

(v) Need to provide Financial Assistance to State Government of Bihar for Providing Relief to the People Affected by heavy Rains in Jahanabad District

SHRI RAMASHRAYA PRASAD SINGH (Jahanabad) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, normal life has been disrupted in Jahanabad Parliamentary Constituency in Bihar because of heavy rains during 9.7.97 to 13.7.97. The houses belonging to Scheduled Castes, backward classes and labourers of the area have been destroyed. Thousand of animals have died therein. The people of this area have taken shelter along with their families in public buildings like schools, community centres and primary health centres. Maximum rain has been recorded this year in the last 15 years.

Therefore, it is demanded that the Central Government should provide adequate compensation to the poor, who have suffered loss of their life and property so that their condition could be improved. The State Government should be provided additional financial assistance for this purpose.

(vi) Need to Give Adequate Representation to SC/STs and Backward Castes in Judiciary

SHRI D.P. YADAV (Sambhal) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, India got independence fifty years ago. Though after independence zamindari system was abolished and efforts are being made for increasing the representation of SC/ST and Backward Classes in various fields but even today the upper castes are dominating the judiciary. The representation of SCs/STs and other backward castes in the judiciary is negligible. Time and again the attention of Central Government had been drawn towards this fact but the weaker section of the society have not been provided due representation in judiciary.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, against the present sanctioned strength of 77 judges in Allahabad High Court, there are only three judges belonging to SCs and one to other backward classes. There is a lot of resentment in these sections of society because the names of advocates belonging to these sections of the society are not recommended by the Selection Committee. A few days ago in newspapers, there was a news item that the Government is going to enact a legislation in this regard.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government that when the issue of appointment of judges of Allahabad High Court

is taken into consideration, the advocates belonging to backward and weaker sections of society should also be recommended so that they could get due representation in the judiciary.

(vii) Need to Sanction Adequate funds for All-Round Development of Sunderbans Area in West Bengal

[English]

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar) : Sir, as you know, Sunderbans in West Bengal is renowned for its flora and fauna, unique mangrove forests and above all being the abode of the legendary Royal Bengal Tigers. It is a pity that its inhabitants who are more than 3.5 millions are living below the poverty line as there is no industry of any kind there. They have to depend on fishing, wood cutting and partly on marginal farming. In fact, this is one of most backward areas in the country. It needs some sort of integrated development which covers more than 90 per cent of the South 24 Parganas. The Central Government has so far not drawn up any plan for its development nor has it allotted any funds for the purpose. The Government of West Bengal has drawn up a four-year plan for Sunderbans and sanctioned a sum of Rs. 7.7 crore for 1997-98 for the improvement of communication system through construction of jetties on river banks and brick paved roads and other ancillary works like soil conservation and make available potable water through lift irrigation. It is high time that the Central Government sanctions some funds for its development in order to reverse the process of debilitation in Sunderbans.

13.00 hrs.

(viii) Need to set up a Low Power T.V. Transmitter at Dudhwakhara in Churu District, Rajasthan.

[Translation]

SHRI NARENDRA BUDANIA (Churu) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to draw your attention towards Dudhwakhara town of Churu Parliamentary Constituency. It is an important town. This town has hospital, post office, banks and many governmental offices. It is also linked to district headquarters by rail and roads. Dudhwakhara town is the centre of business activities of 60 or 70 villages situated around it. Agricultural produce of these villages is also sold in Dudhwakhara town. About 60 thousand people in and around this town are directly

[Shri Narendra Budania]

and indirectly connected to this town but they have been deprived of watching the programmes of Doordarshan.

This town is the centre of Churu, Taranagar and Jhunjhunu tehsils. In view of the importance of this town, it is essential that Doordarshan programmes should be telecasted properly. There has been a long standing demand of the people of this area in this regard, but so far the Union Government has not paid any attention towards it. Therefore, the Union Government is requested to give instructions to set up a L.P.T. at Dudhwakhara in Churu district (Rajasthan) on priority basis without any delay.

13.01 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till
Fourteen of the Clock*

14.08 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at Eight
Minutes past Fourteen of the Clock*

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

INSURANCE REGULATORY AUTHORITY BILL*

[English]

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): I beg to move :**

"That the Bill to provide for the establishment of an Authority to protect the interests of holders of insurance policies and to regulate, promote and ensure orderly growth of the insurance industry and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto be taken into consideration."

With your permission, I would like to make a few brief introductory remarks. As this august House is aware, the Common Minimum Programme of the Government stated and I quote . . .

"We have gained considerable experience in the working of the banking sector.

* Published in the Gazette of India, Extraordinary Part II, Section-2 dated 24.7.97

** Moved with the recommendation of the President.

The said experience will be applied to the restructuring of the insurance industry. But, at the same time, public sector companies like LIC, GIC etc., will be strengthened. Keeping in view the Common Minimum Programme of the Government, in the Budget speech this year I had proposed certain structural reforms in the insurance sector. Following the announcement of the Budget, LIC and GIC have already been delegated financial powers to make non-scheduled and non-consortium investments without obtaining the prior approval of the Government. I had also announced the intention of the Government to allow LIC to enter into joint ventures in the pension business, and allow UTI to expand its retirement benefit plan into a fullfledged pension fund. In the health insurance sector it was proposed that GIC and its subsidiaries would be permitted to float joint ventures, and a few Indian companies, i.e., Indian-controlled with majority Indian ownership, will be permitted to enter the health insurance business. LIC and GIC would be given the power to determine the terms and conditions of service of its employees and agents.

All these proposals require change in the existing insurance laws. I am also happy to inform this House that LIC and GIC have been given a full compliment of members for their Boards, and both are today Board-managed companies.

Before the aforesaid reforms are implemented, it is necessary to have a strong statutory Insurance Regulatory Authority in position. Such an authority would formulate comprehensive regulations for all the service providers in the insurance industry and monitor their performance on a regular basis in the interest of healthy growth of insurance industry and safeguarding the interest of the insuring public. For this purpose, as announced by me in 1996 Budget, I introduced on 20th December, 1996 the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill to give statutory status to the interim IRA. This Bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance for examination. The Standing Committee has since submitted its report to this House on the 9th of May, 1997. The Standing Committee, as you are aware, was composed of 30 Members of this hon. House and 15 Members of the Rjya Sabha. The Standing Committee has made a number of recommendations. I am glad to inform the House that we have accepted the recommendations made by the Standing Committee. I will introduce the amendments to the Bill in the light of the recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.