initiate a scientific investigation and research project to identify and diagnose the root cause of bamboo flowering, so that a permanent cure can be found out, for this purpose?

**SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA :** As I mentioned a Central team has already visited the place. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has also sent a rodent expert, Dr. Ishwar Prasad there. He examined the situation there. Subsequently another distinguished geologist Mr. M.R.N. Prasad was also deputed to Mizoram to study the problem. He, along with some scientists from his own department, studied this problem. Scientific investigations are going on into this, because it has been recurring from time to time. There is a history dating back to 1881. Once every 50 years this problem arises. And after every 18 years here is a small variety of this problem called 'Mautam'; and the major variety is called 'Thingtam'. We are looking into this problem. As my friend stated, there are inaccessible areas in Aizawl district, whose problems are being looked into, as also those of the remote areas in Lunglei district.

**SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU :** Actually the misery of the people of Mizoram started the day the country was partitioned.

Because of Partition, the people in Mizoram have been completely cut off. There is no communication, practically, with the outside world. Because there is a very high rate of literacy, the problem of unemployment is more acute there, than in other areas. The "Thingtam" variety of bamboo flowering occurs over every 18 years. That is why in 1959, the Mizo disapproval movement was there arising out of the famines which occurred in 1959. In that context, I would like to know from the hon. Minister what he proposes to do. No doubt he is a Minister representing the entire Government. What steps does he propose to take?

12.34 hrs.

[**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair**] Will the Minister seriously consider the question of bringing the entire affected areas of Mizoram under a pest relief programme, and also start food-for-work programme in other areas of Mizoram. They will then be able to tide over the problem immediately.

**SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA :** If any request comes from the State, any amount of food can be provided. So far as communications are concerned, though I am not directly concerned with it, I would like to say that our policy is to provide communication even to the remotest parts of the country. This year we have got Rs. 20 crores for construction of rural roads. These are mainly rural roads and some allocation has been made to Mizoram out of this amount. Rat control measures are being adopted and they have proved successful also. I was told that the rat population has been reduced and over 1 1/2 million rats have been killed and people have got awards to the extent of Rs. 3 lakhs.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU :** May I know from the hon. Minister the quantity of foodstuffs so far air dropped in the Mizoram area? Is the Government aware of the fact that there is utter lack of purchasing capacity in the Mizoram people? In view of this, do the Government propose to take massive relief programme by which food can be supplied free of cost so that the poor people may not die of starvation?

**SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA :** No air dropping of food has been done because no such demand has been received. So far as damage is concerned, I may inform the hon. Member that the damage calculated by the State Government is to the tune of 14,000 tonnes of rice. Because it is a difficult area, we are already supplying about 30,000 tonnes of rice to Mizoram. But this year we are supplying 42,000 tonnes of rice.

**SHRI SAUGATA ROY :** In view of the acute scarcity conditions existing in Mizoram and it is only the bureaucracy which is doing the relief work, does the Government have any intention of having a popular set up in Mizoram at the earliest, so that they can tackle the famine situation in Mizoram in a better way ?

**SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA :** So far we have not received any complaints about the distribution of foodgrains there.

#### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

##### Scaling down of Iron Ore Export Target

\*536. **SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY :** Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CO-OPERATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether iron ore export target has been scaled down; and

(b) if so, the reasons thereof ?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI ARIF BEG) :** (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main reason for scaling down the export target has been the severe recession in the world steel industry.

##### Imposition of Ban of Auction of Indian Tea to London

\*537. **SHRI SHANKERSINHJI VAGHELA :**

**SHRI ANANT DAVE :**

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CO-OPERATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a proposal under consideration of Government to bring tea within the ambit of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act ;

(b) whether Government have also been considering a question of allowing the auction of tea only in India and imposing a ban on the auction of Indian tea at London; and

(c) if so, the particulars thereof and the measures adopted to implement these proposals ?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI ARIF BEG) :** (a) to (c) . Presumably the Hon'ble Member has in

mind the recommendation made by the Public Accounts Committee in its 15th Report on Customs and Receipts 77-78 in which on para 1-95 the Committee has recommended to the Ministry "to examine the question of bringing tea within the ambit of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act so as to plug the loophole for any loss of foreign exchange." This report has been received only very recently and is being examined in consultation with the concerned Ministries. The report, has, among other matters, recommended a ban on the sale of Indian tea through London Auction. A committee is very shortly being appointed by Government to examine the various recommendations concerning the marketing of tea and other related issues.

##### Central Assistance to State Governments for putting up Pavilions in Agri Expo-77

\*538. **SHRI DURGA CHAND :** Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state :

(a) the names of States which have put their Pavilions in the Agri Expo-77;

(b) the names of the States which have not put their pavilions and the reasons given by each State Government ;

(c) whether the Central Government consulted the state Governments in putting up their pavilions; if so what were their response; and

(d) what financial assistance was given to each State by the Central Government in this regard ?

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI ARIF BEG) :** (a) and (b) : A statement is laid on the Table of House.

(c) Yes, Sir. Accordingly 16 states and 5 Union Territories participated in the Fair.

(d) No financial assistance was provided by the Central Government to either the States or the Union Territories.

##### Statement

(a) Out of the 22 States and 9 Union Territories, 16 States namely, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West