Weekly Notes

Record World Output of Rice

A RECORD world rice output is estimated for the crop year ending July next, in the revised estimates of the US Department of Agriculture. World production of rough rice is expected to reach 357,000 million lbs. Tin's is 6 per cent higher than in the previous year and 7 per cent above the pre-war average. The largest gain is in Asia with production estimated at 224,000 million lbs (excluding China) which is 6 per cent higher than in the previous year and 3 per cent above the pre-war average. The heavy rice importing countries are expected will benefit most. India's acreage in rice has been one of the largest, and production is higher in Japan, Pakistan and Korea.

The rice exporting countries are expected to have an increased production of one thousand to two thousand million pounds of rough rice. Major gainers are Burma, Brazil. US and Italy. Smaller crops have been reported in Thailand. Egypt and Mexico. India and Ceylon, it may be recalled, received 86 per cent of Burma's increased exports of milled rice while India was the principal buyer of Thatland's exportable surplus.

A record acreage under rice and favourable weather conditions in most countries are given as the causes for this improvement, as well as high prices and concerted efforts to raise output. Despite the increase in production the export market continues strong, and the US Department of Agriculture believes that all exportable allotments will find a ready market.

Up to March 31, a total of 1,ooo million lbs of US rice had been licenced for export against the current crop year. This includes 65.7 million lbs for Ceylon. As the total commercial allocation for the crop year is more than 1,200 million lbs there are still some 200 million lbs left to be licenced.

Estate Duty Another Stage

THE Estate Duty Bill has moved another step forward in its checquered career, having come out from the Select Committee stage. A bill to levy an estate duty was first moved in the Central Legislature in 1946. It was reintroduced in the provisional Parliament in 1948, but although it passed the Select Committee stage, it could not be taken up for consideration and ultimately lapsed. The bill introduced in August 1952 is practically the same as the 1948 bill, as amended by the Select Committee at that time. The present Select Committee has, however, made a number of substantial changes.

A detailed examination of the changes made by the Select Committee must necessarily be postponed to a later issue. Attention, however, may be drawn here to two of them, which are fundamental. First, the Committee has laid down the minimum exemption limit at Rs 5O.000 in the case of an interest in the joint property of a family governed by the Mitakshnra, Marumakkattayam or Aliayasantna Law. and that lor property of any other kind at Rs 75,000. These are the minimum, the actual exemption limits (subject to the prescribed minimum) and the rates of taxation are to be fixed by the Finance Act every year. as in the case of income tax.

Secondly, the Select Committee has not left it entirely to the Government to decide which classes of property or people should be exempted from the duty. By an amendment of section 32, the classes of property which are to be exempted have been specified. The most important of these relate to life insurance policies. The relevant clause says that " money payable under one or more policies of insurance effected by the deceased on his life for the purpose of paying estate duty or assigned to the government for the said purpose, to the extent of the amount payable" will be exempt from payment of the duty. Also that " moneys payable under one or more policies of insurance effected by the deceased in his life, to the extent of Rs 5.000 " will be so exempted.

That this limit should be put at Rs 5.000 is bound to arouse bitter controversy. It does appear to be lows it should not he overlooked, however, that this is in addition to insurance policies effected for the payment of the estate duty itself. There is. therefore, a definite encouragement to life insurance sicen the individuals liable to the duty will gain by taking out life insurance policies at least to the extent of Rs 5,000 *plus* the amount of estimated estate duty.

Production Ministry has a Foundry

AMONG the babies the Ministry of Production has to carry is a foundry which manufactures sugarcane crushers and agricultural implements. It is situated at Nahan, the capital of the former Simnur State, now a part of the Himachal Pradesh The Ministry of Production acquired the foundry as a founding orphaned by the integration of the Sirmm State. It was a State enter prise in which the ex-ruler of Sir mur had 5o per cent share. After the disappearance of the State into the Himachal Pradesh, a Part C State, the Central Government took over the ex-ruler's share for a sum of Rs 50 lakhs and it is now the sole owner of the property.

-As had been the practice before the Comptroller-General came down heavly on it. the foundry was made into a private limited company with a Board of Directors consisting of three nominees of the Government of India and three of the Himachal Pradesh, with Sin U,I Goswamy, ICS, currently undergoing a rural re-orientation as Secretary of the Community Project Administration, as the Chairman.

The most important product of the foundry is the cane crusher. The other products are also connected with sugar manufacture, viz, sugar boiling pans, and other miscellaneous articles, required by gur manufacturers. The foundry also makes chaff cutters for flour mills, east iron ovens for baking and cooking, buckets and cots for the local hospital.

There is a power house attached to the foundry which supplies electricity to the town of Nahan, besides meeting its own power requirements. The cane-crushers turned out by the foundry appear to have a fairly extensive market and it's marketing methods showmuch greater enterprise than does Sindri for the foundry has a number of agencies which hire out these crushers to agriculturists. Recently it supplied .100 cane crushers' to" the Government of Indonesia. Rather a lusty and troublesome baby for the Ministry of Production to