

Government does not reach the flood/drought affected areas in time. I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether Government are taking any steps to ensure timely assistance to the such areas?

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, it is a general type of question. If it concerns foodgrains, I can tell, but it will be a bit difficult if it concerns financial assistance. But it is our endeavour to see that the assistance reaches the affected areas soon after it is sanctioned by the Central Government in consultation with the concerned State Government, so that the affected people whether it is flood, drought or famine get immediate assistance. That is the purpose behind it. If there is any delay in it, it will be our endeavour to eliminate it.

PROF. CHANDRA BHANU DEVI : Bihar has not sought any grant for flood and drought, although many of its districts had been affected by floods. I want to know whether Government propose to provide some assistance for such areas ?

S. BUTA SINGH : Each State has a provision of funds called 'margin money'. They seek central assistance only when they need assistance over and above this 'margin money'. If Bihar Government has not sought assistance, it means that they have managed the relief works with the help of the 'margin money' and have not written to us ; this is what we understand.

PROF. NIRMALA KUMARI SHAKTAWAT : I know a huge quantity of foodgrains in your godowns is rotting. I want to know to know from the hon. Minister the quantum of foodgrains that is lying in the open. Secondly, I want to know the quantum of foodgrains supplied so far to Rajasthan, the State which is facing the most severe drought of the century ?

S. BUTA SINGH : My Ministry is concerned with the production of foodgrains; it is my colleague who takes care of warehousing part of it. It is stored in their godowns. It is not true that we allow the foodgrains to rot. We store it with utmost care and it is our endeavour not to let the foodgrains rot. So far we do not have water proof godowns and we have to keep a large quantity of foodgrains in the open also. It

is always our effort to store the foodgrains with care.

The quantum of foodgrains supplied to Rajasthan was 12,000 tonnes each as regular supplies under N.R.E.P. and R.D.E.G.P. In addition to it, 36,000 tonnes each of foodgrains were also supplied. Thus, the total under N.R.E.P. comes to 48,000 tonnes. Another 48,000 tonnes were also given under R.L.E.G.P. Thus the total quantity of foodgrains supplied to Rajasthan is 96,000 tonnes.

SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Through you, Sir, I would like to submit that a central team had visited Maharashtra. I want to know the quantum of assistance sought by Maharashtra and the actual relief given by the Central Government to the State ?

S. BUTA SINGH : So far as the question of supply of foodgrains to Maharashtra is concerned, I can give the figure. 20,000 tonnes of foodgrains were given to Maharashtra. The report of the Central team is submitted to a high level committee and, thereafter, the relief is given to the State Government after funds are sanctioned.

English

Production of Potatoes

*406. SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the extent of production of potatoes in the country ;

(b) whether Government are contemplating steps to ensure the potato growing farmers a remunerative price keeping in view the crash in prices of potatoes last year due to an abundant crop ;

(c) if so, whether Government are devising any ways and means to utilize the surplus potato crop ; and

(d) if so, what are the proposals ?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (S. BUTA SINGH) : (a) The production of potatoes in the country last year i.e. 1984-85 was estimated at 126.32 lakh tonnes.

(b) A standing arrangement evolved by the Government in March, 1985 regarding market intervention operations through cooperatives exists to ensure a reasonable price to farmers in the event of fall in prices of potatoes below Rs. 50/- per quintal of fair average quality.

(c) and (d) Arrangements for the sale of surplus potatoes purchased in producing areas under the market intervention scheme are made by the designated Central and State level modal agencies in the consuming centres in different parts of the country.

SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT : Mr. Speaker, I would like to know whether the Government is aware that sale at Rs. 50 per quintal is beset with corruption and that farmers are harassed with rejections on account of the decrease in the size of potatoes of average quality. Therefore, is the Government contemplating making available better seeds to ensure better and uniform production of potatoes ?

S. BUTA SINGH : We have always been persuading the State Government to replace the seeds. Unfortunately for most of the crops, the rate of replacement of the seeds has been going down. That is the reason why the crop is not coming up to its quality and as a result of the decrease in the quality the procurement agencies do not pick up the quantities which are made available in the market and the farmers continue to suffer. Therefore, I would like my colleagues the hon. Members to persuade the States to replace the seeds, because the replacement of the seeds of high yielding variety is important as the high yielding variety seeds cannot be continued for a long time. They have to replace them annually and most of the States do not come forward for the replacement of the seeds. That is why we have accumulated large stocks of seeds with us. I would urge upon the hon. Members to impress on the State Governments that replacement of seeds is a vitally important matter for improvement in the agricultural production.

SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT : My second question is, apart from the purchase of surplus potatoes, is the Ministry contemplating setting up of agro-based industries which would utilize the surplus potato crop?

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, this is a suggestion for action.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE : Is the hon. Minister aware that the price of Rs. 50/- per quintal for potatoes, which is the support price, has become really a disincentive for potato crop? Keeping that in view, is that price going to be increased this year, and if so to what extent?

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, for the first time we had taken this step. Earlier, even the support price was not available to perishable commodities like potatoes and onions. It was only last year that we took this step and arrived at this price in consultation with the various States. And, it is not supposed to be a really remunerative price because this support measure, which will not allow the farmers to sell in distress. But I agree with the hon. lady Member, Shrimati Geeta Mukherejee that at many points the farmers had to sell them in distress because even this price was not available, as most of the market intervention agencies, the intervening agencies, they were very fussy about the quality and in their opinion the quality of potatoes was not up to the mark. Therefore, they did not purchase them. So, the price was fixed, at Rs. 90/- per quintal in consultation with the States and no State Government has come forward for the revision of this price.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes, Bal Ramji?

Translation

SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAVA : Hon. Speaker, Sir, through you, I want to know from the hon. Minister the basis on which support price of potato was fixed Rs. 50 - per quintal?

S. BUTA SINGH : Sir, the basis is broadly the same which I mentioned earlier

[*English*]

The cost of production takes into account other things, but as I said, this was only a step towards intervention in the market, to stop distress sale and as soon as we entered the market the price did pick up. That is why we were not forced to buy all the quantity. It was only a support price, so that it does not come down, but as

I said the price can be revised only in consultation with the States.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Amarsingh Rathawa.

Financial Assistance to Panchayats for Purchase of T.V. Sets

407. **SHRI AMARSINH RATHAWA :**†

SHRI MOHANBHAI PATEL : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to provide financial assistance to village panchayats to enable them to purchase T.V. sets for the benefit of villagers or to provide T.V. sets to village panchayats ;

(b) if so, the details of Central assistance given to each State during the Sixth Five Year Plan and the number of panchayats covered ; and

(c) if not, whether Government propose to introduce this scheme during the Seventh Five Year Plan ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI V.N. GADGIL) :

(a) to (c) A statement is given below.

Statement

As a part of the VI Plan scheme for TV utilisation of INSAT, 2000 VHF and 2000 Direct Reception (capable of receiving TV signals directly from satellite) TV sets for community viewing are under installation by Doordarshan at villages in selected three-district clusters in the six States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The distribution of these TV sets is as under :

Name of State	No. of VHF TV sets	No. of Direct Reception TV sets
Andhra Pradesh	...	400
Orissa	...	400
Maharashtra	600	300
Gujarat	400	300
Bihar	400	300
Uttar Pradesh	600	300
Total	2000	2000

VHF sets have not been allotted to villages in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa because such sets were installed there in the period before VI Plan. During the VI Plan there was, however, no other scheme to give central Financial Assistance to village Panchayats to enable them to purchase TV sets for community viewing.

It has also been decided in principle to provide, during the VII Plan period, 5000 community viewing TV sets (both VHF and Direct Reception) at selected villages in the States and Union Territories in the North-Eastern region, viz. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Further details of this scheme are yet to be finalised. State and Union Territory Governments have also been requested to provide community viewing TV sets at Panchayat level out of their own resources.

[Translation]

SHRI AMARSINGH RATHAWA : Sir, there are many people in rural panchayats and urban panchayats who cannot afford to buy a television set. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether government have any scheme under which a person could keep a television set through Panchayats if he so desires so that he could get valuable information through this medium?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : The Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Share of States for Rural Development Schemes

*389. **SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK :** Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether economically backward States have not been able to take full advantage of centrally sponsored poverty amelioration schemes, like I.R.D.P. and N.R.E.P., for want of matching State resources ;