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**Proceedings of the thirteenth Session of the First Assam Legislative Assembly,
assembled under the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935.**

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber, Shillong, at 2 P.M., on Friday the 26th November, 1943.

P R E S E N T

The Hon'ble Mr. Basanta Kumar Das, Speaker, in the Chair; the ten Hon'ble Ministers and fifty Members.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STARRED QUESTIONS

(To which oral answers were given)

Legislation *re*: Ghatua Dance

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*35. (a) Has the attention of Government been drawn to the articles published in the 'Sylhet Chronicle', dated the 19th October 1943, under caption (i) "Wanted a drastic Legislation" and (ii) "A girl dressed and used as a *Ghatua* boy" ?

(b) If so, will Government be pleased to state what steps they have taken or intend to take to eradicate the evil ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

35. (a)—Government have seen the articles.

(b)—A report will be obtained as to whether the position is so rife as to demand special measure.

***Re*: Posts of Temporary Extra Assistant Commissioners**

Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAJIN asked :

*36. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) What is the total number of temporary Extra Assistant Commissioners recruited from among the members of the Bar during the Section 93 Administration ?

(b) What is the total number of retired officers re-employed from among the former holders of (i) listed posts and (ii) from among those of the Assam Civil Service ?

(c) What is the total number of posts of Additional temporary Extra Assistant Commissioners appointed during the course of the current year ?

(d) Whether they are aware that at present there is no one from among the Ahom Community holding any of these classes of temporary posts ?

(e) If so, whether Government propose to consider the question of appointing Ahoms in any appointments of these or similar classes of posts in future ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

36. (a)—Ten.

(b)—(i) four.

(ii) four.

(c)—Seven.

(d)—Yes. One of the temporary officers was an Ahom, but he has since been absorbed in a permanent post on probation.

(e)—Certainly ; this is always done.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know what will be the tenure of office of these temporary Extra Assistant Commissioners?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am not yet certain, Sir, about their tenure of office, but their period of service has been extended by six months more.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is there any proposal for termination of the services of those lawyers who are now working as temporary Munsifs?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir, not yet.

Public Works Department Subdivisional Office, Habiganj

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN asked:

*37. (a) Is it a fact that recently Government have decided to transfer the office of the Public Works Department Subdivisional office from Habiganj to Maulvibazar?

(b) If so, what are the reasons for so doing?

(c) Is it a fact that there is already an office of the Public Works Department Subdivisional office at Maulvibazar?

(d) Is it a fact that at Maulvibazar a Divisional office is going to be established?

(e) Is it a fact that from Maulvibazar the southern boundary of Habiganj is very far?

(f) Is it a fact that at Habiganj there is already a good office building for Subdivisional Officer's office?

(g) Is it a fact that the Habiganj public is strongly opposed to the idea of transfer of this office?

(h) If so, do Government propose to give up the idea of removing this office from Habiganj?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied:

37. (a) & (b)—The Habiganj Subdivision is a purely temporary one opened for the purpose of coping with additional projects required by the military, and this Subdivision will be closed as soon as this work has been completed.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Yes, provided the Defence authorities sanction certain projects.

(e)—No.

(f)—There is only a temporary office at Habiganj.

(g) & (h) Government are not aware that there is any strong opposition to a measure which is necessary for expeditiously dealing with work of Military importance. Government see no reason why the present Habiganj and Maulvibazar Subdivisions be not amalgamated eventually into one Subdivision as was the case previous to 10th December 1942.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Since these questions were tabled did not the Hon'ble Minister consult with the questioner with regard to the transfer of the subdivision?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN: Yes, Sir, I had a discussion with the hon. questioner on the 19th November last, and in view of the suggestions made by him the matter is being re-examined, and if possible we will retain the subdivision at Habiganj.

(Starred question No. 38 standing in the name of Maulavi Mabarak Ali was not put and answered as the questioner as well as the Member who was authorised to put the question on his behalf were absent.)

Improvement of Cattle

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked:

*39. (a) Will Government be pleased to state the steps they have taken to improve the cattle position of the Province, both plough-cattle and milch cows?

(b) Are Government aware that milk and milk products in the Province are becoming scarce and very dear?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA replied :

39. (a)—The usual activities of the Live-Stock section of the Agricultural Department continue as before. No special war time activities have been undertaken. A scheme for maintenance of the goat population and subsidising the feeding of milch cattle was included in the Grow More Food estimates for 1943-44 but was not accepted by the Government of India. The province cannot finance such a scheme which requires about 15 lakhs of rupees without the assistance of the Government of India.

(b)—Yes.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Are Government aware that the cattle of the Province are becoming scarce because of the large demand by the Military ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: We have taken strong measures prohibiting slaughter of milch cattle and working bullocks below the age of 10.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it a fact that the price of cattle has gone up very high ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: Yes, Sir, in some parts of the Province.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it not universal throughout the whole Province ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: Government have received no report to that effect. As far as our report goes the price has gone up in some parts of the Province.

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV: In this connection do Government propose to extend the activities of the Veterinary Department for improving the cattle stock of the Province ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: The Veterinary Department always takes prompt action whenever cattle diseases break out in any part of the Province. Government are also taking steps for the proper maintenance of the livestock of the Province.

Mr. F. W. BLENNERHASSETT: Referring to (b), do Government propose taking any steps to so allocate milk supplies, or attempt to regulate the milk supplies of the Province, so that the needs of the Military may not overlap the needs of the civil population, as at the moment there is a very great danger of the civil population going short arising from the fact that the Military individually buy milk whereas, as we all know, they are supplied with rations of milk of various kinds, and therefore need no more ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: In some parts of the Province, as for instance Dibrugarh, the District Magistrate fixed the price of milk, but the milk disappeared from the market. These are the difficulties. However, the suggestions of the hon. Member will be remembered by the Government.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: Is it not a fact that field assistants were very much useful in coping with epidemic in cattle diseases ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: Yes, Sir.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do Government propose to improve the cattle position of the Province in any way they think fit within the resources at their disposal ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: We have been trying to improve the quality of cattle by good breeding and placing good bulls in the interiors of the Province.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: How many such bulls have been placed by Government in the interior ?

The Hon'ble Mr. NABA KUMAR DUTTA: I want notice of that question, Sir.

Re: Security Prisoners

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*40. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The names and home districts of the Security Prisoners of the Province and the names of Jails where each of them has now been detained ?

(b) The names of those Security Prisoners who have been granted an allowance and the amount of such allowance granted to each of them per month ?

(c) The reasons as to why all the Security Prisoners have not been granted monthly allowance according to their status and past earnings ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

40. (a)—Government do not consider that it would be in accordance with the public interest to publish the names or location of security prisoners.

(b)—For the same reason Government are not prepared to give the names of Security Prisoners to whom family and personal allowances have been granted. Allowances have been sanctioned to 73 persons, of whom 54 are in receipt of family allowances (with personal allowances in 21 cases) and 19 of personal allowances only.

(c)—It is the policy of Government to make such allowances according to proved necessity only. Some prisoners have not yet asked for allowances, some applications are under investigation, and some prisoners who have asked for allowances have been shown not to be in need of them. Government have however approved in consultation with the Central Government the expenditure of Rs. 5 per month by the Jail Authorities on the personal needs of prisoners who are not in receipt of private funds and who have not been sanctioned a specific higher personal allowance.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Did not Government publish the names of those detenus to whom allowance was granted in reply to some questions in the last Session of the Assembly ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I do not remember it, Sir.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is there any change in the situation to justify the contention that names are not disclosed in public interest ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: That is Government opinion, Sir.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is not this House entitled to know which of the Members of this Assembly have been detained as Security Prisoners ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I do not know whether the House has a right to know. If a question is put I shall give the numbers.

†Stijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Not the names ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I said 'numbers'.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Did Government take into consideration the present scale of rise in prices with regard to the allowances that were already granted ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Yes, Sir, in certain cases I have reviewed the allowances and increased them.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Is it in proportion to the scale of rise in prices ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Of course it is not proportionate to the scale of rise in prices. Increase has been granted in certain cases.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Do Government think that the allowances granted are sufficient to maintain the families of the prisoners ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : In many cases Deputy Commissioner recommended less amount but I have increased them.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI : Are Government prepared to give the names of the Members of Legislative Assembly who are Security Prisoners now ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : Government cannot make any distinction between Members of the Legislature who are unfortunately detained as Security Prisoners and other Security Prisoners.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : May I know why permission was refused to some student prisoners of the Sylhet Jail last year to appear at the University Examination while similar facilities were granted to the student prisoners of the Silchar Jail and of Bengal Jails ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : This is an entirely new question.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Yes, the question does not arise.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : This question arises because the Hon'ble Premier has said that he does not like to make any difference between classes of prisoners.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : In regard to what?

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Regarding facilities granted to prisoners.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : In respect of what matter ?

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : Members of Legislative Assembly prisoners and non-Members of Legislative Assembly.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER : Very well. The hon. Member may put his question.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE : What is the reason for making such differences ? Some students of the Sylhet Jail were not allowed to appear whereas those in other jails were allowed.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : I want notice of the question.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Will Government consider the petitions of those students who want to sit for examination this year ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : This is a question of policy which cannot be discussed or decided in reply to a question.

Re Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE asked :

*41. (a) Will Government be pleased to state why Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A., Chief Whip of the Assembly Congress Party, has been transferred from Jorhat Jail to Maulvibazar Jail ?

(b) Is it a fact that he is keeping very indifferent health now ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

41. (a)—Because of the objectionable propagandist activity in which he is reported to have indulged in Jorhat Jail.

(b)—Government have enquired into the complaints about this transfer and have been given no ground for thinking that he is in indifferent health. They are still considering where he should be accommodated in future, and will ascertain whether the suggestion has any foundation.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA : Is not a district jail a safer place to stop propagandist activity than a subdivisional jail ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA : This again is a question of opinion. I am not prepared to reply to it. But the question whether Srijut Debeswar Sarma should be removed from the sub-jail of Maulvibazar to a bigger one is under my consideration. I have received a letter from the hon. Member himself. He does not complain of any indifference of health.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: What class of prisoner he is? Is he No. I or No. II?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He is No. I.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is he getting facilities of No. I in the Maulvibazar jail?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He is given a part of the hospital.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: Is it not a sort of solitary confinement?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I will not agree with my hon. Friend.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: What is the nature of propaganda he has carried in the Jorhat jail?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I do not think this question arises.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: Is it healthy for a healthy man?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is not unhealthy.

†Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV: Why Maulvibazar of all places has been selected?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It was done by the Inspector-General of Prisons.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Who reported against Srijut Debeswar Sarma?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The jail authorities in Jorhat.

†Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Were these allegations enquired into by a responsible officer?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The Jail Superintendent is a very responsible officer.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: Is it not a fact that in cases of contagious diseases, patients are removed to the other room in the hospital?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am not aware of that. My Friend comes from Maulvibazar. Perhaps he knows Maulvibazar Jail better than myself.

All I know is that an extra room has been converted into a room to be used for the hon. Member of this House.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: I visited the jail. I am a jail visitor. There are two rooms in the hospital. One of which is meant for contagious patients.

Once there was an epidemic of dysentery in the Maulvibazar jail and a patient had to be removed to the other room.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is under the same roof but there is no connecting door.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: Yes.

†Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Do not Government think that even if a healthy man is kept in a room which is adjacent to a sick room he will feel unhealthy and sick?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

†Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV: What action Government took against officers of the Jorhat Jail for allowing Mr. Sarma to do propaganda work in the jail?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He has been removed from the centre of activity.

†Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV: Is there any arrangements for indoor games in the Maulvibazar Jail ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADUDLA: No.

†Babu DAKSHINA RANJAN GUPTA CHAUDHURI: Will Government take steps to transfer him ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I have already replied. I have received a letter of complaint from Srijut Debeswar Sarma and I have taken action on it.

Re Estates under the Court of Wards.

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV asked :

*42. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether the Court of Wards has passed orders for the increment of allowances of the Wards of each estate under their management ?
- (b) If not, whether Government propose to increase their allowances in view of the present abnormal rise in the cost of living ?
- (c) Whether it is a fact that the percentage of rent realisation by the Estates has increased since the rise of prices of agricultural commodities ?
- (d) Whether Government propose to decrease the amount paid towards repayment of loan so long as normal conditions do not revive ?
- (e) Whether it is a fact that officers working under the Court of Wards have been allowed dearness allowance ?
- (f) Whether Government propose to bring all Khamar lands of the Wards Estates under direct cultivation by the Court of Wards ?
- (g) If not, whether Government propose to return all Khamar lands to the Wards for direct cultivation by themselves ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi MUNAWWAR ALI replied :

42. (a)—No general order has been issued.

(b)—Increase of allowances has been sanctioned in certain cases recommended by local officers but some estates are not in a financial condition to admit of increased allowances.

(c)—Increases have been recorded in some estates but not in all.

(d)—No.

(e)—Yes.

(f)—No.

(g)—Government will consider this.

UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

(To which written answers were laid on the table)

Re Maulvibazar Municipality

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ asked :

51. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) Whether it is a fact that the Maulvibazar Municipality at its meeting held on 12th May 1942 adopted a resolution for approaching Government for a loan of Rs.8,000 ?
- (b) The number of correspondence made by the Board up to date in connection with the said loan ?
- (c) The reasons for Government's refusal of the said loan ?
- (d) The Municipality's outstanding arrears and liabilities to date ?
- (e) Whether Government are aware that arrangement for better water supply, communications, conservancy and drainage is required in the town of Maulvibazar ?

- (f) Whether Government propose now to reconsider their previous decision about the loan ?
- (g) Whether any extra grant will be made to the Board for the Military use of the Board's roads ?
- (h) The compensatory grant made to the Board for Channighat ferry for the years 1940-41, 1941-42 and 1942-43 and the sale proceeds of the said ferry for the said years ?
- (i) The annual communication grants for the Maulvibazar Municipality and the Srimangal Town Committee ?
- (j) The number of mileage of road maintained by both these Local Bodies ?
- (k) Whether it is a fact that the communication grant for the Maulvibazar Municipal Board is insufficient ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY replied :

- 51.(a)—Yes.
- (b)—Six letters—three through the Deputy Commissioner and three direct addressed by the hon. Member as Chairman of the Board.
- (c)—Reasons advanced were not in conformity with the provisions of the Local Authorities Loans Rules.
- (d)—Information is being collected.
- (e)—Why in Maulvibazar, "better" arrangements in such matters are welcome everywhere.
- (f)—Only if the Board comes up through the proper channel and grounds

justify.

(g)—The matter is engaging the attention of the Government.

(h)—

Years	Compensatory grant Rs.	Sale proceeds Rs.
1940-41	... 1,847	2,500
1941-42	... 1,847	2,400
1942-43	... 740	* 600

* (from 1st April 1942 to 30th June 1942 only).

(i)—Maulvibazar—Rs.950.
Srimangal—Rs.1,780.

(j)—Maulvibazar—3.53 miles plus 3.7 miles of bridle paths.
Srimangal—3.17 miles.

(k)—Government will examine this at the time of distribution of the grant for

the next year.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ: Sir, the reply to question No. 51(f) is 'only if the Board comes up through the proper channel and grounds justify'. May I know what is meant by 'proper channel' ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: The proper channel means that the petition should be sent to Government through the Deputy Commissioner.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ: May I know from the Hon'ble Minister what are the grounds that will justify a loan from Government ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: I think, hon. Member himself knows what are the proper grounds for taking a loan from the Government. The hon. Member himself is the Chairman and a lawyer and as such it is not necessary for me to tell him what are the proper grounds for taking a loan from Government.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN: May I know who is the Chairman of the Maulvibazar Municipal Board ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: The Chairman of the Maulvibazar Municipality is the hon. questioner himself.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ: If the Municipal Board, Sir, has got an outstanding arrears to the extent of Rs.8,000 and if its liability is lesser than that, can the Board in that case expect a loan from Government ?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: I don't know, Sir, what is his exact question. However I take that he wants to say that the financial position of the Board is bad and that is why the Chairman applied for a loan. I admit that his statement is correct but the loan application is not in conformity with the rules under which the Government can grant loan.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ: I want to know from the Hon'ble Minister that if the outstanding arrears of the Board amount to Rs. 8,000 and if the liability of the Board amounts to a lesser amount, then can the Board expect to have a loan from the Government?

The Hon'ble Srijut HIRENDRA CHANDRA CHAKRAVARTY: No, Sir. I don't think, this can be argued as a ground for granting a loan to the Board. The loan cannot be granted against the provisions of the Local Authorities Loan Rules

Purchase of paddy from Habiganj subdivision by Messrs. Ispahani and Company

Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEV asked:

52. (a) Will Government be pleased to state whether Habiganj subdivision is a surplus area?

(b) Is it a fact that Messrs. Ispahani and Company have taken away 25,000 maunds of paddy from Habiganj subdivision since after reimposition of the ban in August 1943?

(c) If so, what were the prices offered by the said Company at the time of purchase?

(d) Do Government contemplate permitting further large scale export from the subdivision?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

52. (a)—Normally it is slightly surplus but rice situation depends on the condition of the different crops in the various parts of the subdivision.

(b)—No.

(c)—Does not arise.

(d)—No.

Sugarcandy Factory at Nowgong

Khan Sahib Maulavi MUHAMMAD AMIRUDDIN asked:

53. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether they are aware that Debendra Nath Ghose of Haborgaon town in the district of Nowgong had a factory for manufacturing sugarcandy?

(b) If so, why the supply of sugar has been withheld from him recently?

(c) Whether Government are aware that the dealers sell sugarcandy at Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3 per seer in the present markets of Nowgong?

(d) Whether Government propose to control its price?

(e) Whether Government propose to set apart a particular quota of sugar for the said manufacture?

(f) Whether it is a fact that this matter was brought to the notice of Government by the questioner by a demi-official letter dated the 23rd October 1943, addressed to the Secretary, Supply Department, Assam?

(g) If so, what action has been taken on that letter?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied:

53. (a)—Government were not aware of the existence of such a factory until Khan Sahib mentioned it in his letter dated 23rd October 1943.

(b)—This is due to the inadequacy of sugar allotment.

(c)—No.

(d)—The consumption of the stuff is not much to justify control.

(e)—No. No sugar can be issued for such purposes without a permit from the Sugar Controller.

(f)—Yes.

(g)—This has been replied and the hon. Member has perhaps received the reply by now.

Re Deviraj Singh, an ex-Pay-Havildar of Karimganj

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA asked :

54. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether it is a fact that one Deviraj Singh, an ex-Pay-Havildar of Karimganj submitted several petitions commencing from October, 1941 to the Inspector General of Police, the Chief Secretary and His Excellency the Governor of Assam, alleging that he and his nephew were assaulted and his properties were looted by the people of Ainakhal Tea Estate within Hailakandi Subdivision ?

(b) Whether it is a fact that the said Deviraj Singh also alleged that his nephew Mahadev Singh who was seriously wounded and taken to Ainakhal Garden Hospital for treatment did not return and is still untraced ?

(c) Whether any enquiry was made into the allegations made in his petition ?

(d) If so, who made the enquiry and with what result ?

(e) Whether the result of the enquiry was communicated to the petitioner concerned ?

(f) It not, why not ?

(g) Whether Government considered the allegations made by the petitioner and also his grievances against the local police and the Subdivisional Officer, Hailakandi ?

(h) If so, what steps were taken to ensure a fair enquiry ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

54. (a)—The date given is inaccurate. Deviraj Singh and his son submitted some 3 or 4 petitions to various authorities from March 1941 onwards.

(b)—Yes, it was so alleged in his petition.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Enquiries were made by a Sub-Inspector, an Inspector and a Deputy Superintendent of Police at different times. They reported that the allegations were false and vexatious and one officer recommended his prosecution for false report.

(e)—Yes, the result of enquiry was communicated to the petitioner, Deviraj

Singh.

(f)—Does not arise.

(g)—The hon. Member is referred to the reply given in question No. 54(d).

The allegations of the petitioner received very full attention from the local officers.

(h)—Does not arise.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Sir, the reply to question No. 54(d) is that "enquiries were made by a Sub-Inspector, an Inspector and a Deputy Superintendent of Police at different times. They reported that the allegations were false and vexatious and one officer recommended his prosecution for false report." May I know whether he was actually prosecuted as recommended.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: No, Sir.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Sir, the allegation is that the nephew of Deviraj Singh has not returned home and remains still untraced. May I know what was the Police report about this man ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The report is that, Sir, the man is not untraced; in fact he is still there and carrying on his usual avocation.

Babu RABINDRA NATH ADITYA: Where, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: He is present in the locality where he used to be before.

Government Employees' Co-operative Store at Maulvibazar

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ asked :

55. Will Government be pleased to state—

- (a) The share capital of the Government Employees' Co-operative Store at Maulvibazar and the amount received by sale of commodities by the said Co-operative Store since its start till the last audit by the Government Auditor ?
- (b) The names of members of the Managing Committee of the said Co-operative Store ?
- (c) How many bags of (i) sugar (ii) flour and (iii) Atta and how many tins of kerosene were sold by the said Store since its start till last audit ?
- (d) The net profit made by the said Store till the last audit ?

The Hon'ble Dr. MAHENDRA NATH SAIKIA replied :

55. (a)—Rs.580-0-0 ; Rs.8,175-10-9.

- (b)—1. Maulavi S. Islam Chowdhury, Subdivisional Officer.
2. Mr. B. L. Sen, Extra Assistant Commissioner.
3. Babu K. K. Chowdhury, Sub-Deputy Collector.
4. Babu Jamini Kumar Bhattacharjee.
5. Maulavi A. Zahir.
6. Babu Gurudas Purkayastha.
7. Babu Kamini Kumar Bhattacharjee.
8. Srijut K. C. Katakai.
9. Maulavi A. Manaf.
10. Dr. A. Zaman Chowdhury.
11. Maulavi A. Rahim Khan.

(c)—(i) 49 bags of sugar, (ii) 4 bags of flour and (iii) 7½ bags of Atta and 116 tins of kerosene.

(d)—Rs. 695-11-0.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ : Sir, with regard to (a) the question is "will Government be pleased to state the share capital of the Government Employees' Co-operative Store at Maulvibazar and the amount received by sale of commodities by the said Co-operative Store since its start till the last audit by the Government Auditor ?"

The reply to this question is that the share capital is Rs.580 and the amount received by the sale of commodities is Rs.8,175-10-9. May I know whether these figures are correct ?

The Hon'ble Dr. MAHENDRA NATH SAIKIA : The commodities are purchased from time to time from the sale proceeds and that is why the amount of sale proceeds appears to be so high.

Maulavi ABDUL AZIZ : Then Sir, the reply to question No. 55(d) is that the profit is Rs.695-11-0. Is it correct, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Dr. MAHENDRA NATH SAIKIA : We have got nothing to say about profit so long the controlled commodities are sold at controlled rates.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : Is it not a fact that the Government Employees' Co-operative Stores in each of the Subdivisional Headquarters receive preferential treatment over the other private Co-operative Stores ?

The Hon'ble Dr. MAHENDRA NATH SAIKIA : That is a new question, Sir.

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN : How can that be a new question, Sir ? My question is a very simple one as to whether the Government Employees' Co-operative Stores get preferential treatment from the Government, in matters of supply.

The Hon'ble Dr. MAHENDRA NATH SAIKIA : The set of questions before us relates to one particular Co-operative Store, and his one is a question of policy.

Hamidabad Islamic Intermediate College

Maulana ABDUL HAMID KHAN asked :

56. (a) Will Government be pleased to state the total number of Islamic Intermediate Colleges in the Province ?

(b) Are Government aware that an Islamic Intermediate College has been started at Hamidabad ?

(c) Is it a fact that the said Hamidabad Islamic Intermediate College is the only one institution of its kind in the Province ?

(d) Will Government be pleased to state whether they have received any representation regarding the grant of financial aid to the said College ?

(e) If so, what action has been taken on that representation ?

(f) Do Government propose to sanction suitable recurring and non-recurring grants to the said College ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

56. (a)—None.

(b)—Yes.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Yes, in the form of a resolution of a public meeting held under the presidentship of the same hon. Member.

(e)—It is under the consideration of the Government now.

(f)—The matter will be considered in due course.

Goalpara Government High English School

Maulavi MUHAMMAD AMJAD ALI asked :

57. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether Srijut Dhirendralal Das, a teacher of the Goalpara Government High English School, was deputed to Teachers' Training College at Shillong and Maulavi Safiur Rahman was appointed to act as Assistant Master against the vacancy caused by that deputation by the Director of Public Instruction in his Notification No.363-A, dated the 10th July 1943 ?

(b) Whether the said Maulavi Safiur Rahman joined his acting appointment on 29th July 1943 ?

(c) Whether by Demi-official No.19614, dated the 26th August 1943, from the office of the Inspector of Schools, Assam Valley Circle, Maulavi Safiur Rahman was ordered to continue in the deputation vacancy till April, 1944 ?

(d) Whether it is a fact that Maulavi Safiur Rahman was relieved on 28th September 1943, by the Head Master of the Goalpara Government High English School and was not allowed to join his post on the re-opening day of the school, after the Puja Holidays ?

(e) If so, why ?

(f) Whether Maulavi Safiur Rahman represented the above facts to the Inspector of Schools, Assam Valley Circle, by a petition ?

(g) If so, whether any action has been taken in the matter ?

(h) If not, why not ?

The Hon'ble Khan Bahadur Maulavi SAYIDUR RAHMAN replied :

57. (a)—Yes.

(b)—Yes.

(c)—Yes.

(d)—Yes.

(e)—Because the deputation of Srijut Dhirendra Lal Das had to be cancelled for unavoidable reasons.

(f)—Yes.

(g)—Yes. Maulavi Safiur Rahman has been given another temporary appointment.

(h)—Does not arise.

Re Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI asked :

58. (a) Is it a fact that Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A., has lately been transferred to Maulvibazar Jail ?

(b) If so, do Government propose to remove him to any of the first class jails in district headquarters of the Assam Valley ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

58 (a)—Yes.

(b)—Government are discussing with the Inspector General of Prisons the most suitable jail in which to place him.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know, Sir, when we can expect a decision on this point ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sometime after the Session.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is it immediately after the Session, Sir ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It may take about a week or about ten days after the Session.

Re Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A.

Srijut RAM NATH DAS asked :

59. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) Whether it is a fact that Srijut Debeswar Sarma, M.L.A., since his transfer from the Jorhat Jail to Maulvibazar Jail has been losing his weight ?

(b) Whether it is a fact that he is not keeping well there ?

(c) If so, whether Government propose to re-transfer him to the Jorhat Jail or to some other district Jail of Assam ?

(d) The reasons for transferring Srijut Debeswar Sarma from the Jorhat Jail to the Maulvibazar Jail ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

59. (a) and (b).—Government have had no indications to this effect.

(c)—Does not arise.

(d)—Because of the reports received of his propaganda activity in Jorhat Jail.

Re Political Prisoners

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY asked :

60. Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) The result of the enquiry, promised by the Hon'ble Minister-in-charge of Home Department in reply to unstarred question No. 46 during the last Budget Session of the Assembly, 1943, regarding the grant of allowance to the mother of Radha Ranjan De, a security prisoner, now detained in Sylhet Jail ?

(b) Whether any allowance has since been given to the mother of Radha Ranjan De ?

(c) Whether Government have ascertained the fact that the said Radha Ranjan De was in the employ of Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy, M. L. A., as his Secretary, before his arrest ?

(d) Whether Government have ascertained from the communist Leaders of the Province that he was and still is an Anti-Fascist Communist worker ?

(e) Whether Government propose to release him and other communist prisoners to allow them to work in village areas for imbuing the people with the spirit of defence against any Japanese aggression ?

61. Will Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing—

(a) The names of convicted political prisoners now placed in different Jails of Assam in connection with the last political movement, or in other cases ?

(b) The names of detained political prisoners now placed in different Jails of Assam, in connection with the last political movement, or in other cases ?

(c) The names of prisoners who have been interned in connection with the last political movement or in other cases ?

- (d) The names of persons who have been externed in connection with the last political movement or in other cases ?
- (e) The names of persons against whom warrants have been hanging and who have not yet been arrested in connection with the last political movement or in other cases ?
- (f) The names of persons against whom cases have been pending in connection with the last political movement or in other cases ?
62. (a) Will Government be pleased to state the reason why the following prisoners are either detained, or interned or externed, or convicted or arrested or under warrant :—

(1) Probhodanda Kar, (2) Asutosh Sen, (3) Manik Chaudhury, (4) Rajendra Nanda, (5) Achintya Bhattacharya, (6) Nibaran Dutta, (7) Jiten Sarma, (8) Radha Ranjan De, (9) Mati Jaigirdar, (10) Dhiren Dutta, (11) Jagat Bhatta, (12) Taru Barthakur, (13) Nilmani Barthakur, (14) Profulla Goswami, (15) Ramesh Sarmah, (16) Amio Das Gupta, (17) Pabitra Roy, (18) Benoy Chakravarty, (19) Susil Das Gupta, (20) Ajoy Bhattacharya, (21) Sashindra Dutta, (22) Barin Dutta, (23) Manindra Roy, (24) Jaineswar Das, (25) Nikhilendu Mitra, (26) Digen Das Gupta, (27) Sukumar Nandi, (28) Gopen Deb, (29) Tarapada Bhattacharya, (30) Mohitosh Purkaystha, (31) Gopen Roy, (32) Kedarnath Barthakur, (33) Sadhu Singh ?

(b) Is it a fact that the Secretary, Surma Valley Committee, Communist Party of India, has informed Government that the aforesaid prisoners are Communists ?

(c) Will Government please state whether Government have considered the cases of release of the aforesaid persons ?

(d) If not, why not ?

63. Will Government be pleased to state —
- (a) Why Kedar Barthakur with another of his companion was arrested on the 9th August 1943 at Nazira ?
- (b) Whether Government are aware that the Communists of the Province made strenuous efforts to stop demonstrations, Hartal, etc., in various places on the 9th August 1943 ?
- (c) Whether Government are aware that Kedar Nath Barthakur and his companion are Communists ?
64. Will Government be pleased to state —
- (a) Whether it is a fact that Sashanka Sekhar Ghosh and Hareswar Goswami, the two convicted political prisoners now in Sylhet Jail, have changed their opinions and have become Anti-Fascists ?
- (b) If so, whether Government propose to release them ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

60. (a)—Though not altogether satisfied that the case warranted the grant of an allowance at the public expense, Government have sanctioned a maintenance allowance for the prisoner's mother.

(b)—Yes, as stated above, Rs. 25 per month. The Deputy Commissioner has been asked to report further, if necessary.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: May I know, Sir, from what date the allowance will be given ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am sorry, Sir, I have not got the file with me, but if I remember aright the allowance will be given six weeks or two months after his detention.

Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY: May I know why he should not be given allowance from the date of his arrest ?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: In reply to a question I cannot give out reasons for Government's decision in this matter.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

(c)—Government are informed that Babu Karuna Sindhu Roy paid the prisoner at Rs. 25 per month until the latter was convicted in January 1941. When he was released after his sentence of one year's rigorous imprisonment he remained out of employ until his detention in September 1942.

(d)—Government have been so informed.

(e)—The cases of all security prisoners are under review.

61 and 62. (a)—Government regret that they are unable to enter into detailed discussion either in respect of convicted persons or of security prisoners.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Sir, question No.61 has not been answered. The question was "will Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing the names of convicted political prisoners now placed in different jails of Assam"? We find that the names have not been mentioned here. So Sir, question No.61 has not been answered.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Sir, this morning in reply to a starred question I have already replied that it is not within the public interest to give out the names; so we have not given the names here.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is it the decision with regard to political prisoners only or with regard to all classes of prisoners?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: It is with regard to political prisoners only.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Is it not a denial of the rights of this House not to get certain information regarding the names of the prisoners?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: It depends on the discretion of the Government to decide what information they can give, and what they cannot. If there be any information which touches the privileges of the House, then of course it becomes a different matter.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I know, Sir, whether in future these questions are to be disallowed by the Chair?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Questions are allowed by the Speaker, but it entirely depends on the discretion of the Government to reply or not to reply to the questions.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: If Government refuses to give answer then are we helpless?

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I am also helpless.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA replied :

(b)—Yes.

(c)—As already stated, Government have the cases of detenus under review. Opportunity was given in September 1942 to all the persons who were under other forms of restriction to give an unqualified undertaking that they would oppose any activity in pursuance of the Civil Disobedience programme. Two only were prepared to give such an undertaking and their restriction orders were withdrawn.

(d)—Does not arise.

63. (a)—Government understand that Kedar Barthakur was arrested for breach of orders under the Defence of India Rules; they have no information regarding his companion.

(b)—Government derive their evidence on that point almost entirely from the statements of the Communists themselves. They are prepared to accept the fact.

(c)—Government have no information.

64. (a)—Government have no information.

(b)—Government cannot commit themselves to a decision on the bare statement of any person as to his opinions.

Adjournment Motion re: the order depriving the relations of Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi, M.L.A., a prisoner at Gauhati Jail, of the privileges of interviewing him.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg leave of the House to move—

“That this Assembly do now adjourn to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance and of recent occurrence, *viz.*, the order depriving the relations of Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi, M.L.A., Leader of the Congress Assembly Party and now a prisoner at Gauhati Jail, of the privileges of interviewing him.”

Sir, I must thank the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his kind order of transferring Mr. Bardoloi from the Jorhat Jail to the Gauhati Jail on grounds of health. He was particularly brought to Gauhati so that his own physician might attend him and also that his relations might enquire about his health and may give such assistance as is possible and allowable from outside the Jail. But, Sir, by a curious order which has been passed either by the jail authorities, (the Superintendent of Jail is supposed to be a responsible officer), or by the district authorities that such interviews will have to be held in the presence of a Criminal Investigation Department Assistant Sub-Inspector. Now, Sir, the rules as far as I could understand, and as far as it was elucidated on the floor of this House by the Hon'ble Prime Minister himself was that an interview with a security prisoner must be held in presence either of the Deputy Commissioner or the Superintendent of Police. As a matter of fact, when I was kindly granted permission to interview with Mr. Bardoloi in Jorhat Jail the interview was held in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar. Now there cannot be much serious objection, if exigencies of circumstances require, that an interview should take place in the presence of a high and respectable officer of equal status but it is ridiculous that an Assistant Sub-Inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department, or for the matter of that a Sub-Inspector must be present when an interview is given either to his wife or a relation. So practically Mr. Bardoloi has been denied an interview with his relation because Mr. Bardoloi would not like to have interview in such circumstances as such officer may report all sorts of things and the result will be an aspersion, a reflection on the conduct of a person of high social position like Mr. Bardoloi or Mrs. Bardoloi. Therefore, Sir, this order is tantamount to a denial of a privilege which the rules allow. This is a matter of recent occurrence, Sir, because, Mr. Bardoloi was recently transferred to Gauhati Jail and the first opportunity of interview occurred in the last week...

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: When did the hon. Member come to know of this?

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: Only yesterday, Sir.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank Mr. Chaudhuri for the kind compliments that he has paid me for transferring Mr. Bardoloi to Gauhati Jail in spite of the policy of Government that Leaders of the locality should not be kept in the local jail. In this matter the credit goes to him for his insistence that Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi must be transferred to Gauhati Jail for treatment of his eye troubles by his own family physician, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua, who was at one time a security prisoner, but on humanitarian considerations for the safety of his patients I had released him.

The Government had not passed any order restricting Mr. Gopinath Bardoloi's interviews in any way. As a matter of fact, Sir, the Provincial Government of Assam has gone much further than most other provinces as well as the Central Government in matters of interviews by security prisoners. It was in the interest of the public in general that orders were passed that such interviews must be in the presence of responsible Government officers. The orders, if any, according to the wordings of the Adjournment Motion, is supposed to have been passed by the Jail Authorities or by some other authorities. But now it appears from the statement of my Friend, Mr. Chaudhuri, that there was no denial of interview by any express order either of Government or of Jail authorities. At the insistence on the part of the Jail

Superintendent or the Jailor himself that a Criminal Investigation Department Assistant Sub-Inspector should be present, Mr. Bardoloi thought it much beneath his dignity to interview his own relations. I will look into this matter, Sir, and so far as Mr. Bardoloi is concerned, I will insist that the Deputy Commissioner or if he is out on tour the Extra Assistant Commissioner-in-charge or the Superintendent of Police or the Additional Superintendent of Police be present.

I have got absolutely no information except what my Friend places before the House. I think, Sir, with this my hon. Friend, the Mover, will be satisfied. The way in which I have treated Mr. Bardoloi is on account of his personal relation with me and also because of his status of being the Leader of the Opposition.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: May I request the Hon'ble Prime Minister to communicate this decision by wire to the Deputy Commissioner because the health of Mr. Bardoloi is so bad that he requires immediate attention?

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saivid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: The position is this, Sir, that my Friend has made certain allegations. I am not in a position to say whether they are correct or not. I will have to ask the Deputy Commissioner to report on what has been stated by Mr. Chaudhuri in this House and what he has got to say in reply and at the same time I will tell him that during interview with Mr. Bardoloi, the Deputy Commissioner or Senior Extra Assistant Commissioner or the Superintendent of Police or the Additional Superintendent of Police must be present and not a Criminal Investigation Department Sub-Inspector.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: I am very thankful to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Sir. I do not wish to press the Motion.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: As the leave is not pressed, it is not necessary for me to decide whether the Motion is in order or not.

The Assam Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943.

Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAJIN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Assam Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943 (introduced in and passed by the Assam Legislative Council) be taken into consideration.

Sir, in urging upon this House to accept the Bill, as passed by our Elders, I would like to remind the House that the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, 1937, as amended by the Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Amendment) Act, 1938, was passed by the Central Legislature and was designed to give the Hindu widows better rights with respect to property of all classes. The Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, 1937, was sponsored by Dr. G. V. Deshmukh of Bombay in the Central Legislative Assembly and this measure was considered to be one badly needed and Dr. Deshmukh at that time earned the gratitude of the Hindu women all over India. In the following year the Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Amendment) Act, 1938, was brought to the Statute Book and this Act was piloted by Sir. N. N. Sircar, the then Law Member of the Government of India. The Amending Act was designed not to extend the scope of the Deshmukh Act but to correct a mistake that remained in the original Act. Sir, this Act, the Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act, was meant to give a Hindu widow the right to share in the estate of her husband in spite of the existence of sons, grand-sons, or great-grand-sons, which, previous to the passing of this Act, excluded her from inheritance. But, Sir, the fact that this Hindu Women's Rights to Property Act received the assent of the Governor General in April 1937 made a world of difference. This House knows that the power to legislate on agricultural land devolved upon the Provincial Legislature on and from the 1st April 1937 when Part III of the Government of India Act, 1935, came into operation. So this delay in the receipt of the assent to the Act by only a fortnight resulted in cropping up of a great question which was ultimately referred in 1941 to the Federal Court.

And this hon. Court construed the word 'property' in the Act to mean 'non-agricultural property' in the Governors' Provinces. Sir, the Government of India, early in the year 1941, constituted a committee, known as the Rau Committee, to inquire and report on the various questions affecting the rights of Hindu women in India. This Rau Committee in July 1941 submitted a report and they, along with other matters, recommended that parallel legislation for agricultural land should be introduced into the Provincial Legislatures in order to give the Hindu widows those better rights that were sought so be given in the original Act of the Central Legislature. They had also prepared and appended a draft of a Bill to their Report and that draft was designed to operate with retrospective effect and validate transactions that were entered into on the strength of the Act of the Central Legislature. Sir, the present Bill was exactly the draft that was prepared by the Rau Committee for the provinces and in several of the provinces in the meanwhile this Bill has been enacted. In this Province my hon. Friend Srijut Satyendra Mohon Lahiri of Gauhati, whose position as a jurist in this Province is very well-known to the Members of this House, had sponsored this Bill in the Assam Legislative Council and the Council was pleased to accept it. In an agricultural Province like Assam the necessity for such a Bill may not be over-emphasised. With these few words, Sir, I beg the House to accept the Bill.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Motion moved:
 "That the Assam Hindu Women's Rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943 (introduced in and passed by the Assam Legislative Council) be taken into consideration".

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA: Sir, I am really obliged to my hon. Friend Srijut Buragohain for moving this Motion for consideration of this important subject. While this Bill was discussed in the Upper House I took the attitude that the Bill be first circulated for eliciting public opinion. But the veteran representatives of that House representing the Hindu community were very much keen and pressed for the speedier passage of the Bill.

Now as regards the necessity for bringing this Bill here in Assam it has been very sufficiently stated by my hon. Friend and I need not add anything further.

He has also referred to the Rau Committee which sat for preparing such a Bill and the Bill which was sponsored by Mr. Lahiri in the Upper House and which is now before the House is just the same as was drafted by the Rau Committee.

Sir, there has been really much agitation throughout India for having such better rights to the Hindu women. We received a representation from the Secretary of the All-India Women's Conference for bringing such a legislation here in Assam as well. Personally I have every sympathy for this Bill and I also feel that Hindu women should have better right to property, as indicated in this Bill. This is a matter affecting a particular community, especially the Hindu community. And for this reason I thought in the Upper House that it would be better to circulate it for public opinion. Here, in this House, I do not find that any of the hon. Members is coming forward to express an opinion on this Bill. Sir, if this is decided by the House that the Hindu women should get better right, I shall be the last person to stand in its way. A copy of the draft Bill which was prepared by the Rau Committee was sent to this Government but then the Section 93 Administration intervened and nothing could be done during that period. Then after assumption of our office when we were considering whether we should bring in such a legislation Mr. Lahiri in the Upper House brought this Bill and this is exactly the same that was drafted by the Rau Committee.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI. Will the Hon'ble Minister please explain why this Bill is called the Hindu women's Rights to Property Bill though the benefit of this Bill has been really given to the Hindu widows?

The Hon'ble Srijut RUPNATH BRAHMA. Under the provisions of the Hindu Women's rights to property Act, which has been passed by the Central Legislature it is distinctly stated that the interest known as Hindu women's estate is limited.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: I am now putting the question to the House. The question is:—

“That the Assam Hindu Women's rights to Property (Extension to Agricultural Land) Bill, 1943 (introduced in and passed by the Assam Legislative Council) be taken into consideration.”

The question was adopted.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Consideration clause by clause of this Bill will be taken up on the 30th of November next. The last date for tabling amendments is today.

Discussion re food situation in the Province

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: Further discussion of the *Motions on the food situation in the Province is to begin now.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that the problem relating to the supplies of foodstuffs such as rice, *dal*, salt, sugar, atta, mustard oil, etc., and other necessities of life, namely, coal, wood-fuel, kerosene oil and cloth, etc., is a very difficult and complicated one for the simple reason that there is an acute shortage of these goods brought about by the war and loss of Burma. Of all these, the rice problem is the problem of all problems without which we cannot go on for a single day. For the last two sessions we are all crying hoarse and requesting Government to tackle this problem in right earnest in co-operation with the public. But, Sir, to what effect? To find out the real position, so far production of paddy in our Province is concerned, I would urge upon the Government to open registers in villages throughout the entire Province with a view to record the real and actual production and the need of the Province according to population. If this work cannot be done by the existing Government machinery, I would request the Government to employ necessary men required for the purpose. If figures are collected according to (a), (b), (c) and (d) columns of my suggestion No. 1, Government will easily be in a position to find out whether our Province is a surplus or a deficit one. During the last Budget Session the Hon'ble Premier wanted to prove that our Province was a surplus one. Myself relying on the Government publications proved that the Province was not a surplus one. So far as the Surma Valley is concerned it was stated by the Government that the figures were collected on the population basis. Sir, you can well understand how far this kind of statement should be or could be relied upon.

*1. Maulavi MUHAMMAD MAQBUL HUSSAIN CHAUDHURY to move:—

“That this Assembly do proceed to consider the food situation of the Province”.

2. Maulavi ABUUL BARI CHAUDHURY

Maulavi NAZIRUDDIN AHMED to move:—

Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN

“That this Assembly is of opinion that the extremely grave situation arising out of the acute shortage of food-stuffs and the abnormal prices thereof in the Province be taken into consideration”.

3. Maulavi ABDUR RAHMAN to move:—

“That this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do constitute a special Committee of seven members consisting of officials and non-officials, with non-official majority to be nominated by the Government to draw up a definite programme to deal with the economic and food problems of the Province and to regulate the supply policy”.

4. Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE to move:

“Taking the food situation into consideration this Assembly is of opinion that in order to effectively tackle the present food situation and to improve the economic condition of the Province the Government do take the following measures amongst others at once:—

(1) To open registers in villages immediately throughout the Province with a view to record (a) the name of each cultivator, (b) the area of his land under paddy cultivation, (c) total quantity of crop when harvested, (d) number of members of dependents in the family of each cultivator below and above 12 years of age separately.

Sir, this time also the Hon'ble Premier has boldly and with pride stated that our Province is a surplus one though he admitted that his statistics are not accurate. My hon. Friend Mr. Wittaker, the leader of the European Group, has also criticised me following the suit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister because I had the audacity to say that this Province is a deficit one. I have no intention to enter into the intricacies of figures this time as it was not liked by the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Mr. Whittaker, but I shall only cite two passages from two publications one by the Agriculture Department of the Assam Government and the other by the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, India, dated 10th March 1943. Sir, it is known to you perhaps that 15th June 1943 was declared as the Grow-More-Food Campaign day. A meeting was held in the town of Sylhet on that day and our Hon. Friend Mr. Munawar Ali, Revenue and Forest Minister, presided over that meeting. Here is a poster which was hung on the wall of the meeting hall. (A poster in Bengali was shown to the

(2) To prevent export from the Province before knowing the actual surplus, if any, and to allow inter-district export of foodgrains within the Province.

(3) To pursue vigorous anti-hoarding drive.

(4) To prevent profiteering by all possible severest means.

(5) The Grow More-Food Campaign be properly handled by an expert and qualified officer.

(6) To set up Regional Food Advisory Boards throughout the Province to regulate the production, supply and price.

(7) To introduce rotation cards throughout the Province.

(8) To make adequate arrangements for supplies of all kinds of essential food-stuffs and other necessaries of life."

5. Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURGOHAIN to move :

"That after the word 'Province' at the end of the original Motion (i.e. No.1) the following be added :-

'and that this Assembly is of opinion that the Government do take the following amongst other measures without delay :

(a) Introduction of rationing all over the Province including the rural areas ; and

(b) Fixation of price of all essential food-stuffs including milk, meat, eggs and fish'."

6. Babu NIRENDRA NATH DEB to move :

"That after the word 'Province' at the end of the original Motion (i.e. No.1.) the following be added—

'and that this Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do refrain from making any purchases of rice or paddy on their own account'."

7. Srijut SURENDRA NATH BURAGOHAIN to move :

"That for the original Motion (i.e., No.3.) the following be substituted.

"That the Assembly is of opinion that the Government of Assam do set up a Standing Committee of seven Members of the Assam Legislature, five to be elected from this House, one to be nominated by the Government from among the Members of the Legislative Council and the Minister-in-charge of Supply to act as its Chairman, to advise the Government from time to time on problems and policy connected with civil supply of the Province."

8. Babu KARUNA SINDHU ROY to move :

"After the word 'Government' in the fourth line (i.e. of Motion No.3) the following shall be added :
'and to be taken from all parties of the Province'."

House). You will find in it that under the head "Production of foodstuffs in Assam"—

'Assam's *khadya drabya utpadan*'—

Rice—425 lac maunds.

Dal—7 lac maunds.

Molasses—11 lac maunds.

Requirement—

Rice—452 lac maunds.

Dal—18 lac maunds.

Molasses—14 lac maunds.

Balance—

Rice—27 lac maunds.

Dal—11 lac maunds.

Molasses—3 lac maunds

comes from outside. Import has been practically stopped at present. To remove the scarcity of foodstuffs grow more food."

I am sorry, Sir, my Friend the Hon'ble Revenue Minister who presided over that meeting is now absent, it would have been better if he had been present here now. Another thing, how our suggestions are respected or cared for by Government will be proved by the number of Ministers now present in this House.

The Hon'ble Maulavi Saiyid Sir MUHAMMAD SAADULLA: I am in charge. I have taken full note of what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Exactly so, Sir. It would have been better if all other Hon'ble Ministers would have been present in this House. Their callousness is conspicuous by their absence.

Now, Sir, whom am I to believe?

The Hon'ble Premier or my hon. Friend Mr. Whittaker or the Agriculture Department of the Government? Sir, I shall be obliged if the Hon'ble Prime Minister enlightens us on this point, i.e., what the Government has to say to this? Who is responsible for the bluff? I want a straight answer from the Hon'ble Prime Minister. Sir, I crave your indulgence so that you may please see that this poster forms part of the proceedings.

As regards other publication, Sir, it will be found on page 1 of the Report of the Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, India, dated March 10, 1943, that.

Rice Crop 1942-43.

Assam area 50,83,000 acres

yield 16,22,000 tons,

yield per acre 715 lbs.

On page 2 of the above mentioned statistics you will find the average outturn for the Province is estimated at 81 per cent. of the normal which is the same as that of last year.

On page 5 you will find
1942-43.

Assam total (Autumn, Winter and Summer crop)—50,83,000 acres.

Previous year, i.e. 1941-42—49,59,000 acres. Average of preceding 5 years—53,11,000 acres. Increase in the current year (1942-43) over previous year (1941-42) 2.5 but decrease in the current year (1942-43) over average of preceding 5 years is 4.3. On page 6 it will be found that yield total Assam 1942-43 is 1,62,200 tons, 1941-42 is 1,57,300 tons. Average of preceding 5 years is 17,59,000 tons. That is increase of 3.1 per cent. in 1942-43 over 1941-42 but decrease in 1942-43 over the average of preceding 5 years is 7.8 per cent. Now, Sir, it is up to the Hon'ble Members which statement they are to believe and whether the area under paddy cultivation and production have really increased. These are most simple and plain figures. I am sorry my Friend Mr. Whittaker is absent. Otherwise he would have no difficulty to follow me. So, it is needless for me to say that he won't challenge me.

Mr. R. A. PALMER: On a point of information, Sir. Is the Hon'ble Member trying to make out that the statistics are wrong or that the Province is a deficit one?

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Statistics are quite all right and the Province is, as I said, not a surplus one.

Sir, about a couple of years before the war was declared by the British Government they took up the question of food and employed thousands of new hands for the most vital problem which has faced the world with the commencement

আসামে খাদ্য দ্রব্য উৎপাদন—প্রয়োজন			
চাউল—	৪২৫ লক্ষ মণ	চাউল—	৪৫২ লক্ষ মণ
ডাল	৭ " "	ডাল	১৮ " "
গুড়	১১ " "	গুড়	১৪ " "

অবশিষ্ট চাউল ২৭ লক্ষ মণ, ডাল ১১ লক্ষ মণ এবং গুড় ৩ লক্ষ মণ বাহির হইতে আসে। বর্তমানে বাহির হইতে আসা এক প্রকার বন্ধ। খাদ্য দ্রব্যের অভাব দূর করিবার জন্য অধিক শস্য উৎপাদন করণ।

of the war. Sir, so far as my information goes, about 36,000 employees are engaged in Great Britain today to make the food policy of the British Government successful. If the figures are collected according to my suggestion, the Government will be in a position to know at the first instance the actual position of a particular village. After keeping the necessary quantity of paddy for the family of the cultivator concerned the cultivator should be allowed to dispose of his surplus to his landless neighbours. In this way after meeting the needs of all the inhabitants of a particular village up till the next harvesting season, if any surplus is available, it should go to the next village which may be found to be a deficit one. Then after meeting the demands of all the villages under a thana the surplus, if any, should go to the nearest thana found to be in deficit and then the surplus should go to the subdivision and from subdivision to another subdivision, if found to be in deficit. In this way the real position of a district will be found out and if any district is found to be in deficit inside the Province the surplus district should meet the demands of the deficit district nearby and when the requirement of all the districts in the Province is met and if any surplus is found it will be our moral duty to send that surplus to other Provinces where they are in real need of it. This is the only means by which real surplus or deficit of a Province as a whole can be ascertained. Moreover, in my opinion, some reserve should be kept for the emergency, *viz.*, greater military projects, etc. There is no denying the fact that we have got last three crops better than our usual expectation. The weather has been very much merciful to us and we have lost practically nothing due to flood or any other natural calamities rather we have been favoured with most suitable conditions for getting good crops. No body knows what would be the fate of the next crop. The real surplus may be found out in the way suggested by me but there is another way of finding our surplus—of course unreal—I mean the man—made surplus. If people do not and cannot take their full meals daily due to scarcity and high prices, naturally at the end of the year it will be found that actually even in deficit areas there are some stocks. The prices of rice and paddy rose to such a height sometime during the current year that it was beyond the capacity of about 80 per cent. of the population to have their usual daily meals of normal years. There were several cases of rice and paddy looting in the district of Sylhet. Many people—though very little in comparison to our sister Province—Bengal—died of mal-nutrition and starvation in this Province. Many people even now cannot take two meals a day and there are many more who cannot have a full square meal a day and the cases of even not having a single meal a day are not insignificant. Under these circumstances, if at the close of the year we find that in some places there are some stocks and if we jump to the conclusion that these are real surplus it will be a great mistake on our part.

Sir, the Hon'ble Premier said the other day that during the period when there was no ban for about two months a large quantity of rice and paddy was exported to Bengal from the Surma Valley; but, Sir, I am pleased to inform the Hon'ble Premier and the Hon'ble House that the appeal of the Hon'ble Premier to the effect that the people should not sell rice to the outsiders and that the public should make propaganda for the same purpose produced the desired effect. Though there were some exports yet it was nothing in comparison to our anticipation. Here, Sir, we find a solitary instance where the Hon'ble Premier gave the right lead at the right time and he deserves our thanks. I wish he gave such lead to all our just and neglected causes at the right moment.

Sir, the matter is far too serious. No time can be wasted as the problem does not brook delay. I do not really understand why our Hon'ble Premier is delaying to get us out of our not insuperable difficulties. He may perhaps fully follow in the foot-steps of his colleagues, wash his hands of the problem and leave it to the much maligned and unfortunate permanent officials who alone take the odium for the mistakes while the Ministers try to gather with both of their hands the credit that comes. In Mr. Whittaker's words—"Workings of one or two cylinders will not do, all the ten cylinders should work for the efficient running of the Government machinery". Government should give their pointed attention to the transport affair. Transport difficulty is responsible to a very great extent for our miseries. The Government controlled the price

of rice and paddy in a gradual lowering of prices by fixing the maximum price but did not pay any heed to the anti-hoarding drive in co-operation with the public. No price control policy can combat the greedy operations of the black market unless Government with public support ensure supply in the towns as well as in the villages. There can be no doubt that high prices brought money to the peasants and some who had sufficient land to grow or sufficient money to purchase paddy beyond their own family requirements cleared their pecuniary obligations including rent and the more substantial farmers have made fortunes and invested their savings in buying more land. In determining the limits of maximum prices, the legitimate interest of the growers of food, who had to pay high prices for other necessaries of life, must be protected. But regard must be had to the interest of the consumers as well who are landless or practically landless, whose small holdings did not, and could not, produce sufficient crop and who had to buy and shall have to buy paddy and rice. Regard must also be had to the fact that while the prices of other commodities have increased four times, the price level of paddy and rice increased from eight to ten times. At the same time, the wages in many places in the Mufassil had only doubled or trebled; the reason was that except the big farmers who had prospered and a few contractors who had money, other employers of labour, principally the middle class employers, their income remaining stationary, are now worse off, for they could not afford to engage servants or daily labourers on the corresponding high wages.

The price control policy was justifiable. It would be however calamitous for the producers of foodgrains if the actual price fall down much below the standard of prices for other commodities, or much below the maximum price fixed. It would be wrong to suppose that only towns-people suffered from high prices of paddy and rice. In the villages also it will be found that only big farmers and landlords, who had got sufficient paddy from *bhagidars* and *bargadars*, had a stock of paddy. Their number would not be more than 10 per cent.; others including peasants with small holdings had to purchase rice at high price and their income being limited and uncertain they are all, high and low, living a precarious existence, having half a meal with money got by selling their cattle, utensils, ornaments, land and even standing crop. The process of impoverishment of the peasant class has been steady though slow, their holdings being subdivided by the growth of population, by inheritance and sale, so that these holdings are not sufficient to employ them and the produce, not sufficient to maintain them, with the result that the number of landless, or practically landless people, is growing, while only a few people are increasing the area of their holdings. The present distress is aggravating and accelerating the process. The village economy cannot therefore be neglected. Though there may not be actual starvation and death from starvation on a very wide scale except at Baniachong, where the people are half starving with insufficient rice, *dal*, fish and necessary vegetables—for available vegetables are being sold for rice—the effect of the price control has been practically nil in the villages. Many people there are not aware of the existence or purport of the order and in many places paddy and rice are being openly sold at higher prices. At the same time ban on the export of rice and paddy to Bengal has tended to lower prices in spite of the attempt to smuggling. It is also doubtful if smuggling has been completely prevented. Suspicions are expressed of connivance through bribe in some cases. It is also to be noticed in this connection that high prices have revolutionised stable economy of the villages. The poorer people cannot purchase paddy as before for they have not the money to purchase sufficient paddy for husking and from their small earnings they are to purchase rice daily, say a seer or two. The poorer section has thus lost the economy of husking. The husking trade has also changed hands. Formerly, Rs. 4 or 5 was sufficient capital for this purpose. The poorer people, specially widows, carried on this trade, purchased paddy on *hat* day, husked the same and sold it on next *hat* day. Now-a-days no less than Rs. 40 or 50 is required for capital for this trade and well-to-do farmers with stocks of paddy have adopted this trade which is now more profitable than before. The present is the most acute stage. Those who got high wages in centres where military projects such as road construction and aerodromes are being made, have with difficulty tided over the distressful time. With the gathering of *sali* and *aman* crops many will have some paddy though not sufficient for them all up to

the next crop season. The acutest period will be soon over but until the period is over the Government should be watchful to relieve the distress and to save the people from deaths due to starvation. The next few months is the busiest agricultural season. The people would be harvesting *sali* and *aman* crops and growing seedlings and cultivating and transplanting *boro* paddy and there need be no lack of employment for able-bodied persons who have no cultivation of their own. But usually in this season a large number of day labourers are brought over from neighbouring districts of Bengal to reap the paddy on payment of wages in kind. This year cash wages will be very high and many people may not be able to pay the same. It is therefore necessary for the Government to grant Bengal labourers permission to take paddy they get as wages to their home. This will be an inducement to them to come. When the problem of harvesting is satisfactorily solved, the next problem is for the Government to consider the home supply for the people of the district for the next year by voluntary contribution or purchase through "Dharmagolas" or co-operative stores for each village. Each village should also make arrangement for its own husking; the "Dharmagolas" are to sell paddy to consumers or to village huskers for need of the village. Co-operative Stores for purchase and sale of rice may also be started in each town. As to purchase by Government for its need in any scheme of freezing or seizure, producers should be allowed to keep sufficient paddy for their home consumption for the year till the next harvesting season, and sufficient to cover the risk of failure of next crop as already suggested by me, and it is desirable that the producers should be allowed to exercise their own discretion in fixing the limit of their own consumption and any compulsory requirement should not be imposed by encroachment upon these reserves. But if it is found that the reserve is in excess and the limit is fixed arbitrarily, in that case Government should intervene and fix the quantity of daily consumption.

Sir, on the last occasion when I had the opportunity to speak on the food situation in the House I gave a few suggestions for the kind consideration of Government, but, Sir, they received a very cold reception. Every scheme suggested and every idea given was thrown to the wind and blown up to pieces for the reason best known to the Hon'ble Premier. I hope this time my suggestions will not meet with the same fate. The price control, as a principle, justified itself but it is such a delicate and responsible task that without thoughtful planning and resourceful administration it is bound to have disastrous effect. Schemes prepared in this callous, in this undigested, ill-conceived and amateurish manner will lead to an aggravation of the trouble. It will lead us nowhere for the simple reason that those at the helm of affairs do not know their job. I shall cite only one example which will bear out my contention. A few days after the price control order was published, rice disappeared altogether from the Sylhet town market. People went to the Bazar with money, but could not secure rice as they were told on several occasions by the shopkeepers that there were no rice in the market. People having the means to purchase had to be satisfied by taking flattened rice (*chira*) and grams. But ultimately, when the situation became grave and this fact was brought to the notice of the district authorities, they started a few searches and the desired effect was there. Both rice and paddy were found in the stocks of the merchants. These were seized and placed in the market and were sold by the district authorities at controlled price at different parts of the town only for two days and after that rice appeared again in the market, and curious enough in some cases the price was cheap, a little less than the controlled price and the quality was also a bit superior. If the public did not help the Government by refusing to purchase at prices higher than those in the control order, it was because the Government order was defective. While the Government insisted on obedience, it did not offer that protection by ensuring supply to which public was legitimately entitled. Government created another difficulty by fixing different prices for the public and for the Government agents and contractors. Many of the dealers were under impression that when Government had permitted a higher price for Government agents and contractors, they had a chance with them and could hold back their stock. The anti-hoarding drive must be pursued vigorously; otherwise fixing of prices will be of no use. Today it is admitted that the price control orders have not been so successful as the Government has been so long only nibbling at the prob-

lem. I appreciate the difficulties of the Provincial Government in so far as the situation is beyond their control. They are not responsible for the indiscriminate and unjustifiable currency expansion which is one of the primary causes of price inflation, they are not responsible for the haphazard controlled policy launched by the Central Government, under the advice of their Economic Adviser, nor have they any control over the large scale military purchases and wastage ; but it cannot be denied from all accounts that they are at least responsible for playing the part of "yes man" of the Central Government in matters of final decision which rests with them. It is reported in some places that the prices of paddy and rice are much below than the controlled price. It may be so. But why ? If any one says that it is due to surplus I will challenge his statement. The real cause is that the profiteers who have made their fortune at the expense of their own kith and kin are waiting like so many vultures to fall upon the new crop. It is their trick. They are releasing the hoarded paddy and rice only to lower the price of the new crop. If the price is lowered, naturally the small stockists and the poor cultivators will think that the price will go still lower and will come out in the market to sell their paddy to get the best available price then ruling the market. Then these big hoarders and profiteers will purchase again at a lower rate only to come out with their stock, when there will be no more small sellers, to realise highest price from the consumers. If this is allowed, both the producers and the consumers will suffer and the middlemen will reap the real harvest. The country at present is in need of all the necessaries of life. There is scarcity of practically each and every essential commodities of life, in other words, scarcity of every thing but there is one thing in abundance in India, I mean the Defence of India Rules. Though they are in abundance, yet in many cases where their use would be for the benefit of the public without any exception, they are not properly used. There are rules providing heavy punishment for the profiteers, but what do we find in the actual field ? Very few profiteers are detected—majority escaped and practically 99 per cent. of the detected are fined only in name. I would urge upon the Government to see that these black sheep are properly dealt with by the existing stringent laws of the land. I shall be failing in my duty if I do not mention here that while the general public are crying at the top of their voice to punish the profiteers, in some cases it has been found that even the convicted persons for profiteering have been given fresh licenses for a better and bigger market. If these things are allowed to continue, those people who say that these rules are only in name cannot be blamed by any honest man for passing such remark.

Sir, now I shall enter into the question of "Grow More Food" Campaign. I gave some of these suggestions last time also as I then considered that these were most useful ones. I shall refer to some of them today as well. The "Grow More Food" Campaign initiated at the instance of the Government of India was indeed a timely move in the right direction. Now I wish that the campaign had been rightly pushed through. But alas, the Department of Agriculture had no plan or policy to guide the movement in the right direction. It seems that the entire fund was spent for the production of potato, of which there is already a surplus in the Province. Practically nothing was done for augmenting the production of rice and wheat, our staple food in which the Province is deplorably deficient. That definitely shows their field of work lay. Had the officers not lacked foresight there would not have been such a grave and alarming situation with regard to rice, the shortage of which threatens to endanger our social life and peace. Nothing calls for a more concerted action between the public and the Government than the "Grow More Food" Campaign for devising means and ways in tackling the various local problems connected with it. This is a sphere of activity in which all are equally interested because it touches the stomach of everybody. The Government should, therefore, initiate a bold and a positive policy on the following lines to tide over the crisis.

Settlement of new areas with the outsider will not and cannot solve the problem as for the first few years the new-comers will consume more than they can produce and instead of solving the problem it will aggravate the situation. The real solution therefore lies in the fact that the existing areas should be protected by bunds and irrigation

canals. Well planned intensive cultivation is always better than ill planned extensive cultivation. What is the good of extending the area if we cannot harvest the full crop? Government, Sir, should at once pay their most concentrated attention to intensive cultivation. Give lands to the landless and practically landless people of the Province and give them good lands which may be easily cultivated. For Heaven's sake do not throw open all the lands to the outsiders and seal the fate of the people of the land. Help others with surplus food grains, but do not make a gift of the land. Give the eggs, but not the ducks. My other suggestions are as follows:—

(a) To guide the work of this important campaign, I mean the "Grow More Food" Campaign, the Government should appoint a Special Officer conversant with rural agricultural economics in all its bearings and capable of planning and directing the work in the right line. If necessary, the Government should not fight shy to recruit a capable man from outside the Province.

(b) The activities of the Agriculture Department should be switched off exclusively to cope with the present emergency. If necessary, the peace time activities may even be suspended for the time being.

(c) The Department should arrange supply of seeds of high yielding varieties. Agriculture in Assam is entirely rain-fed and the success or failure of a crop depends a good deal on the vagaries of weather.

(d) Arrangement for protection of paddy from flood, water-hyacinth and insect should be made immediately.

(e) Irrigation facilities for extension of *boro* paddy cultivation should be provided.

(f) Provision should be made to supply sufficient quantity of soyabeans, mustard seeds, sugarcane setts, vegetable seeds, wheat, and pulse seeds for local production.

(g) To provide against possible shortage of kerosene oil, cultivation of castor, mustard and "*tappi mula*" (raddish) should be extended.

(h) Extension of existing areas of grazing land by throwing open the reserves to the cattle owners free of cost and encouraging production of fodder should be taken up the Livestock Department. Instead of fritting away their energies for vegetable production for the Military and supply of Livestock for slaughter as it was reported, the Livestock section of the Agriculture Department should concentrate their all in augmenting the production of fodder and livestock materials.

(i) A number of propaganda Officers capable of understanding mass psychology should be appointed immediately to preach to every village about the necessity of increased food production and give advice to the cultivators as to how the production can be increased by improved cultural method, preparation of land, seed rate, time of transplanting and spacing between the plants.

So far as I know, it is impossible for any industry and less possible for agriculture than for any other, to increase its productive capacity without an outlay of capital; so Government should help the agriculturists in all possible ways especially for purchasing plough cattle and agricultural implements. No plough or milched cattle should be allowed to be sold for slaughter.

My next suggestion is that the Government should appoint Regional Food Advisory Boards with ramification in every subdivision to plan out food and fodder production programmes according to local conditions and give advice to the Agriculture Department with regard to its execution and to control prices of essential commodities. These boards should consist of officials and non-officials giving due representation to land owners, merchants, and should also include local bodies, Food and Relief Committees, other publicmen and local Members of the Legislature. All the Subdivisional Board's should be co-ordinated through a District Board consisting again of both officials and non-officials. Though we got assurance on several occasions from the Hon'ble Prime Minister that this would be done, but nothing has been done as yet. After the Food Conference, we received letters from the Deputy Commissioners requesting us to let them know whether we would be agreeable to serve in the Committee and I am sure most of us expressed our willingness immediately; but though a couple of months have

passed away, we have not been able to know the fate of these Committees. It is high time that Government should take the public into confidence in these vital matters especially when they are volunteering their cooperation for solving the problem.

We all know that Government are purchasing and shall have to purchase rice for the military and their employees. In this connection I would like to suggest that at the time of purchase their agent or any officer should take extra caution regarding the quality of rice. Sir, I have been told that rice of the controlled shops at several places are full of paddy and pebbles and are not liked by the consumers. Besides these controlled priced rice there is another kind of rice in the same shops which are the usual clean stuff, but the price is much higher than the controlled price. People are compelled to purchase this variety at a higher cost and hence the price control order has been set at naught in all those places. Government should see to this also. So far the quantity is concerned they should not purchase much in excess of their requirement and also which they cannot store in good condition. From our experience we find that one of the main causes of such a high price of rice was the blank cheque given by Government to their agents who being the commissioned agents did not care for the price at all. The result was that people with limited means had to go back from the market without their necessary purchase. It is needless to say that if Government becomes a party in the market and begin to compete the price, no private individual can compete with the Government. I hope I am clear and Government will take the hint.

Last time when I spoke about rationing, the Hon'ble Premier remarked—"Mr. Baidyanath Mookerjee, as usual, has made very thorough recommendations. But some of these recommendations, God forbid, we may not be compelled to adopt. Let us all use our brains—let us all co-operate to prevent such a stage when rationing will be necessary, especially of rice". But, Sir, ultimately he had to accept my recommendation, though the rationing has been introduced in the Municipal areas only for the time being. Now I would request him to introduce the system in non-municipal areas as well and at the time of rationing the number of members in the family should be considered. So far the rationing of kerosene is concerned, not only the number of members in the family but also the number of rooms in the house should be considered. A flat rate for each and every house will not serve the purpose. A man who has got 16 members in his family is getting 5 seers of sugar a month whereas a man having 24 members in the family is also getting the same quantity. In villages, kerosene had been allotted one and half a pound for every house irrespective of the members of the family and the number of rooms in the house. Sir, I am fully aware that the system of rationing is a difficult and complicated one, but still I venture to say that there is some common sense points of view which when lacking makes one feel very much dis-

Sir, I hope the Hon'ble Prime Minister will enlighten us about his working with the money voted by this House under a token demand of rupee one. How much money has been spent up till now under the scheme and on what account and what is the benefit of the scheme derived so far by the people of the Province?

Sir, an Extraordinary Gazette has been published on the 10th instant and there I have found an order entitled "The Advances to Cultivators (Information) Order, 1943" which I believe the Hon'ble Prime Minister referred to the other day. Sir, the real object was not made perfectly clear to us. On what basis the scheme was formed and why these informations were required, we hope, will be made clear to us.

Sir, along with rice, the problem of other essential commodities of life should also be solved. Government, are doing something in this respect, I admit; but my request to them is that they shall have to do much more. The problem of supply is more important than the problem of control. We require *atta* and flour, but the quantity we are getting at present is practically nothing in comparison with our requirements. Sir, I know that during the regime of rationing we cannot get like pre-rationing days but the quantity ought to be a little bit reasonable. Sometimes the quantity allotted seems to be a mockery. Along with *atta* and flour Government should also supply sugar, *dal*, mustard oil, etc. in reasonable quan-

tity. So far as supply of salt is concerned it may be said to be satisfactory at present. Over and above these essential food supply. Government should see their way to supply the people with other necessaries of life such as cloth, coal and kerosene oil, etc. We heard a lot from the Hon'ble Prime Minister about his *Ais tel* and castor seeds; the House will be grateful to him to know about the progress made by the Government in these directions. Sir, along with supply of all the above mentioned necessaries of life our popular Government has another duty to perform and that is equally important in comparison with any other duty of the Government, namely, prevention of death due to starvation not for want of articles but for want of purchasing capacity. Sir, all through my speech I am voicing the demand and prayer of the public and I hope my suggestions will receive these consideration they deserve. On the very first day of the present session it was brought to the notice of the Government about the pitiable condition of Baniachong where people are dying for want of food. It is the moral duty of Government to save the lives of the people of the Province by all possible means. Give doles to those who have no power to purchase the foodstuffs even at the concession rate not to speak of controlled rate. The other day, the Hon'ble Prime Minister blamed me for not bringing this matter before him at an early stage, but, Sir, during the middle of October when I came up here our Hon'ble Premier was out of the Province and I appealed to His Excellency the Governor to visit Baniachong. The Hon'ble Finance Minister will bear me out. He also wanted to know what I had done, Sir. If he hinted at anything else than pecuniary help I dare say I have given much more than he has; but if he wanted to know regarding my pecuniary help I can humbly say this much that I shall try to keep pace with the Hon'ble Sir Muhammad.

The Government is supplying paddy at controlled rates to some 1,600 families at Baniachong. Although the quantity of paddy supplied to one family may not be inadequate, but the principle adopted and the survey made are erroneous. Firstly, more families ought to have been included in the list. Secondly, the main defect of the Government survey is that the survey list of each circle mostly contains the names of families which have absolutely no purchasing capacity and that no note was taken of this fact with the result that many families included in the list are not able to purchase the paddy sold from the Government stores. And further unhappy state of things that has come to exist is that some middlemen are making *benami* purchases in the names of those who have no purchasing capacity and are taking the paddy allotted to those families thus carrying on really a business of profit to them. Provisions should be made to provide free rice to those families which have no purchasing capacity and names of more families having purchasing capacity at the controlled rate should be included. The opening of relief centres both at Baniachong and other places by the public has done a great service and Sir, I shall be failing in my duty if I do not mention your name in this connection as the pioneer of this relief movement in the District of Sylhet. (*Hear, hear*). It would have been a different tale to tell today if you would not have rendered your most valuable and unique service in the cause of humanity. Sir, I dare say that the Sylhet public are doing their part quite well. The free kitchens started by your committee has saved many a life and many poor middle class families have also been saved by your timely action. There was a time when we saw at Sylhet a large number of skeletons covered with skin moving in the streets like so many moving dead bodies. Like Baniachong many human bodies would have been found to be eaten by dogs, jackals and vultures but for your timely action these valuable lives have been saved. Sir, majority of our people have been born to suffer and to die without raising a voice of protest against the callousness of those who are responsible for their well being otherwise the situation would not have come to such a pass. If the news of Baniachong would have reached you earlier, you could have saved many more lives though your resources are limited. The response from outside the district is rather discouraging. Now, whatever it may be, the public have done and are doing their part. It is up to our popular Government to see that not a single more life is lost for want of food. If this kind of death would have taken place in England, God alone knows what would have been the fate of Mr. Churchill today.

The Hon'ble the SPEAKER: The Hon'ble Member has spoken for more than an hour.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, I shall take about another ten minutes. Sir, the other day, my hon. Friend, Mr. Whittaker, I am sorry he is now absent, said something for us.

Srijut ROHINI KUMAR CHAUDHURI: He is always absent when his name is mentioned.

Mr. BAIDYANATH MOOKERJEE: Sir, the other day my hon. Friend Mr. Whittaker, the Leader of the European Group, was saying about the free supply of milk to the children in England. I am sure at that time he forgot that all these are possible in England, simply because England is an independent country but India is a dependant one. England has got a milched cow called Kamdhenu, whereas India has not even a lame plough cattle in spite of Lord Linglithgow's seven years rule and about 200 years of British rule. Here our Hon'ble Premier might say what is destined to be must be. But, Sir, my reply to that will be *নহি সূত্রস্য সিংহস্য পুৰিসন্তি মুখে মগাঃ*. Deers do not enter into the mouth of a sleeping lion. Rely on the providence, but do your duty. God helps those who help themselves.

Sir, more than a couple of years ago when we made a gift of a lac of rupees to England showing a gesture of our goodwill to Mr. Blennerhasset's country as Mr. Whittaker is not here now to call it his country—though at that time we were even declared to be in the war zone, our Ministry had no will to fight the economic warfare of our own Province which could have been very easily visualised by the knowledge of the fact that England had plans ahead to fight such a warfare in her own case. Now though in the midst of such a great war England is planning her post-war economic reconstruction. We being placed in the same condition are trying to tackle the present crisis and are groping in the dark.

My hon. Friend Mr. Whittaker has rightly said—and expressed his feeling towards the Ministry—that there is no Baniachong in the tea industry of Assam and nobody has died up till now of starvation in the tea gardens. Sir, the best condemnation of the policy followed by the Government came from the most unexpected quarters, that is from the whips including the Chief Whip of the Government and from the European Group. We on this side of the House could not have said things stronger than those which the supporters of the Government have said and why—because of the callous attitude of the present Ministry, and I hope at the end of it they will not say like the Kabuli moneylender who says to his victim "*Tum Hamara Bhai Hai, Ham Tumara Bhai Hai*". Has any House ever been treated before as this Government has treated it. Questions are asked on the food problem, but proper answers are not given.

I heard the Hon'ble Prime Minister to say that he has requested the military authorities to supply him with tinned milk for the sick people of Baniachong. I have nothing but praise for him for this move and it has got another bright side too. If tinned milk is distributed by the military people they will get an opportunity of mixing with the masses which I think is really very beneficial from all points of view. Sir, I hope this time our Hon'ble Prime Minister will find bread in my speech and not stones. Sir, in a matter like this we want the co-operation of every community and party as it is a national crisis and the best way to tackle the problem is by taking the public into confidence. Government must take into careful consideration the resolutions and recommendations of the Food Committees. I will appeal to all sections of the House that all controversies must be hushed, all personal jealousies must sink, (*Hear, hear*) all mutual recriminations must be thrown into the background. The problem that faces us to-day is the gravest of all. Sir, we can understand the ravages of nature, we can understand the visitation of calamity over which we have no control. But let us control the prices, let us have control over distribution as these are not the ravages created by forces over which we have got no control. I appeal to the Hon'ble Prime Minister to save the people from the present crisis. If he cannot save the lives of his people he will certainly lose in all his endeavours. If he is in want of money let him borrow money. They will repay the loan for whom he will borrow. He should give food and clothings to his people and save them from death. If he can do that, his name will be printed in golden letters in the history of Assam. Sir, it requires only a bold stand with a determined set purpose. People are looking to him for help

He should extend his helping hands. Let him give the lead and he will be surprised to find the effect of it. The whole country will be at his back to tackle this problem. On the other hand if he does not take the public into confidence, release the political prisoners and rely only on his officers, the result will be disastrous and he will leave only shameful black marks with his name. Sir, I am resuming my seat with the sincere hope that Government will accept my suggestions and save the country from destruction.

Adjournment

The Assembly was then adjourned till 11 A. M., on Saturday, the 27th November, 1943.

Shillong

A. K. BARUA

The 13th January 1944.

Secretary, Legislative Assembly, Assam.

