

[Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi]

Every flood destroys these highways and the DM becomes helpless. The National Highways Authority people hardly come. I approached 20 times. I found nobody there, no officer was there, and only a guesthouse. When I carried a paper with the DM, no one was there to acknowledge that paper. Therefore, kindly make a Zone. For every State where the National Highway is operating, there should be a Zone to look after and respond to the issues in consultation with the State Government. Otherwise, PWD people will say, "This is not our task. We cannot encroach upon the National Highway Authority." The District Collectors also will say, "We cannot encroach upon the National Highway Authority." Then, where do we go? We cannot explain to the people. The National Highway Authority is under your control. This is my last request.

At the end, I would like to say that while awarding contracts, tenders and other things, please do not look into any political consideration, give it to the best companies with best specifications, who can do the job well. I gave you one example, Panagarh Express Highway of Bengal. I am not pleading for 'A' company or 'B' company but you give to the best and highly sophisticated companies, who would be able to do well....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Only one hour has been allotted to this Bill. You have already taken 15 minutes.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, this Bill cannot be passed within one hour. The entire House will agree with me. Every Member will agree with me....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: In the BAC meeting, we have allotted one hour for this Bill.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: After allotting one hour to this Bill in the BAC meeting, the members shouted at me, "Why have you agreed for only one hour? This is the Road Bill — Rs. 5,000 crore."

With these words, I conclude and thank the Minister for his good journey in the Ministry. As he ran in the battlefield as a Major General, in the battle of infrastructure also, he will succeed.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (MAJ. GEN. (RETD.)) SHRI B.C. KHANDURI: Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri Kharabela Swain.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (Balasore): Sir, I rise to support the Central Road Fund Bill, 2000. As everybody

knows, road constitute a vital part of the infrastructure like telecommunication, ports, airports and railways. So, it is a vital part of the infrastructure.

I am very happy that at last the Government of India has come forward with such a proposal thorough a Bill, which will provide the most needed thing for the construction of roads. The most needed thing for the construction of roads is money.

Sir, for the last 53 years, the roads in this country are in appalling state. In a single year, the collection of cess from petrol, and collection of cess from diesel has come to about Rs. 6,000 crores....(Interruptions)

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI (Visakhapatnam): Now, it is four o'clock. We have to take up the Discussion under Rule 193.(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I am also looking at the clock.

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN: Sir, the way you are looking at the clock, I get frightened.

MR. SPEAKER: You can continue next time.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU (Srikakulam): Sir, what about this Bill?

MR. SPEAKER: It will be taken up later.

15.59 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

LOSS OF LIVES AND PROPERTY DUE TO FLOODS, DROUGHT AND OTHER NATURAL CALAMITIES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, the discussion regarding loss of lives and property due to floods, drought and other natural calamities in various parts of the country under Rule 193 has been admitted in the name of Sarvashri Rupchand Pal and Ajoy Chakraborty. They have requested me to allow Shri Somnath Chatterjee to raise the discussion on their behalf. I have allowed Shri Somnath Chatterjee to raise the discussion.

16.00 hrs.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you and to the other hon. Members of this House for the indulgence and accommodation shown to me for initiating this important discussion.

I rise to initiate this debate on an extremely grave national issue. I hope and trust that this will not be treated as a mere routine matter or a matter of any particular State or a particular Party. Even when we are discussing, after the motion has been adopted, today we have seen how the people of Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu have been affected by the recent tornado or heavy rains. They are experiencing a very serious natural calamity. We sympathise with the people of those States. I shall join the hon. Members to raise the matter and in their demand for greater Central assistance for meeting the relief and rehabilitation work. As a nation, we should be deeply concerned that every year more than once, one or more States of this country are suffering of serious natural calamities of different intensities and some of which are also of rare severity. We are losing very valuable national assets. Vast areas are devastated due to these calamities. Crores and crores of rupees worth properties are damaged or destroyed. Lakhs of people are rendered homeless. People are dying due to floods or drought. Some cases are also of earthquakes resulting in, apart from loss of national assets, utmost human privation and misery.

We were talking just now of construction of roads. Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi rightly mentioned that because of the floods valuable roads, for which a lot of money has been spent, are being destroyed. He mentioned just now the road from Panagarh to Moregram which is very well constructed by a Mumbai concern, AFCONS. It is part of my constituency. I have been looking into this. It is one of the finest constructions made by a very able contractor. I must openly admit that. It was built with the Asian Development Bank funds available to them. Even that very well constructed road has been damaged severely because of the fury of the floods. I will ask my hon. friends here to please go and see. Then you will realise what was the fury of the floods.

We have seen the telecom services getting totally disrupted; electricity lines are snapped; houses are destroyed; and huge numbers of people are becoming homeless. The schools and hospitals are damaged. This is not the experience of my State or my area. I am afraid, probably, most of my hon. friends in one part of or the other of the country have had such traumatic experience. It may be now I am suffering.

Today Pondicherry has joined us, Tamil Nadu has joined us and our very distinguished friends in Andhra Pradesh had also experienced it.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU (Srikakulam): We have had the experience.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: You, you had the experience of the Orissa super cyclone. And I have the distinction of joining Shri Yerranna in demanding some special assistance from the Centre for him. No doubt, I am not trying to score any debating points. I am mentioning all these things because sometimes a narrow vision is taken. I am not blaming talking of anybody particularly. It is treated as if it is a matter of a particular State. But this is happening.

And we have also seen now that another serious danger is taking place and many States are suffering, and that is the havoc that is created by soil erosion. Even frontiers of district are being altered, borders are being altered, deforestation resulting in soil erosion also, siltation of the river beds, these are very serious problems which cannot be dealt with as a mere party issue or a State issue. That is my humble submission.

But it is always generally said that it is the State Governments which are responsible because it is the Governments which are in the field. Therefore, the question of providing relief is the responsibility of the State Governments. Rehabilitation of the affected people, restoration and re-construction has also to be undertaken by the State Government. No doubt, Constitutionally it is their responsibility.

But the Finance Commission, which is a Constitutional body has realised that it was impossible for any State in this country to bear those financial obligations. Therefore, the States, although they have this primary responsibility they hardly have the wherewithals to meet the expenses required for providing urgent relief etc; and because the States find that the burden is unbearable, that is why, everybody is running to Delhi. When Parliament is on, we raise it here. We go to the Prime Minister and we ask for assistance. We hold demonstrations. We are supporting each other in this. There was a most unanimous view on this. The Members of this highest body agreed that this is a matter which cannot be treated as a pure and simple State matter. The States do need substantial funds.

It is quite proper to keep in mind that from the Second Finance Commission onwards it has been one of the terms of reference of the Finance Commissions that they should make provision as to how to meet the expenses for natural calamities. It was realised, even when the Second Finance Commission was constituted that we were not able to get rid of natural calamities. Some may be avoided, some cannot be avoided like earthquakes. Latur was devastated. How could it be avoided. There are some, may be peripherally some

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protection might have been there. But these are not under anybody's control. Therefore, when such situations occur, they find that it is a daunting task for any State Government and then they rush to Delhi and ask for Central assistance. Otherwise, for no fault of the state or the people of that State they are seriously prejudiced, and the progress, the development achieved or undertaken within say, five years or ten years, could be washed away in two days or one day. Their whole achievements or developments are destroyed. It is not easy in this country to construct roads, to construct houses, buildings, hospitals but it will take a few minutes or a few hours for them to get destroyed and then wherefrom will the money come?

Unfortunately, if we consider the country as a whole such calamities are coming with frightening regularity. Even in one year or more than once, some States are suffering this problem. At least in some States almost every year and in some of the states even more than once a year they occur.

In that situation, the question necessarily arises as to how to meet this as a national cause.

Sir, we are discussing in the highest forum of our country. We are discussing this in a forum, which is the highest forum. My appeal to all sections of the House is that as we treat this as a national issue, we should try to take an all-India view as to how to come to the rescue of the persons, who are all Indian citizens. They are our brothers and sisters. No one should gloat over others' misery. I am not saying that anybody is doing it. Nobody can remain aloof in somebody else's misery.

Sir, the conscience of the whole country was roused when the super cyclone hit Orissa because destruction of such magnitude was almost unparalleled. As Members of Parliament, we, responded. Many of us have even donated Rs. 10 lakh out of our MPLADS's Fund. I made a similar appeal. Now, I request my friends also to kindly respond, if possible.

Therefore, these are the matters, which should be treated in that sense. But, today, I may be excused for dealing with the recent devastation by floods that has taken place in West Bengal, which is of rarest severity, caused by incessant and unprecedented rainfall which took place for four days. Though I have got the figures, I do not wish to burden anybody with those figures. I have got all the official figures — figures of the Government of India and of the State Government. It is one of the most devastating floods with heaviest rainfall in nearly hundred years. Not only West Bengal, but our

border State Bihar also suffered seriously. Nobody else will know it better than our esteemed hon. Minister for Agriculture, Shri Nitish Kumar. Consequent upon the development of low pressure over the Bihar Plateau, there was very heavy precipitation of high density. ...*(Interruptions)* Now, Jharkhand, parts of Bihar...*(Interruptions)* 'Yes', we congratulate the Jharkhand, but we are not happy that Jharkhand faces such problems...*(Interruptions)* Then, we have to stand by them and stand by Bihar and stand by Jharkhand also.

Sir, between 18th and 20th September, for 96 hours, there were incessant rains in the Mayurakshi basin itself during four days. The total rainfall in the uncontrolled catchments between Massanjore Dam and Tilpara Barrage exceed 1000 mm in 96 hours. Even when the annual rainfall is around 500 to 600 mm, in four days, the rainfall was 1,000 mm. Birbhum district recorded rainfall between 1050 and 1480 mm, which is much above the annual average rainfall. Murshidabad district — Shri Adhir Chowdhary is always trying to catch hold of me—his district recorded extraordinarily high rainfall of about 1200 mm during these four days causing complete inundation of the river level of Bhagirathi and Jalangi which rose to 11.93 meters which is 2.88 meters above the extreme danger level. As a result of these, ultimately, Nabadwip and Krishnanagar—my friend Shri S.B. Mukherjee is here, he represents it — and all Block Headquarters in Murshidabad in Nadia were totally inundated.

As we know, river Ajoy originates from Bihar...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): It is in my constituency.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Well, you are also sending excess water to me, but I have no quarrel on that.

Sir, in a single day, river Ajoy rose by four metre! As a result of it, all the embankments were over-topped, as they say in their language. Damodar-Barakar Basin also received the heaviest rainfall in living memory during those days. Therefore, we are saying that such rainfall caused floods of rare severity and the misery that has been faced by the people has been almost of monumental proportions.

I am thankful to the Ministry of Agriculture that they forthwith sent a team - much sooner this year than other years. The Joint Secretary who visited the State, heading a team of Central officers, described the flood situation

as very serious. The Prime Minister himself described that this has caused serious national loss. The hon. Agriculture Minister himself visited the State. We deeply appreciated it. Our then Chief Minister expressed his gratitude to him and described the flood as a severe one. The Minister is here. I have got it from the papers. He said that the national level help was needed to tackle the situation. I am grateful to him for his endorsement.

One hon. Minister said on the floor of this House that the flood was due to very heavy rainfall, both in quantity and intensity, never recorded before. She said it on the floor of this House on the 22nd of November. Between 18th and 23rd September, the total rainfall in Ajoy Basin was 1,040 mm, in Mayurakshi catchment area it was 1,224 mm and in Damodar Basin it was 529 mm. Bhagirathi Basin was over-flooded as it received discharges from its tributaries many times more than its carrying capacity. The embankments of all the rivers breached by over-topping. All the details have been given here. The hon. Minister also said that the floods caused by the rainfall of such high intensity in a short span of time, as during the current year, is difficult to predict and prevent.

It has also been said in the leading national dailies that it has been a national disaster. The *Indian Express* says that the State has suffered an enormous human calamity and the loss of lives and property has been of staggering magnitude. 2.18 crores of people in 171 Blocks and 68 Municipalities are affected. 1,320 people have lost their lives in nine out of seventeen districts of the State which have been affected. The cattle death has been about 83,630. The number of cattle affected is 31 lakhs plus. 19.20 lakh hectares of crop area of an estimated value of Rs. 3,866 crore have been affected. 21,94,858 houses of the estimated value of Rs. 438.97 crore have been damaged or destroyed. We had almost been cut-off. Communications had been disrupted very seriously, National Highways became non-negotiable, railway lines were uprooted — even now it has not been normalised in spite of efforts — and there was no connection between north and south Bengal at all. The estimated damage is of the order of Rs. 5,660 crore.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the State did take recourse to immediate relief and rescue operations. Twenty-nine thousand and seventy three relief camps were opened. I have got these figures also from the Ministry of Agriculture's note. Forty eight lakh people were rescued. Air-dropping of food articles was effected and Army help was requisitioned immediately. I personally know that in my constituency the fury of the flood water was so much that the Army men had to come back as they

could not even reach the place. Even the Army helicopters could not reach the places because of the inclement weather and also could not find dry places to drop the food articles. One day they came back saying — 'Sorry, we cannot do it.'

Civil Defence pressed into operation 50 speed boats along with 3,000 country boats. About 10 lakh pieces of tarpaulins have been distributed and 12 crore halogen tablets were provided to purify the drinking water. Sir, whatever may be the criticism — I am happy to say that only 58 deaths have taken place due to diarrhoea and some enteric diseases which is even less than the normal figure. Sixty two thousand metric tonnes of rice have been distributed as special G.R. and the State Government has already incurred an expenditure of Rs. 583 crore out of its own resources.

I am sorry that I have to tax your patience by reading out these figures only to show the magnitude of the damage, the magnitude of the suffering and the large number of people and areas which have been affected which required massive funds, massive efforts - coupled with massive funds - for the purpose of reconstruction and restoration and rehabilitation also.

Therefore, necessarily and naturally from the very first day the State Government has been asking for funds. I am sorry to say one thing here. Hon. Minister Shri Nitish Kumar is here and there is no doubt that he will reply to this discussion. No effort was made to provide any assistance and whatever was provided was out of our, the State Government's normal allocation except the Calamity Relief Fund. Sir, I will come to the C.R.F. immediately because I will take a few minutes only to deal with that.

An amount of Rs. 101 crore is allocated to West Bengal under the Calamity Relief Fund out of which 25 per cent has to be provided by the State and 75 per cent has to be provided by the Centre. Only that amount has been given which is due to the State under compulsion, under the Constitution, as per the Finance Commission's report which has been accepted by the Government. Not a single paise has been given. I am not making any ground of it. Mr. Minister, I am not making any complaint. A State Government — whichever State it may be — has to pay even for the use of the Army. They have to pay for the helicopters. They have to pay for the Army boats. All the charges have to be paid. Naturally, these bills are coming in. I do not know actually whether they have been paid or not upto now.

After all these figures have been taken account, the State demanded for immediate relief of Rs. 1,586 crore

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for the purpose of meeting the essential expenses out of which only Rs. 101 crore has been paid and it is — as I said earlier — out of the C.R.F. which is not a special relief.

Sir, I have got here the report of the Eleventh Finance Commission. I will take only a few minutes more. The Calamity Relief Fund was constituted after the Ninth Finance Commission made a recommendation to that effect. Earlier the State Governments were to provide what is called 'margin money' against which funds were to be raised. But that system was discontinued and the Calamity Relief Fund, under the decision of the Tenth Finance Commission was established separately for each State on the basis of the recommendations of the Ninth Finance Commission.

Sir, there is a total estimate here. As I have mentioned, a sum of Rs. 101 crore was allocated for West Bengal. The Report of the Eleventh Finance Commission says:

"The Ninth Finance Commission mooted a near fundamental change in this approach, by recommending creation of a Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) for each State to which the Centre and the State were to contribute in a ratio of 75:25 and by doing away with different forms of Central assistance, requirement of the visits of the Central Team to States etc."

It further says:

"It is the primary responsibility of the States to incur necessary expenditure on the immediate relief whenever a natural calamity occurs. To role of the Centre is to provide supplementary assistance to the States as it may not be possible for a State to immediately come forward with sufficient funds to meet natural calamities which occur suddenly and with intensity."

Again, at page 91, para 9.22 says:

"This does not, however, mean that a calamity of rare severity should be left to be attended by the States from their own resources alone. The super cyclone in Orissa (October, 1999) and the drought prevailing currently in some States, are a pointer to the fact that a State faced with a severe natural calamity will not be able to provide relief to the affected area and the population all alone, and will depend on the assistance from other States and the Central Government. In a situation like this, the decisions will necessarily have to be made on an emergent basis without waiting for an assessment of the damage by a Central team followed by confabulation in an Inter-Ministerial Group and decision by NCRC."

Sir, what happened after the Tenth Finance Commission? Apart from CRF, they made a provision for what is known as NFCR, National Fund for Calamity Relief, under the Ministry of Agriculture to provide assistance to the States affected by natural calamity of rare severity. It held the view that if a calamity of rare severity occurs, it should be dealt with as a national calamity. I am humbly trying to place this before this august House that if a calamity of rare severity occurs, it should be dealt with as a national calamity and it requires additional assistance and support from the Central Government beyond what is envisaged under the CRF scheme. This is the recommendation of the Tenth Finance Commission. The Tenth Finance Commission followed this principle. This principle has also been followed by the Eleventh Finance Commission. It has been accepted by the Government.

Sir, the Eleventh Finance Commission has said that this NFCR has not been very successful because no specific allocation was made for NFCR. That is why, there was no accumulation of funds in NFCR. Now, the Eleventh Finance Commission has changed the position. This is very important. They say that this National Calamity Contingency Fund will have to be constituted by the Central Government with initial funding of Rs. 500 crore by the Centre so that the money is readily available because you cannot expect the State Government to meet the expenses. Immediate relief is necessary and cannot wait for a Central team to go and have confabulations, if I quote the language of the Eleventh Finance Commission. Sir, this was a very important suggestion which was made.

It was also provided:

"That a National Centre for Calamity Management of the Ministry of Agriculture be established to monitor all types of national calamities including calamities of rare severity without any specific reference from the Central or the State Government. The Centre should be empowered to make recommendation to the Central Government as to whether a calamity is of such severe nature."

Any financial assistance provided by the Central Government to the States in this regard should be recouped by levy of a special surcharge on the Central tax, and not to be deducted from the allocation under the Planning Commission."

This is the difference. Earlier, whatever fund was given was adjusted against one or the other funds available to the State.

"Collections from such a surcharge should be kept in a separate fund created in the Public Account of the Central Government to which it should contribute Rs. 500 crore as the initial core amount. Outgo from this fund should be recouped by levy of the surcharge."

Sir, when this resort was submitted before this House, the Government of India had to give an explanatory memorandum as the Constitution, requires. In this Action Taken Note of 27th of July, 2000, today is 30th of November, it has said:

"The Central Government's responsibility does not get restricted to the availability of the amount in the CRF as indeed has been shown during 1995-2000 when the Central Government released Rs. 2,500 crore from NCFR.

Please see the Action Taken Note of the Government of India, Ministry of Finance.

Instead, the Commission has recommended that the Central assistance to the States in national calamities should be financed by levy of a special surcharge on the Central taxes for a limited period. A surcharge can also instil a feeling of national participation for a national cause. Collections from such surcharge should be kept in a separate fund to be known as 'National Calamity Contingency Fund' created in the Public Account of the Government of India.

The Commission has also recommended that the Government of India should contribute an initial core amount of Rs. 500 crore to this fund so that the funds for initial operations are readily available. However, drawals from the fund should be accompanied by imposition of the special surcharge etc."

Sir, at para 12 of this Action Taken Note or Explanatory memorandum as they call, it says,

"The Government has accepted the above recommendations of the Commission. The recommendation concerning the National Calamity Contingency Fund will be implemented after necessary legislation is enacted."

Sir, apparently, this is now creating a problem, that is, the explanation given from Prime Minister downwards is, "What can we do"? In September, when our calamity came, what we call a rarest, of severe magnitude, immediately requests were made. As a matter of fact, our former Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu sent a request to the hon. Prime Minister. Although we are ordinarily

opposed to Ordinances, this is a case where an Ordinance should have been passed because the House would not sit till November. No action has been taken on that. So many Ordinances have been converted into Acts of Parliament everyday; even today, two Ordinances have been passed. So, we do not understand this. What happened is that the Government of India totally ignored a very serious recommendation which is of a national importance. This is not for West Bengal or Andhra Pradesh or Orissa. This is for every State, for the whole country. Can we prevent natural calamities taking place by refusing to pass the legislation? Just because we do not pass an Ordinance, will rainfall not come, will floods not come, and will typhoons and tornadoes not come? What is happening today? Our brothers and sisters of Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu are facing it today.

16.35 hrs.

(DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH *in the Chair*)

Sir, this is a criminal neglect. I charge this Government. Their people say as to how they could pass an Ordinance when Parliament is to sit soon. This is what they say when two crore and eighteen lakh people are involved; so many people in Bihar are involved, huge damages and destruction have taken place; people are homeless and national properties have been totally destroyed. To say that because the House will sit in November and we cannot pass an Ordinance — that was the apparent excuse that was given — is a deliberate neglect, a criminal neglect, if not an unfriendly act towards the people of West Bengal.

Sir, I know my friends will immediately get upset. But we felt that because of the pressure from one of the important allies of this Government who described this as a man-made flood — this has, of course, been denied by the hon. Ministers — all sorts of alleged impropriety are taking place. Therefore, it has not been refused on that ground. I can only say that it is the height of irresponsibility to allege that this is a 'man-made' flood. I repudiate this with all sense of seriousness and sincerity and appeal to my friends on all sides of this House not to play with the lives of the people. We have got our political battles to fight. Nobody is saying that we give up our political views. Nobody is saying that one should surrender to others. But this is a question of alleviating the miseries of the people of one of the States in this country. I demand that Pondicherry must get the relief; the State of Tamil Nadu must get the relief. It is not for us alone that we are saying this. But what have they said?

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Sir, as you know that the States get money from the Centre under four heads, namely, one is for the division of taxes under the Constitution and second is the provision under the Planning Commission for providing Revenue Deficit Grant. Here, we had taken about Rs. 2000 crore by way of 'ways and means' provision. Within one week that was adjusted against revenue deficit grant of Rs. 400 crore for which an interest had to be paid on Rs. 200 crore. I do not know whether the interest is more important than human lives.

Sir, you would remember that a few days back we had held a demonstration in front of the Parliament House building. Ordinarily, I agree and I concede that it should not be done. But here is a case where the people are suffering and the State Government alone cannot obviously meet the expenses. People have to be protected; houses have to be built; roads have to be constructed and hospitals have to be re-constructed. But then there was total silence and callousness on the part of the Central Government towards meeting the necessary expenses.

Sir, I am obliged to the non-NDA Parties in this House. They also participated and joined us in the demonstration. It was not taken as a mere West Bengal cause. I do not wish to make it a West Bengal cause only. West Bengal provides only a very grim example of the situation, a recent example of very grim consequences. We were very happy that it was being felt as a national cause. So many political Parties joined us in the demonstration. I can understand the compulsions of Shri Yerrannaidu. He could not have done it without a clearance from Hyderabad. But at least he said on the floor of the House that he supports our demand. I am sure, Shri Vaiko also does it.

Sir, we met the hon. Prime Minister with a representation signed by 70 Members of Parliament from different Parties. I know some of our friends from West Bengal also wanted to sign it but they could not sign it. I know their compulsions.

Sir, this is a matter which has to be looked into very seriously. The Government of India owes an explanation to the people of this country as to why it was not done. Why till today no Bill has been presented in Parliament? Hon. Prime Minister expressed his helplessness in the absence of a law. He said that if surcharge was imposed, there would be difficulties. The Government has accepted the proposal. If Government cannot implement it, let it find out some other method of providing assistance! If it neither passes a law nor provides any other method to provide assistance, who are the targets? Targets are the common people of West Bengal because they have been

supporting a Government which is not to their liking. We have not every grugged - we have strongly supported on the floor of the House - grant of additional fund to Orissa, grant of additional fund to Andhra Pradesh, and even the demand for additional fund for Gujarat which is suffering from drought. Half of Gujarat is now under drought. They need the money. Madhya Pradesh is also facing severe problems. Are we going to treat it as a political issue, a partisan issue, or as a national issue? Shall we treat the residents of some other State to be our enemies because they happen to support some other political party in their State? Where will be unity in India and what will remain of India as a country then?

I appeal again and again to the Government of India. It has the wherewithals. It has accepted the recommendations of the Finance Commission. It has undertaken to provide assistance before this House. An Explanatory Memorandum has been filed in the House saying, 'will be implemented after necessary legislation.' Why no legislation is passed? Even today, I am told that the hon. Finance Minister has informed the State Finance Minister that action is being taken to frame a legislation. This Session will continue till 22nd of this month. I do not know on which date he will come with that legislation. It will have to go to the other House, President's signature will have to be obtained, and then the Government would start looking for money.

I respectfully submit that this is a matter which cannot be ignored any longer. Along with this we have been suggesting that a long-term action has to be taken. The riverbeds have come up. Deforestation is taking place. Dr. Sarkar was the Chairman of Calcutta Port Trust. He was running here all the time to get money for dredging of the Calcutta port. He knows what the problems are. If you come to my constituency, Shri Nitish Kumar, you will be able to see. You can come to Santiniketan....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): I undertook aerial tour.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): You have become a high flier, Mandir wala, and have gone away from realities.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Riverbed of Ajoy, which comes partly from Jharkhand and partly Bihar, is almost on the same level as its banks.

[Translation]

DR. BIKRAM SARKAR (Panskura): Were you not defeated in Jhadavpur.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: You were also defeated once.

[English]

DR. BIKRAM SARKAR: I never lost from there. Sir, he is giving wrong information.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Okay, it is withdrawn. You lost to your leader. She did not file nomination.

DR. BIKRAM SARKAR: You should withdraw your remark.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Okay, I withdraw it.

Sir, this is not a matter relating to any particular area. The whole plateau and the whole river system has to be studied to see as to how siltation can be avoided? The DVC system has not been completely constructed. It has been done partly. That is also causing serious problems. The result is the one or the other part of the country is suffering serious predicament and prejudice.

Sir, let it not be taken as a mere request to the Government. We will treat it as a serious lapse if no steps are taken immediately forthwith to provide assistance to West Bengal.

Sir, when *ad hoc* assistance was rightly provided to Orissa and Andhra Pradesh when they faced such calamities, there is no reason why such assistance should not have been provided to West Bengal or any other State that is suffering from calamity of rare severity. So, I demand that this matter should be immediately responded to.

Sir, this country has to be governed for the sake of the people. The Government has to be for the people. The Government cannot be for only its allies.

16.46 hrs.

(SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU *in the Chair*)

The Government cannot be only for its allies, and we have a justified feeling that because of the pressure from one of the allies of this Government, they have not taken any steps in the matter.

Even today, I understand that the hon. Prime Minister has not given any assurance to the Chief Minister who had met him. There is no doubt that he had heard him attentively, but he has not given any assurance to him. I am told that one of the officials has said that the Government will make a move in this Session of the House. Now, if that is the plea that there is no law in this country for giving this relief and assistance, then, this is an unpardonable lapse on the part of the Central Government. I would rather say, it not a lapse but it is a deliberate action to deny the people of West Bengal their legitimate dues.

Some of my friends from the Andhra Pradesh may be on the right side today but who will be on which side in future, nobody knows.

If the future of this country is to be decided on the basis of who is on which side, then the country's future is very bleak and we shall never accept this. There will be a widespread agitation. There will be demonstration. The people will rise against this intolerable injustice that is being caused to the people of West Bengal. Therefore, I demand that immediate action be taken by the Government of India.

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY (Calcutta North West): Hon. Chairman, Sir, I rise to speak on the discussion under Rule 193 regarding loss of lives and property due to floods, drought and other natural calamities in various parts of the country.

The devastating floods, drought and other natural calamities have caused damage to the crores of people of this country in general and floods have caused severe damage to the millions of people of West Bengal Particularly. It has very seriously affected our economy also. The poor farmers, poor agricultural labourers have been seriously affected due to all these calamities. We all know that even yesterday evening and today morning how the severe cyclonic storm had hit the people of Pondicherry and Chennai. We express our solidarity with them and hope that the Central Government will take all necessary steps to extend fullest cooperation to the affected people there.

Sir, I remember that during the April, 2000, severe drought took place throughout the country. Then, the hon. Prime Minister had convened an all-Party meeting on the 25th April, 2000. The main drought-hit States were Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

[Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay]

We raised this issue at that time also. The severe drought situation caused tremendous anxiety not only amongst the Members of this House but in the whole country. We were really anxious to see what the Central Government was going to do and how they were trying to sort out these problems.

I remember, at that time, on behalf of our Trinamool Congress Party, we placed a few proposals. I want to raise it here this time also. We very categorically said that India had enough water resources and so the people should not suffer when droughts affect our country. If our huge surplus water is managed proper and scientifically, we can sort out this type of problems to a certain extent. We had said that water conservation methods should be modernised on a priority basis.

We very categorically said that there should be the harvesting process of water. In different parts of the world, rainwater is being harvested. So, we proposed that water harvesting including rainwater harvesting was necessary in a country like ours where water is certainly in surplus. We categorically said that the inter-State river water disputes have to be resolved. Otherwise, when people are affected by droughts they cannot get relief promptly.

We also proposed the framing of micro level strategies to face the drought situation in the country. We proposed projects for prevention of damages. We proposed the protection of cattle stocks. We proposed an arrangement by which when an area is badly affected by drought we could promptly supply water and food. These were the proposals we made very categorically at the all-party meeting.

We have a very efficient Minister, Shri Nitish Kumar, in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture. We made those proposals with great expectations and hopes. We may kindly be clarified what the Government is considering about the proposals that we made and what decisions are going to be taken by the Government about these proposals.

Recently, there has been a flood situation in your State, the State of Andhra Pradesh. You very promptly managed to send messages to the people; you lifted the people from the affected areas within a very short period. We always appreciate your system and arrangements for tackling flood situations. Your Government has proved its efficiency, which we fully appreciate. Shri Somnath Chatterjee is a great admirer of yours. He often quotes your name. You have extended your support to them; I will also extend my support after some time, after giving my version. Seeing the way the Government of Andhra

Pradesh tackled the situation, other States should have been cautious. They should have ensured that information reached people about where there were apprehensions and where there were possibilities by which people could be affected by floods. I will come to that point later.

In West Bengal, it was a devastating flood. There is no doubt about it.

People are just trying to remain alive. They are struggling for existence. They do not know how to survive, from where to get food and how to build their shelters again. They have become homeless and rural economy had totally collapsed. We certainly share our feelings and sentiments. When cyclone hit Orissa, the Central Government took all out efforts to extend its assistance. I am sorry to say this. I will request the hon. Minister Shri Nitish Kumar to give a positive reply in the House. We are making a positive demand. When the Central Government could extend assistance when Orissa was affected by cyclone, why is it not extending its hands of cooperation when West Bengal has been very badly affected?

I did not expect Shri Somnath Chatterjee to say that due to the objection of a particular ally, meaning the Trinamool Congress, the Central Government had not sent the money. I will request Shri Nitish Kumar to clarify this and give a positive reply. Let us know whether any allies of the present NDA Government put any pressure in not extending assistance to the State Government of West Bengal.

I do not know whether Shri Somnath Chatterjee is frustrated for not becoming the Chief Minister of West Bengal after Shri Jyoti Basu, whose name was also being published sometimes in the newspapers of Bengal, as sometimes they criticise Shri Nitish Kumar.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: They were the newspapers sponsored by you. He is now really stabbing me in the back.

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY: The former Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu is normally known as briefless Barrister and Shri Somnath Chatterjee is a very busy and a very reputed Barrister of the country. He could deal with the matters nicely. I believe, as an orator and as a parliamentarian, he has very nicely placed the demands. The Chief Minister of West Bengal is now touring Delhi seeking assistance for the flood affected people. They have given a warning or a threat also in their latest meeting. They said that if their demands were not fulfilled, there would be a Bengal *bandh* or a Bharat *bandh*. So, political issues are already ready with them

because West Bengal is going for elections in the month of April. So, all arrangements are ready and the speeches were also ready, as Shri Somnath Chatterjee was mentioning here, which are not for the poor.

I attended the all party meeting convened by the Chief Minister himself at the Writers Building. I supported it. The Chief Minister was there and the present Chief Minister was present there. I had the privilege to deliver my speech there about man-made flood. I said to here also that it was a man-made flood. I will request Shri Somnath Chatterjee to go through the records of the all party meeting. I raised the issue there also. The then Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu instructed the State Government or his officials to go to my house and meet me, to convince me or try to convince me. I ultimately did not agree because I wanted the issue to be discussed with the officials in a public place and not in a private place.

The devastating flood cannot be controlled; I know that. It was a huge rain. What I wanted to mention very categorically is this. There was a heavy rainfall. But the water was released from the dams without intimating the people in the rural areas, in the villages. I will request Shri Somnath Chatterjee to hear what I am trying to place before the House without prejudice.

17.00 hrs

The flood occurred between 19th and 26th of September. What was the volume of water that was released? On 19th, from Durgapur Barrage, 42,310 cusecs of water was released. People are generally aware that between 20,000 and 30,000 cusecs of water would be released. On 20th it went up to 1,07,850 cusecs; on 22nd it went up to 1,60,000 cusecs; and on 23rd it went up to 2,23,292 cusecs. People were not intimated in time about the release of water. From 19th to 23rd the release of water went up from 42,310 cusecs to 2,23,292 cusecs. People had to suffer. The same thing happened in Tilpara Barrage. There, the release of water went up from 43,167 cusecs to 2,08,762 cusecs.

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): What was the inflow of water?

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY: I am not talking of inflow and the rainfall.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can speak when your turn comes. When Shri Somnath Chatterjee spoke nobody disturbed him.

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY: Sir, because of the way the water was released from these Barrages, people had to suffer a lot. Had people been warned of this, they would not have been affected to such an extent in spite of the heavy rainfall. That is why we made this allegation that this is a man-made disaster. We still stick to that. It was a man-made flood and we stick to our allegation.

I would once again request the Central Government to take all out efforts. The extent of damages and losses have been broadly explained. A Central team had been there. Shri Nitish Kumar reached Calcutta very promptly. He met the Chief Minister along with all his officials. It was appreciated by the State Government itself. But when this issue was raised in the 'Zero Hour' and when Shri Nitish Kumar was getting ready to respond to this issue, he was not allowed to respond. We would urge upon the Agriculture Minister to provide funds. But there must be accountability and utilisation certificate should also come. If utilisation certificate is not submitted in time, the next instalment may be delayed. We would certainly approach the CPI (M) Parliamentary Party Leader, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, to talk to Shri Buddadeb Bhattacharya, the present Chief Minister of West Bengal. Let the Chief Minister talk to hon. Railway Minister, Kumari Mamata Banerjee also. Shri K. Yarrannaaidu's support and Shri Vaiko's support will not help him to that extent. There are two more Ministers in the Central Government, Shri S.B. Mookherjee and Shri Tapan Sikdar, who are representing West Bengal. Let the Chief Minister have a meeting with the Minister of Central Government who are representing West Bengal in Delhi. Why is he hesitating? Let the Chief Minister express his desire.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, it is a very important discussion. Members should not sleep.

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY: I do not know what are the reasons for his hesitation and reservation?

Sir, I may also inform the House what was happening in West Bengal when it was badly devastated by floods. At that time, one Chief Minister was retiring from Chief Ministership and another Chief Minister was coming to take oath. A festive mood was there. It was supposed to be celebrated and inaugurated. It continued for a few days. Neither the former Chief Minister nor the present Chief Minister visited the flood-affected areas. They were in festive mood. The Chief Minister was taking retirement after remaining in power for long 24 years and another Yuvraj was coming to take oath. The total state of affairs went into mess. Was it proper? Do people not expect that when floods affect any part of the State the Chief

[Shri Sudip Bandyopadhyay]

Minister should rush to that area? So, this has to be brought to the attention of the House. But still one feels that people of West Bengal should not suffer. We are very firm and confident about it. There should not be any tendency or attempt to curb the interest of West Bengal. It is because today or tomorrow Kumari Mamata Banerjee is going to take over the State after the elections in April. So, what is our gain by raising the issue that we will oppose the Central Government for not sending the money to the State Government? We appeal to the Central Government to make all-out efforts without any hesitation. Whatever is possible to do, it must do.

Sir, I still remember when Shri Jyoti Basu was going to Thiruvananthapuram. I was also travelling by the same flight. Our Chief Minister normally travels in the 'J' class. Normally, we travel in the 'Y' class, as our leader Kumari Mamata Banerjee also does. But on that day, we were sitting just side by side in IA-320 aircraft. At that time, there was a cyclonic storm in Visakhapatnam and the flights were not going straight to Chennai. While travelling, some discussions took place between us. He asked us: "Why do you not take interest to see the ordinance matter?" Shri Somnath Chatterjee very categorically raised it. He said that the Central Government is trying to impose upon us all these hazardous processes. We are really feeling very disturbed due to this reason. I said that as a Chief Minister of a State, when you are pointing it out to us, we will certainly look into it and would also see that the Central Government makes all-out efforts. But now I have one paper of the Government of India, the Ministry of Finance, (the Department of Economic Affairs). Shri Somnath Chatterjee mentioned many matters from the Action Taken Report. But so far as Chapter 12 is concerned, following has been very categorically mentioned:

"The Government has accepted the above recommendations of the Commission. The recommendation concerning National Calamity Contingency Fund will be implemented after necessary legislation is enacted."

So, we believe that this matter is to be taken up on priority. I certainly believe that petty politics should not be reflected on such issues. I have mentioned it on several occasions on the floor of the House that after Independence Eastern region, particularly West Bengal, is the worst sufferer of regional imbalance. It is my firm belief and opinion that the agony of West Bengal sometimes go up to the extent that we feel isolated. Sometimes this feeling comes to the minds of the people of West Bengal whether they are in the mainstream or not. I believe that this Government should take all out

efforts and should extend all financial assistance to West Bengal.

Without any hesitation they should tell the truth on the floor of the House as to how far they are prepared to help where there are problems and where the situation actually stands. If Shri Nitish Kumar is not responsible, then why do we accuse him on every occasion that it is because of him or the Government that the people are put to sufferings?

I would, therefore, urge upon the hon. Minister to come with an open mind and report to the House. The agony and the feelings of the people of West Bengal have to be properly ventilated and properly projected in this House.

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN (Tirunelveli): Mr. Chairman Sir, I rise to speak on this occasion with anguish.

The people of Tamil Nadu, particularly in the district of Cuddalore, have been attacked by a cyclone yesterday. A severe cyclone at 150 kmph wind had attacked Cuddalore. About forty fishermen of Cuddalore who had gone for the fishing have not returned so far. In a crisis like this, the Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu should attach their top priority. This is the need of the hour. In Tamil language there is a proverb:

"Manthirikka azhagu varum porul uraithal"

It means that a Minister should have the foreknowledge of all the consequences of cyclone. He should have the foreknowledge of the consequences arising out of drought. He must have the foreknowledge and the thoughtfulness that in the monsoon season, cyclone would definitely attack a cyclone prone area like Tamil Nadu.

The Times of India reported that the cyclone could have crossed over to the State of Andhra Pradesh. But it attacked Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu. I would like to apprise the House about the lapses of the Central Government and the State Government. I am not charging anybody, but am only highlighting the callous negligence and the gross negligence on the part of the Central Government. Till this time, that is 5.10 p.m., no Minister has gone and visited the cyclone affected area. No one has consoled the people there.

SHRI C. KUPPUSAMI (Madras North): The State Ministers have visited.

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: About twenty thousand trees have been uprooted. About fifty per cent of the trees

and forty per cent of the lamp-posts have been uprooted. Telephone wires have been cut off and the whole country has lost communication link with Cuddalore and Pondicherry. This morning, at about 11 o'clock, the Chief Minister of Pondicherry, Shri Shanmugam phoned me up about this incident. I would not say I am lucky. On the first day of this Session, we gave a notice to raise the issue of flood situation in the country. Today it so happened that I am able to raise this issue with vigour.

In Pondicherry, a portion of the Raj Nivas, the official residence of the Lt. Governor, has been broken because of the fall of a tree. *The Times of India* reported: "In Pondicherry, a portion of Raj Nivas, the official residence of the Lt. Governor, gave way when a tree fell on it." So, it is a grave situation. People of Cuddalore are frustrated. We have different seasons like droughts and floods. As soon as monsoon season sets in, there will be imminent floods.

I would like to point out the past record of the Central Government of their service to the people of Assam.

Sir, when the impact of damages came as on June, the Central Government had released only Rs. 13 crore for Assam. Today, what is the position of Assam? For the last six months, they have been agitating. But the Central Government is not able to concentrate on the problems of Assam. The Central Government has released Rs. 148 crore for Andhra Pradesh. Sir, it is because you are an ally to the Government, you are able to get it. The State of Arunachal Pradesh got only Rs. 2 crore. The assessment of damages is vast. This position was as on 15th July, 2000. So, Sir, the Central Government has a step-motherly treatment towards certain States. So also is the position in Bihar. There is no release of funds from CRF by the Central Government.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Although they have ten Ministers from Bihar!

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: No fund was released to Bihar and Gujarat got Rs. 131 crore. Why is this discrimination found? Is it a Government of allies, as Shri Somnath Chatterjee puts in? It is Government of India. Or you declare that it is Government of NDA. As on 1.8.2000, they have released Rs. 8.4 crore to Himachal Pradesh.

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): It is National Disasters Association!

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: Then we must form an association saving the country from the NDA. For Kerala, the amount released is only Rs. 17 crore. Punjab got

Rs. 16 crore and Sikkim got Rs. 2 crore. Uttar Pradesh received Rs. 39 crore. I heard Shri Somnath Chatterjee speaking about West Bengal. That is why, I say that the Government should act on this matter. They should treat everybody alike. They should treat the States alike. They must treat all the citizens alike. This is the case of flood. It is an act of God.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI (Visakhapatnam): they should treat all the calamities alike.

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: It is not a man-made flood. No man can make a flood. Man causes a flood. Man-made is different from man-caused. Man can cause a flood. He can open a sluice. In West Bengal, there was incessant and unprecedented heavy rainfall in the catchment areas. What is the remedy which you have given to West Bengal? Sir, do not look at Shri Somnath Chatterjee or the Opposition here. It is the constitutional duty of the Central Government to protect every citizen of India, irrespective of religion, caste, place of birth or political party.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI: What is the role of the State?

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: The role of the State is to ally with the Central Government. Do you want me to say that? No. Flood is a national disaster. When the Central Government is not acting immediately, what is the use of the existence of the Central Government? They should protect the needy ones. You are not able to provide relief. I am citing the analogy. We are not giving employment to the youth. The Prime Minister has sanctioned Rs. 30,000 for a heart patient who is needy, oppressed and weak. So also the States should get funds. I have categorised the States and truth behind the flood. Hundreds of people are dead and millions are awaiting succour in West Bengal and Bihar. What is the action taken by the Central Government? No action is taken by them....(Interruptions) Sir, as All India ADMK Party, we have a perspective throughout India.

I am not speaking only for Tamil Nadu. I am speaking for Assam, West Bengal and every State for that matter....(Interruptions) So, I am not accusing anybody. The Central Government should fight the menace of floods. When the matter was raised yesterday immediately after we received the news about the Cuddalore cyclone, Shri Nitish Kumar immediately reacted to it. I must be thankful to the hon. Minister who was able to react. But what is the use of reaction? It is for Press consumption. Mr. Minister, you can say it in so many words. But you must give the money. You can console anybody. But you must give money. So we are living with floods in Cuddalore and Pondicherry. Therefore, the timely action

[Shri P.H. Pandiyan]

of the Central Government and the State Government would have prevented the recurrence of flood. Flood and drought is a recurrence every year. That is why, I said that you must have a fore-knowledge of the consequences of flood. You must have a fore-knowledge of the consequences of a drought. A Minister must have proper brains to understand. Here, I do not accuse anybody. A Minister must have proper brains to understand. Let it be any Minister for that matter, he must have proper brains to understand the common man's expectations and the common man's protection. For consulting a lawyer, you go to a better lawyer. For consulting a doctor, you go to a better doctor. So, for a Minister, you must have a best Minister....(Interruptions)

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer): Sir, I would submit that the hon. Member is not realising the actual seriousness of drought, flood and the cyclone affecting the States....(Interruptions)

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: Why have we failed to control it? The Central Government has failed to control floods. Had they taken action when they were informed about floods in Gujarat and Orissa, they could have prevented the recurrence....(Interruptions) So also is the position about droughts. We are speaking today with an all-India perspective. We want a best Minister....(Interruptions) My friends, you do not want a best Minister. You do not want a brainy Minister. You do not want an active Minister. You do not want a Minister to act in a situation like this! The Minister should go to the spot....(Interruptions)

SHRI C. KUPPUSAMI (Madras North): Sir, the hon. Member is misleading the House. There are two Ministers who are camping at Cuddalore. From this morning itself, two Ministers, one Shri Ponmudi and the other Shri N.R. Pannerseivam, are camping there....(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will have an opportunity to speak. You can give a rebuttal.

SHRI C. KUPPUSAMI: The point is that he is misleading the House. He is not giving proper information to the House....(Interruptions)

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: Camping is no good. If you go with an empty hand, what is the use of it? What did you do? Did you remedy the situation? What is the use of camping there? The Minister should go with the treasury....(Interruptions) As I said earlier, the Minister should go to Cuddalore with a treasury. If he goes and sits in a travellers' bungalow, calls the Collector, rains will not stop....(Interruptions)

SHRI RAGHUNATH JHA (Gopalganj): You should go there like Ms. Jayalalitha! Nobody will go to jail like Ms. Jayalalitha sanctioning money not according to law....(Interruptions)

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: In 1993, there was a flood. My leader, the General-Secretary of my Party, Puratchithalaivi Dr. Jayalalitha went direct. She saw the flood for herself. She sanctioned the money. She remedied the situation on the spot itself. So, remedy is the answer. Therefore, the Central Government should remedy the situation. The State Government should also remedy the situation. A Committee consisting of Members of Parliament other than the NDA should be formed to protect the States which are ruled by the adversaries so that we can satisfy the people. We can remove the frustration of the people. Today, people are frustrated....(Interruptions) If the NDA is coming, we will take it up....(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Pandiyan, please conclude now. You have taken much time.

SHRI P.H. PANDIYAN: Mr. Chairman, I cannot feel happy about it. It is an unfortunate situation....(Interruptions) The flood situation is unfortunate. The drought situation is unfortunate. We are speaking today about an unfortunate situation.

Sir, you have permitted me to speak on behalf of the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. I thank you very much for that. With these words, I conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI (Khajuraho): Mr. Chairman, Sir, we are present here today to discuss a very serious issue. I do not feel we should see this issue with a political angle. Today, irony is that lakhs of people are pinning their hope to see whether the people's representative who have been elected by them feel their agony, whether they are serious about their problems and finding the solutions thereof, so that the life of these people can be improved upon. Whether it is not an irony that ours is a very large nation considered to be embodied with lots of natural resources. It is surrounded by Himalayas in the north and by large sea-shores and ocean in south. But even after 52 years of Independence every year we discuss either drought, floods or hail storms in either House of Parliament. Every now and then we repeat same old stories. Year after year people of this country are forced to face same miseries. I would like to associate my party with this issue. As I have already said that let us not give it a political colour. Are all of us not compelled

to think that even 52 year after Independence we could not find ways to tackle all these problems.

I remember that in fifties a proposal for linking Ganga and Cauveri and several toher rivers was conceived by the Union Government. It remained an issue of debate for several days. I do not know why this plan was put in waste-bin. May be, it had been dropped keeping huge cost factor in mind. During those days its estimated cost was around Rs. 52000-57000 crore. You see, today in Bengal people are dying because of flood, in Rajasthan and Madya Pradesh people are facing drought and they are pinning for even a drop of water. Had we prepared a comprehensive plan during those days then this situation would have not arisen. We could have definitely found some way out. Though it is late, still if we consider it seriously, something can surely be done. I realise that the country is facing financial constraints and taking up mega projects is difficult. Since capital outflow takes place in the world so now money is not serious a problem. Therefore, if we take up a mega projects affecting lives of crores of people, then nothing impossible.

If we calculate the total amount spent during these last 50-52 years on relief measures because of natural calamities, the loss of property worth billion of rupees, we would realise that we have spent more money than the total cost of those mega projects which we did not taken up.

Last year also we faced same misery, still we are grouping the dark and next year too we would be discussing same issue in this House and sheeding tears. Our thinking and the attitude has become quite narrow. We just worry about solving present crisis and do not take long term measures, that's why same problems crop up every year and the condition remain more or less the same. I request the entire public, all political parties to shun political affiliations and give constructive suggestions. The Government should take initiative in this direction since it is the responsibilities of the Government. The opposition parties can merely give suggestions. I am not saying ths from criticism point of view. I feel that none would disagree with my proposal. Today Orissa and Bengal are facing fury of flood and Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and some part of Bihar adjacent to Madhya Pradesh and some portion of even Andhra Pradesh are facing unprecedented drought. During my visit to my constituency, an octogenarian said that such severe drought he has never seen in his life. Even in the month of November and December only five feet water is there in the wells. Water level in tubewells has gone down by 5 to 16 meters. There is no fodder for cattles and there is no water in ponds and dams. There

is shortage of power since all power plants are lying closed. Farmers are not getting power supply. Kharif crop has been destroyed totally and only one third Rabi crop could be sowed in Madhya Pradesh. And I do not know whether the crop which has been sown will survive or not. Since there is no water and the crop cannot survive without water so the crop which has been sown will vanish within one or two months. Gujarat and Rajasthan have been facing drought for the last two three years. One can imagine what shall be the economic condition of an area which has been facing drought for the last three years. We see lakhs of labourer fleeing at railway stations from their homes in search of a job. Labourers are most vulnerable.

The helpless are migrating to Punjab, Haryana and other States in search of employment. The State Government wrote to the Centre several times. The State leadership came to the Centre and held meeting with the authorities concerned. A discussion was also held in the August House in this regard.

Plans have also been submitted for approval so as to solve this problem. First of all drinking water facility will have to be provided. If there is no irrigation facility and electricity supply in the villages, what will happen to agriculture there? Fodder to feed the cattle and water is not available in rural areas. If lakhs and crores of people are not provided employment, what will hapen to them and if employment also is to be made available to them, the job oriented trades will have to be started there. Only then something could be done. Shri Somnathji was just talking about all this. So, I do not want to repeat them. Confusion prevailed on the part of the Government in respect of bringing about his ordinance.

On the pretext of this ordinance, the Government asked them to enact a lane in this regard, but the Government have not been able to bring a Bill on the subject in this House. The House is in session since 20th instant and no attention has been paid by the Government to this. At least, a bill could have been introduced in this regard. Nobody was going to cause any obstruction for them to do so? Leave introduce the bill could have taken. The Bill should have been introduced on the very first day of the session but I do not think that any sessions effort is being made for it and if any effort is actually being made then I might not be aware of it. If such is the case I am ready to withdraw my words? Is any serious efforts is being made in this regard?

Sir, five to six big States of the country are in the grip of natural calamities. I can give all figures, since I

[Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi]

do have them with me right now. I do not want to read them and I do want to waste the time of the House. I would only like to lay emphasize on the main issue only. I would give a brief account. There are eight such district in Orissa where the rainfall has been seven to fifteen percent below average, in 15 districts it was 20 to 38 percent below average and in severn districts the figure was 44 to 58 percent below average. Paddy crop worth Rs. 770 crores in an estimated area of 1069000 hectares of land has been damaged. Eight lakh families have been adversely affected in Orissa due to drought and famine. They have been wandering search of bread. 167 out of a total of 314 development blocks have been affected due to drought and famine. I have also got with me the figures of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. The situation is the same every where. The crisis is even more severe in Madhya Pradesh where 37 out of a total of 45 districts are affected by drought. Seven districts have witnessed 19 percent less rainfall, and 36 distrits witnessed 20 to 59 percent less rainfall. There is no water left in ponds and wells. In district Reeva, rainfall has been 60 percent less. On can imagine what could be the condition of the people these areas. Crops have been damaged. Nobody is prepared to buy Soyabeen produced in Madhya Pradesh, the highest producer of Soyabeen. Due to scanty rainfall the size of the grain was smaller. Those who procured it rejected because of poor quality of the crop. If concession has been given in Punjab then facility should also be extended to Soya farmers of Madhya Pradesh. On one hand, the production of Soya crop is suffering, on the other, whatever is being produced is not being procured. In such a situation, where will the farmers go? The crops are dying for want of water. There is no water in the wells and the hand pumps are also in a very bad condition....(Interruptions) 37 out of 279 districts are facing the drinking water crisis even today. All the schemes to provide drinking water have collapsed. Relief work are to be undertaken very soon. There are also schemes for organising cattle camps. I would like to tell a very peculiar thing reported at page No. 3 of the daily 'Indian Express'. I tried to confirm it by making a telephonic inquiry and found that it is true. Panna National Park is situated in my own constituency. Wild animals of this National Park have been found entering the residential areas and villages in search of water since water is not available in the park. These incidents have also reported to have taken place in Chhattisgarh also. Some incidents of animals attacking the locals have also come to notice. At some places it has led to the killing of some animals and at some other places, people have been wounded. What a greater irony, can it be than the fleeing of wild animals to villages and

cities in search of water. ...(Interruptions) If it is the Ramrajya, then may God save this country from this Ramrajya....(Interruptions)

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer): 'Daihik, Daivik, Bhoutik tapa Ram Rajya kahin Na Vyapa'. We all want a Ramrajya of this type.

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI: If this definition he is giving is true, he should stop making such a claim that Ramrajya is here because just the opposite is taking place.

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: An effort should be made in this regard by rising above politics.

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH (Vaishali): Rawatji, Jasu Raj Priya Praja Dukhari, Te Nrip Hoye Narak Adhikari."

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to the subject.

[Translation]

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT: Sir, who is responsible for this?

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: No cross talks please.

[Translation]

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, hon. Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Shri Digvijay Singhji had come to Delhi and all the M.P.'s from Madhya Pradesh had held a serious discussion over the criss. After holding discussion at their own level, the M.Ps rising above party politics, met the hon. Prime Minister. The August House should pay attention to these two-three items. The Centre is making cuts in State allocation. We have started making allocation from funds allocated to our State. We have no adequate resources to meet our own needs. If owing to the ongoing financial crisis, the Government cannot provide funds in terms of cash, then arrangements should be made for providing free foodgrains from the FCI godowns, so that at least, we could take up food for work programme under the relief operation.

Secondly, some extra allocations should be made for running various schemes of the Rural Development Departments so that the exodus of people from the drought affected areas could be checked and they could be provided employment and other means of livelihood.

The third submission that we made before the hon. Prime Minister is to relax the ban on the funds being sent to the districts through the Tenth Finance Commission and issue necessary instructions to the Rural Development Department; because as of now these funds are only meant for building construction. Today, the circumstances are very special hence same relaxation should be given. This will help create employment oriented work in these villages so that the poor are provided some succor from the money received through Tenth Finance Commission.

The last thing is very important. My State despite facing various adverse situation and grave crisis, has never been a defaulter in respect of repayment of its loans. Our State has consistently kept on repaying the loans worth crores of rupees it had taken in the past. We submitted before the hon. P.M. to suspend the practice of monthly repayment of loans and make arrangements for their repayment in easy instalments over a period of five years so that, in the meantime, this amount could be utilised for providing employment and making arrangement for drinking water facility. In this way we could also get relief and the Centre will not also have to lose money. We submitted before the Prime Minister to ponder over these points. If necessary assistance is not given in time when I will consider it very irresponsible on the part of the Government and I do not think any Government will like to be labelled as irresponsible.

When the entire country is facing natural calamities and crisis, it would not be possible to combat this situation by an ordinary means. We will have to take some extraordinary and special decision and in my view, any laxity at this stage could prove very disastrous. I hope that the Government will, at least once, ponder over the points to which I have drawn their attention. Though late, yet it is never too late. We should ponder over it afresh so that natural calamities do not occur every year. We should chalk out a national and long term project and evolve a policy in this regard, so that the recurrence of floods and droughts could be checked in those areas. There is a regular feature. We can also take up projects for linking various rivers. The Government should seriously ponder these things. Thank for giving me time to speak.

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA (Mandsaur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, we are discussing here a very important subject and the subject which is related to many areas of the country. It is a fact that earlier also we have discussed flood, drought and many other natural calamities here. During the course of discussion, some urgent as well as some long term measures were also presented in the House. After consideration the Government have

taken some decisions in this regard. These decisions are being implemented. By drawing your attention towards the seriousness of the subject I would like to submit that today only I was going through a news in 'Dainik Bhaskar' published from Indore. A news was published in it that due to the terrible situation of drought a father in a village of Sagar district killed his son. The question was raised in the Legislative Assembly of Madhya Pradesh that why and how this incident took place? I asked for the complete information regarding the entire situation but I would not received the complete information. The moment I get it, I will make it available to hon. Minister. The newspaper has explained the reason as to how the Madhya Pradesh has been hit by drought.

SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR: This incident took place in Sagar district which is adjacent to the border of the constituency of hon. Chaturvedji where a father chopped his son into 18 pieces because of hunger, unemployment and poverty.

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA: I would like to draw your attention towards another subject. The life is in state of little sketter due to drought. The animals there are in a worst condition. In the details provided by the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh to the Member of Parliament, he himself was accepted that due to the scarcity of water, grass and fodder, animals of Dhar Khargona of Khandwa district are migrating to other places.

There is another news published that many animals died in Khargone district after eating poisonous grass. They are compelled to eat grass. I have stated two news items to make you aware that how grave is the situation there? Shri Pandiyan is not present here, he had drawn the attention towards third news item. Somnath da and Bandyopadhyay ji had stated by inviting the attention that how the calamity hit Bengal? The life is in a state of little scatter there due to flood. Recently a sea storm created havoc in the coastal areas of Tamilnadu. The flood disturbed the life there. The life is hit sometimes in Tamilnadu, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh and sometimes in Orissa. When a natural calamity hits us we feel concerned and draw the attention of the Government towards it. The Governments takes some decision but sometimes due to delay in taking these decisions and consequent delay in its implementation we hardly get the benefit which we supposed to get from these decisions. I know I am not standing here to criticize the Government but I would like to ask, that what happened to the amount of fund granted to the State Government of Madhya Pradesh last year for various work? That fund has not reached to the collector as yet. I am coming straight from there today. I would like to draw your attention

[Dr. Laxminarayan Pandeya]

towards the observation of the Chief Minister made in the meeting of hon. Members. The fund of Rs. 500 crore was sanctioned from here out of which the first instalment of Rs. 55 crore has been released recently. The Government of Madhya Pradesh have recently demanded more fund: The distribution of first instalment has not been done properly and now they are seeking more funds. I was stating that according to this note, 2 per cent animal camps, per developmental block are proposed to be set up near perennial river or pond. If they are proposing it now, when they are going to set up them? It says further the animal relief camps will be completely set up in a period of four months but till date no camp has come up. My submission is that its implementation is not being done properly. We talk about schemes but don't implement them properly. I would like to submit that even after release of the relief funds to State Governments people are not getting the desired benefit out of this.

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the State Government has received the amount of Rs. 55 crore till date and than amount of Rs. 10.77 crore per district have been released to collectors of 37 districts. Now, you please tell that where is the money by which this work can be undertaken?

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA: Chaturvedi ji, I do not want to involve myself in this issue but what work has been done by the State Governments? Earlier also, at the time of requirement the Union Government have provided Rs. 128.25 lakh to Gujarat, Rs. 126.88 lakh to Rajasthan and Rs. 225 crore to Andhra Pradesh under rural schemes. The Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh were provided lakhs of tons and Rajasthan 5 lakh 26 thousand tons of foodgrains. Still you are accusing the Union Government. Now this is a natural crisis but earlier also the Union Government has been helping. Now, suddenly this crisis caused by storm has come up. May be you must be aware that a major earthquake had hit Jabalpur which caused massive destruction. People were ruined. I don't want to accuse anybody but I would like to know that whether the State Government have utilised the allocated fund properly?

SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI: It is not a matter of dispute infact. I can give the data of the demands we saught from the Centre.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Government will give the reply. Shri Satyavrat Chaturvedi, please do not argue.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA: I know this but I was submitting that, the level of underground water is continuously falling in Madhya Pradesh. There was the matter of installing tubewells in my constituency. The water was not available 700 feet below the ground whereas Shri Chaturvedi ji was saying that immediate and long term measures should be adopted. I know this also and would like to say that the way Ganga-Kaveri scheme was prepared in same manner Narmada-Shipra, Shipra-Chambal and Chambal with other rivers is linked then this scheme can become a reality. The Malwa region of Central India is gradually becoming a desert. There is a couplet about this.

"Malav dharti gahan gambhir
Pag-pag roti, dag dag neer."

Now, food and water is not available there but if the rivers are linked properly and dams are built then this is much possible. The Gandhi Sagar dam was built on Chambal river. It used to generate electricity till a montah back but now it is no more generating electricity because the dam is empty. There was no scarcity of water in this dam during the last 30-32 years but now there is no water there. My request is that this matter should be considered. When it came to the notice, that silt has accumulated in the dam, the measures should have been taken to remove it. If this is not done, then generation of electricity will be gradually stopped. Rajasthan gets water from this dam, the electricity generated by Rawatbhata not only benefits Rajasthan but also the agriculture in Madhya Pradesh. Therefore, some long term measures should certainly be taken for such dams.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I was stating that the note, given by our State Government, shows the estimate of fall in the underground water in minimum 10 meter and a maximum of 30-40 meter in the month of November, 2000 in comparison to any general month. In forthcoming months the crisis will become severe. Therefore, I would like to submit that the State Government have not been able to implement the schemes due to the non-availability of funds from Central Government. Just now hon. Chaturvedi ji was stating that there is some hindrence in the release of the fund of tenth and eleventh finance commission, the problem is that you have to undertake certain construction work. You cannot undertake relief work directly. Therefore, if the compulsion of construction work is removed or if it is released then it might make the relief work easier. 40 districts of Madhya Pradesh are in the grip of drought. The crop of Soyabean is completely ruined.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, since the State of Madhya Pradesh is adjacent to Rajasthan and my constituency Mandasaur, is surrounded by Rajasthan from three sides. Rajasthan is continuously facing drought and this year it was the most severe one. Being directly connected to Rajasthan, thousands of sheep and goats directly enter Madhya Pradesh. The people of Madhya Pradesh drive them towards Gujarat. But considering the security of the forthcoming crisis the issue should be considered from Rajasthan's point of view. The entire Arawali region of Rajasthan is changing and a massive problem is going to erupt there. Therefore, the most important thing is that the Task Force constituted by the Government, from the view of crisis scheme, should take some decision after considering it so that the fund allocated by the Government to various State Government for the implementation of the scheme are distributed properly. For example, the Government of Madhya Pradesh have demanded an amount of Rs. 606 crore after the formation of Chhattisgarh. This should be provided as early as possible.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please wind up.

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA: I have to say something more. Can I continue.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You may take one or two minutes more. There are many speakers to speak.

[Translation]

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I had been on the tour of Gujarat. There I visited the Kutch and Bhuj regions. The situation there is also very grave. There you can face mirage like situation for a long distance. Sun shines intensely, land is salty. You can go to many kilometers like a deer in search of water but there is no water at all. The situation of Gujarat is also bad. I have drawn attention because Gujarat is also suffering with the same problem. All the rivers of Gujarat have dried up.; Mahi is a largest river in Rajasthan. I have seen river Mahi which is adjacent to the Ratlam district. It has also dried up. The river Mahi not only affects Rajasthan but also Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. River Mahi has dried up river Chambal has dried up and river Narmada is also on the verge of disappearing which falls to the internal region of Madhya Pradesh, the situation there is also very bad. For improving the condition of these rivers and to maintain its water flow the work should be undertaken after drafting a fixed Action Plan. Though in the future the schemes are being drafted for development of catchment area in different places,

for conservation of water and infact development is taking place in the area of water reserve but the implementation of these schemes are not taking place with the required pace and villagers and farmers are not aware of these schemes they have not been able to get benefit of these schemes. Some schemes are only running on government papers and administrative machinery is working arbitrarily. Therefore, I would say that this should be considered thoroughly.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to draw the attention towards another news published in 'Aaj' that what could be the reasons behind all these natural calamities. Scientists say that drought is the warning about the chain of natural calamities. Different parts of the country are in the grip of severe drought therefore the concern of scientists cannot be ignored. Not only in India but many other parts of the world are being affected by famine. Famine has affected those places also which have never seen drought before.

18.00 hrs.

This year the world has faced the destruction by sea storm and severe flood. At the time when the world is heading towards destruction the attention has especially been drawn towards environment which states the cause behind destruction is indiscriminate deforestation and no afforestation. The schemes which were being implemented earlier for afforestation such as path vriksharopan, van vriksharopan have come to an end and due to the absence of these schemes whatever protection we could have provided to the environment is not being done. This is another reason of drought. From this point of view, we must consider that how we can protect environment by mobilising our resources. We can construct small pools and reconstruct old ponds, some bawadis can also be constructed and this problem can be solved by making dams on small rivers and nallahs. We should work together at this time of crisis to solve this severe problem. The Government is doing whatever it can.

In the end I would like to submit that, two three points which were raised specifically were that the fund will be provided to the Government of specifically were that the fund will be provided to the Government of Madhya Pradesh and how the amount of rural schemes will be distributed to benefit them. Though the Government of Madhya Pradesh agreed that the Centre should monitor the schemes but it has been regretted that suitable amount of fund should be allocated to it. My submission is that along with providing fund the restriction should be there that the fund should be spent on the work it has been provided for. There is a provision in 10th Finance

[Dr. Laxminarayan Pandeya]

Commission, that in all the works proposed for building construction work should necessarily be included. But I propose that this provision should be released so that this fund can be utilized for other works and drought affected districts can be provided relief. I don't want to waste the time of the House by mentioning others measures which have already been discussed and would like to request that whatever fund the Union Government is providing should be provided at the earliest so that the people could get relief and the basic needs of the people are fulfilled and we could come out of this crisis and also come out of the kind of destruction that took place in West Bengal or in Himachal Pradesh or in Orissa and the recent storm which hit the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu. This is a national crisis and we should consider it from a national perspective. The losses which the farmers of Madhya Pradesh are facing right now are very huge, crop has been destroyed which cannot be covered. The Government should also consider that how we will cover all these losses and how we will manage to help the farmers in growing crops in future.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: The time allotted for this discussion is two hours, that is, from 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. Many speakers are still there to speak. If there is a consent of the House, then we can extend the time of the House by two hours.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN (Coochbehar): Please extend the time of the House by one hour....(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, one hour is not sufficient. We can do like this — one and a half-hour for discussion and half-an-hour for reply by the hon. Minister.(Interruptions)

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (Pandharpur): Let us continue tomorrow....(Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): Shri Ramdas Athawale, tomorrow is Friday. Please consider everybody's problem. It is a Private Members' Day....(Interruptions)

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY (Basirhat): It can continue after Question Hour tomorrow....(Interruptions)

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: After Question Hour, Members will ask for Zero Hour. If you commit today for

tomorrow, then, there will not be any Zero Hour. Please try to understand it. My request is that we have completed two hours. We do not mind even sitting one hour or one and a half-hour more. But when the Minister will reply, before that everybody may want to speak. But in any discussion, you cannot accommodate whoever wants to speak. So, you have to make choices in discussions. So, my request would be, let all small and big parties speak and if time remains, then, Sir, you can repeat the list. But if you decide that at 7.30 p.m. the Minister will make a reply, then he can make a half-an-hour reply and 8 o'clock, we can close down....(Interruptions)

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: What about smaller parties?

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: As I said, everybody should be represented. My request would be that let us decide that 7.30 p.m. the Minister will reply. Let us try to accommodate as many Members as possible in the next and a half-hours. That is my request because taking it up tomorrow will not be possible....(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would request all the Members to please keep in mind the time constraint so that more Members can get the opportunity to speak.

PROF. UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU (Tenali): Sir, the situation of natural calamities in the country has grown from time to time and has assumed the dimensions of grave severity in most of the States, particularly in States which are located on the coast. Even the statistics and the estimates also show that the damage to the crops due to floods had tremendously increased in the recent past. It was estimated that during the year 1971, that is, just three decades ago, the total area that was being damaged in the whole country due to floods was to the extent of 20 million hectares. Presently, during the year 1999-2000, the crop area that is getting damaged has grown to the extent of 67 million hectares. This speaks volumes whether adequate measures have been taken during all these years or not. These floods after cyclones and cyclones after floods have been occurring and the drought situation is also playing its own role. People have been suffering, assets are getting damaged, infrastructure is getting damaged and cattle are dying. All these things are happening. I am not going into what we have been doing and what the successive Governments have been doing. I am not trying to accuse any particular Government or any particular State, nor the political parties which are at the helm of affairs in different States. But, by and large, what is happening is that a casual treatment is being given to this type of natural calamities. A serious thought has not been given from time to time and a

serious solution has not been evolved. Had a serious solution been evolved, the situation would not have grown to this dimension — from 20 million hectares in 1971 to 67 million hectares by 1999-2000. During these three decades, what are the steps that have been taken by the successive Governments? Had the steps been taken adequately, the situation would have been better and the damage would have been minimum. This is the situation.

On several occasions, even the scientists and the study groups nation-wide have also suggested that the flood-prone zoning programme should be undertaken by the Government of India so that it can advise the State Government also as to what are the steps that should be taken, either during the pre-natural calamity period or during the post-natural calamity period.

India is one of the most disaster-prone country nowadays. It has assumed that particular dimension. It has been suggested that there should be demarcation of areas likely to be flooded and demarcation of areas which are likely to be hit by drought situation. For this, taking into account the past 100 years history as to which State has suffered in a frequency of how many years, all the States in the country have to be zoned first.

You have to take into account as to how many States have suffered floods once in five years, once in ten years; once in 20 years or once in 30 years so that the action programme can also be evolved in the same manner and also assistance from the Central Government can also be given in that proportion. If the frequency of the droughts and floods is so heavy and they occur frequently, naturally no State will be in a position to save the people and no State will be in a position to incur the expenditure. It is but natural that the States will look at the Central Government for assistance. In this particular situation, there is a necessity that we will have to look at this whole programme for droughts, cyclones and floods in a totally different manner.

Successive Finance Commissions have also been making recommendations. Hon. Member Shri Somnath Chatterjee has asked, what had happened to the recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission. No serious thought has been given to them. Commissions after Commissions are being appointed. But no action, as per the recommendations, is being taken. In this way, the situation is also becoming very grave. In this way, the required relief could not be provided to different States, and also to the suffering people.

Coming to the floods that had occurred in the recent past in different States, you are quite aware that in this year and also in last year, Andhra Pradesh was affected by floods. Between 3rd and 27th of August this year,

there were very heavy floods in Andhra Pradesh which were most unprecedented. Even the State capital, Hyderabad was also affected by the floods and there was so much of inundation like never in the past. It has never happened that Hyderabad City was also affected by floods. Eighteen districts out of the 23 districts of the State have suffered because of floods. The villages affected were 4,522 and 29.35 lakh population was affected and the number of houses fully damaged was 1,04,000 and the value of the total damage to the public property was to the tune of Rs. 963 crore.

Amidst all these things, the State Government has taken a lot of initiative under the able guidance of Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu, our Chief Minister. Our Chief Minister has not only taken the steps in this regard in our particular State but also as and when there were natural calamities in our neighbouring States, he helped them. Recently, when Orissa was affected by the super cyclone, our State has gone to the rescue of that State and as much as Rs. 80 crore was spent for flood relief work in Orissa. This amount has been totally borne out by the State Government of Andhra Pradesh.

18.13 hrs.

(DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEYA *in the Chair*)

Our Chief Minister, Shri N. Chandrababu Naidu was the first person to take cognisance of the flood situation in that area.

Recently, the States of West Bengal and Bihar suffered between 16th and 20th of September. It is one of the rarest and severest flood situation and there are no two opinions about it. The State of West Bengal has suffered a lot. I really agree with the statements that have been made by the hon. Member Shri Somnath Chatterjee that adequate relief is to be provided. It is not the question of politics. It is the question of human life. It is the question of damage to a part of this country. We should look at this whole situation only in that way and we support that adequate relief is to be given.

Recently, there was a flood in Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu and other areas. Luckily, our State, Andhra Pradesh has escaped it.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): That was an accident.

PROF. UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU: Yes, that was an accident. There could have been a second calamity as far as floods and cyclones are concerned in quick succession, just only in a matter of two years.

[Prof. Ummareddy Venkateswarlu]

The relief that is provided is hardly Rs. 148 crore from the Calamity Relief Fund.

This is quite inadequate as far as flood situation in Andhra Pradesh is concerned. I need not repeat the total figures of what the West Bengal has suffered. I can only put it in this way that these were one of the severest and the rarest flood situations that the West Bengal and Gujarat had suffered.

Now, I come to the drought situation in Andhra Pradesh, I think, this is one of the very rare situations. Sir, you are aware of the drought which has been there in the recent past in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. All these States were severely affected. Tackling the situation of drought is one of the major items. The State Government of Andhra Pradesh has experienced one of the worst droughts in recent times which resulted in loss of agricultural production worth Rs. 2,560 crore. It is unprecedented. A Memorandum was also submitted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to the Government of India as early as in September, 1999. As against a requirement of Rs. 720 crore, just Rs. 75 crore had been provided by the Government of India as advance.

To tackle this situation of drought in Andhra Pradesh, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken the most appropriate steps. The most innovative step that has been taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh is that under the *Neeru Meeru* Programme, all the people have been made participants and in every house, it has been made mandatory that there should be a soaking pit. We know that in the recent past, the underground water table has been depleting and water circulation is also not proper. So, we have got the responsibility to see that level of underground water table is increased. That is why, under this particular programme, rain water harvesting has been taken up as one of the major issues. So, construction of soaking pits have been taken up on mass-scale along with watershed programme, check-dams and renovation of old village tanks. So, this is one of the major issues.

Now, the rainfall is optimum in most of the areas, but there is no rain water-holding capacity in the villages. Most of the village tanks have been silted and they do not have water-holding capacity. As and when it rains, the water is running out and going into the sea. Unless water-holding capacity is increased in the villages by renovating tanks on a mass-scale by spending huge amounts on that, most of the rain water will go waste as a result of which during summer, there will not be adequate water in the villages. So, this has to be taken

up in a big way by the Government of India and not by the State Government because most of the State Governments have been starving of funds. Sir, these are some of the steps that have been taken and relief measures that have been provided both at the time of drought and also at the time of recent flood in Andhra Pradesh by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. These measures are very meagre and need to be augmented. In particular, the recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission need to be looked into and taken up immediately.

While concluding, I would say that one of the major measures which should be taken in Andhra Pradesh is to link the waters of Godavari and Krishna by providing Polavaram project. Otherwise, most of the water will go waste into the sea. On the one side, we are losing a lot of water which is running into the sea and on the other, there is a huge drought situation in major parts of this country.

To avert the situation of droughts followed by floods, there should be linkage of all the rivers and better utilisation of water. In the days to come, there are going to be disputes about water not only between the States but also between the countries.; The river-water disputes are likely to come up. If at all the wars come up, the wars are likely to come up on the issue of water sharing not only between the States but between the countries also.

Thank you very much for having given me this opportunity.

18.20 hrs.

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN (Murshidabad): Respected Chairman, Sir, I would like to mention here about the unprecedented floods which have affected nine districts in West Bengal. Hon. Member, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, already spoke about this. Among the nine districts in West Bengal, Murshidabad is the worst affected district. The total life lost due to floods is 1,320. Out of this, 696 in Murshidabad, which is my constituency. More than five lakh houses, out of 22 lakh houses, collapsed in Murshidabad. a big bridge, 80 metres in breadth and 62 feet in depth, collapsed in Bhagwangola Thana, which is in my constituency, and it is now like a new river in this locality.

What is the reason for these heavy floods? Hon. Member, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, has already mentioned about it before this august House. There was a heavy rainfall right from 17th September to 20th September.

This is the main reason for the unprecedented floods that have occurred in West Bengal. There was a question in this august House as to whether flood forecasting was being done in proper time or not. In this regard, I would like to quote the reply of the Minister of State in the Ministry of Water Resources which was given on 22nd November to an Unstarred Question No. 519. I am referring to the reply given at para 'c' and para 'd'. It says:

"Flood forecasting cannot prevent floods, but helps in mitigating the flood damage potential. The Central Water Commission issues flood forecasts and flood inflow pattern forecasts to the State Government and concerned agencies from time to time, and regular flood warnings are issued from offices located in DVC and other barrages. The district administration makes elaborate arrangement of communication to different block offices which are likely to be affected by flood waters passing through these areas."

Someone has told that Unscientific release of water from the dam is the cause of the floods. I would like to place some data before you. The Massenjore Dam is managed by the West Bengal Government. The capacity of this dam is eight lakh cubic feet area. Before the rains, it was nearly dry. In the above mentioned four days, ten lakh cubic acre feet of water flowed into that dam. What was the release? On 18th September, the inflow was 2 lakh cusecs, and the release was 43,000 cusecs. This has been calculated by the management. On 19th September, the inflow was one lakh cusecs, and the release was 1.23 cusecs. On 20th September, the inflow was two lakh cusecs, and the release was 1.28 cusecs. On 21st September, the inflow was 2.8 lakh cusecs, and the release was 1.674 cusecs. On 22nd September, the inflow was 1.97 cusecs, and the release was 1.44 cusecs. I would say that it was a calculated release by the management. So, unscientific release of water is not the cause of the floods.

Sir, one thing that is being spoken about in whispering tone in West Bengal is that water distribution as result of Indo-Bangladesh Farrakka Treaty has been the cause of floods. I would like to urge upon the Central Government to consider it their duty to come out with a clear statement on the Farrakka Barrage Treaty between India and Bangladesh.

Sir, so far as rural infrastructure in the State of West Bengal is concerned, I would like to submit that it has been totally damaged in so many places. Out of the total 1700 route kilometres of National Highway in the State, 800 kilometres of National Highway, that includes 19 bridges, have been damaged. Railway connection has been completely out of place. My district and my

constituency has not yet been linked by rail. Partial restoration work of railway lines has started only on the 17th of November, 2000. In total 147 kilometres of rail route there are 117 breaches. So, severe had been the extent of damage.

Sir, I am stating all these things to only show that it was a natural calamity of a rare severity. It has already been stated by our leader Shri Somnath Chatterjee. The hon. Prime Minister has said that it is a national damage. What was expected in this perspective? Our expectation was that the Central assistance would reach the people. But what has happened in reality? The Central Government has failed to compensate this national damage. I would like to urge upon the Central Government to show a reasonable attitude to save the people of West Bengal. The people of West Bengal are out and out Indians. No fund has been provided so far. The Government is talking about advance.

Sir, I am sorry to inform this august House about what has been published in a newspaper which says:

"I am advancing either the Central Plan Assistance or the share of the Central Taxes or other receivables by the State Governments."

Sir, does it help the State? Never does it help the State. As per the norms of the Planning Commission and the Finance Commission there is no conditionality. Such things help the States only to improve their position temporarily from the view point of 'ways and means' provision. Except that, it has no other relevance.

Sir, the Government has failed to constitute the NCCF. There is already a discussion about the NCCF and I am not in a position to go into the details of it. According to one of the recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission, which have been accepted by this Parliament and as well as by the Government, there was ample scope to form the NCCF. It was the Final Report of the Eleventh Finance Commission. Even the Mid-term Report of the Eleventh Finance Commission also mentioned that there was ample scope for the formation of the NCCF.

Sir, we had the Monsoon Session of Parliament and now we are in the Winter Session of Parliament. The Government had ample scope to form this Fund. But I doubt the attitude of the Government. I firmly believe that it is an unpardonable delay on the part of the Government. It is an aberration on the Constitution.

Sir, we are not sitting idle. Re-construction work in the State of West Bengal is going on in full swing. The

[Shri Moinul Hassan]

people of West Bengal will not spare the casual attitude of the Central Government in the days to come.

Sir, I would just like to take another three to four minutes and I would like to take this opportunity to mention about another disaster and that is about erosion. The problem of erosion is a long-standing issue before the Government of India.

In the eight Districts in which the problem of Ganga-Padma erosion is faced, particularly Murshidabad and Malda Districts, Nadia lakhs of people are evicted, lakhs of acres of irrigated land, populous villages, townships and fruit orchard areas are engulfed by the river. The entire economy of these areas is disrupted. A Railway station and the National Highway are at threat. In Eastern Railway, the distance between a station called Sakoghat and the river is only 150 metres at present. At a place called Fazilpur in Murshidabad, the distance between Bhagirathi and Padma is only one kilometre. It was 15 kilometres just fifteen years ago. They can merge into a single river any day. If it happens, there will be another national disaster. The railway station and the National Highway are under threat. It is a long-pending demand to treat this calamity as a national disaster because it is caused by a national river.

Many Expert Committees were set up in the past. An Expert Committee was set up by the Planning Commission in September, 1996 to examine the problem of erosion of Ganga-Padma river system in Malda and Murshidabad Districts of West Bengal and to recommend remedial measures. The Committee in its report submitted in December, 1996 had identified 16 schemes under short-term measures costing Rs. 315 crore, and four schemes under long-term measures costing Rs. 612 crore. The Tenth Finance Commission awarded only Rs. 20 crore to tackle this problem. The Eleventh Finance Commission said:

"The State has drawn our attention to the continuing problem of the Ganga-Padma river system in the Districts of Malda and Murshidabad and sought grant to undertake repair measures. We have provided Rs. 60 crore for this purpose."

The amount given was only Rs. 60 crore. It is extremely inadequate. I had an opportunity to meet the Chairman and Members of the Eleventh Finance Commission. I submitted a Memorandum demanding adequate funds. The Government of West Bengal also placed a Memorandum before the Eleventh Finance Commission. We demanded release of special grants to the tune of Rs. 5.37 crore in a phased manner. During

the period of the Eleventh Finance Commission the funds were very much needed but they were not given.

The Government of India already announced a scheme to meet the problem on 75:25 sharing basis. A lot of funds have already provided by the State Government but the Government of India has been silent on this. In this situation, I would like to say before you and before this august House that to meet this national disaster, release of money from the national fund is very much required.

With these words, I conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI RAGHUNATH JHA (Gopalganj): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this House is making a serious discussion on the problems of famine and natural calamities. Various hon'ble Members have discussed the loss occurred due to flood, famine and other natural calamities. Hon'ble leader of CPM-Shri Somnath Chatterjee has expressed his concern over the loss occurred in other parts of the country especially West Bengal. The Union Government has been asked to provide assistance in this regard. I feel that many hon'ble Members have rightly said that this is not a political issue. ... (Interruption)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Carrying a mobile phone in the House is not permitted. Since you have brought it please switch it off. Mr. Speaker, Sir, has repeatedly directed not to bring mobile phones in the House.

SHRI RAGHUNATH JHA: Its alright Sir, I will not bring it in future. The Union Government should generously provide help at this juncture. Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture was with us in Bihar at the time of massive devastation that had been caused by the floods. From Patna itself, he had directed the officers of Department of Agriculture to go to Bengal and had himself gone to Bengal from Patna on the directives of the Prime Minister. He observed the prevailing conditions there and realised the seriousness of circumstances and had also placed his views and opinions strongly in that regard. Sir, as compared to other areas, where floods occur in 10, 20 or even 25 years, my State witnesses floods every year. Almost all districts of Northern Bihar face loss and destruction every year due to floods. Loss of crop and other property worth rupees 850 crore has taken place over there. You would agree to the fact that all rivers in my State have their origin in Nepal, and the State Government can, in no way, stop these rivers from flowing into our country. No dam can be constructed over there. The State Government does not have the right to hold

talks with the Government of Nepal in this regard. Northern Bihar would continue to be ruined in the same manner unless the Union Government work on the construction of dams on have effective talks with the Government of Nepal. We belong to neighbouring areas of the terai region of Nepal. Our area touches the border of Nepal, where the river makes a steep fall from the mountain, altogether causing an intensive erosion of soil, thus causing heavy damage due to floods which cannot be imagined.

Hon. Minister of Agriculture hails from Bihar, he is very well aware of the conditions there. I have stood to say before the House that the Union Government may hold talks with the Government of Nepal so as to find out some concrete solution to tackle the menace of devastation caused to Bihar by international rivers and if the Government is unable to find out any positive solutions to this problem, then it could give compensation for the damage caused by these rivers.

Sir, the Union Government should think over this fact that things would not be right if efforts in this direction are not made. One and a half lakh hectare land, out of ten lakh hectares of land in Bihar, is atoll area. Nine lakh hectares of land belongs to Northern Bihar and other areas. These areas are badly affected by water logging which has become a regular feature there. Our land would be blessed with prosperity if arrangements are made to clear off accumulated water from this ten lakh hectares of land. Schemes should be formulated for this purpose and hundred percent Central assistance by the Union Government should be provided.

I feel that Bihar can never prosper unless efforts are made in this direction. Bihar is presently divided in two parts. And Bihar is virtually left with nothing after the creation of Jharkhand State. Incidentally, all industries, power plants, coal and other mineral resources are located in the Jharkhand State. Now our area is left with agriculture only and that too is devastated by the rivers flowing from Nepal. Heavy damage is caused by the Ganga, the Kosi, the Baramati and such other rivers flowing in that area. Area from Buxar to Farakka, Munger and Patna is badly affected by erosion. Entire villages have got submerged in water and people are devoid of food even. No preventive measures for flood are being taken in this area. I would urge the hon. Minister that the Union Government take effective steps to check the erosion cause by river Ganga. We can not undertake such a serious task depending only upon the Government of Bihar. Hon. Minister of Agriculture is well aware of the resources left with the Government of Bihar.

Some concrete measures are required to be taken by the Union Government to prevent from flood the 9 lakh hectares of land in Northern Bihar affected with water logging because public life, railways etc. are affected by flood. Thousands of families are taking shelter at the river bank and thousands of people die due to floods every year. So, the Government should atleast provide some help, but the Government is extending no help.

Hon. Minister of Agriculture knows that the floods had occurred last year also. A number of Ministers from Bihar are sitting here in this House who are well aware of the situation prevailing there. Even Andhra Pradesh got help from the Union Government, other States should also get help and so Bihar should also get this help. In order to remove the hardships of Bihar people, I would especially say to the hon. Minister of Agriculture that please don't consider yourself as the Minister of Agriculture in the N.D.A. Government, but feel that you are a leader of Bihar and the people of Bihar have given their love, affection and co-operation to you. So, you should resolutely come forward for the welfare of people of Bihar. We are demanding our rights, we are not begging for anything. The people of Bihar are not ready to tolerate the discriminatory act done to them. The Union Government should also undertake its liability towards Bihar.

SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA (Kheri): Mr. Chairman, Sir, today we are discussing upon the damage caused by floods and famine in the entire country. Members who have spoken before me, have presented their respective view points. It is really a peculiar situation that only the farmer of the country gets affected by floods and famine even after 52 years of independence. We have been discussing upon Agriculture and marketing since the last many days and today we are also making a discussion on the loss suffered by the farmers due to floods and famine.

What is the extent of damage caused and how can this problem be resolved. A large part of India is afflicted by famine and floods. Lot of damage has been caused. Intensive discussion took place on this issue. Estimates of the loss were also made. The Union Government provided assistance in this regard. The Union Government says that State Governments do not perform their duties properly. We have made discussion here. But we were kept in dark of the action taken subsequently in this regard. Discussion on the loss occurred due to floods on 9th August was held. Shri Raghunath Jha, speaking just before me, had said that heavy loss has occurred in Northern India from Himachal Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh due to overflow of rivers flowing from Nepal.

[Shri Ravi Prakash Verma]

This matter was raised in the House with full zest. Around 20 Members took part in it. But no one knows as to what happened subsequently.

My area adjoins the terai region of Nepal. Many new agricultural projects have been formulated in Nepal wherein the direction of the flow of river is being diverted. A lot of loss is being caused due to these projects. The river Sharda which previously had 3-4 lakh cusecs of water, is now flowing with 7-8 lakh cusecs of water. This matter was raised before the Union Government but it is very unfortunate to inform that no measures have been adopted despite assurance given by the hon'ble Minister, and we were not taken into confidence. We were assured that a high level delegation would be sent to Nepal by the Union Government and would solve the problem after proper dialogues. But no one is aware of any such delegation. Magnitude of loss is increasing day by day. Parliament is responsible for that. We virtually become word less when we go before the people. The people have been dragged to the situation of revolt against the Government.

Moreover, there is the problem of marketing of agricultural product. Their crop is not getting sold in the market. The loss taking place due to natural calamities, on the other hand, is making the condition of farmers all the more worse. Whether the Union Government is providing assistance or not and whether the State Government is making efforts or not, but one thing is sure that the administrative machinery is showing utter carelessness in this regard, be it the Orissa cyclone or the problem of famine etc. The problem of the farmers increase due to the inefficiency of the officers and staff engaged in relief works. This should be taken into consideration.

Some part of my parliamentary constituency also gets affected by drought. The water level is decreasing there. The Government of India had sanctioned two projects of the 'Water shed Management Scheme' and allocations to the tune of Rs. two crore was made but no work has been started so far. It has come to my knowledge that the entire money has been spent. The officers had spent all the funds through NGO's of their own relatives. Due to this, the scheme has been shelved. We will have to think over it. What does this prove? Whether the funds are allocated by the Centre or by the State Government, but the system should be monitored. You are yourself associated with farmers. I wish you will pay attention towards it. You must pay attention towards the problems of the farmers. Efforts should be made to put the Government machinery engaged in relief operations in

order so that the assistance may reach the needy in a proper way.

SHRI RAGHUVIR SINGH KAUSHAL (Kota): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I hail from a State whose name is synonymous with farmers. Famine on a small scale do not cause panic in our State. Rajasthan is a very backward State from the education, economic and social perspective. Geographically now Rajasthan has become bigger than Madhya Pradesh. It's area is 3 lakhs and 46 thousand square kilometres and its population is 4.75 crores. Most of its part is desert area where the water is not available. It is in the grip of famine for the last three years. I have never seen such a famine in my life. There is a well developed canal in my constituency. It has not faced any dearth of water since the construction of Gandhi Sagar Dam. Water is even supplied to Madhya Pradesh from the dam. Since long there is no water in the Gandhi Sagar Dam reservoir. Consequently the farmers will not get water from 30th of this month. Irrigation of crops has not taken place and the crops have dried up. Some of the canal area falls in district Ganganagar also. That area is also not getting water from Indira Gandhi and Ganga canals.

Right now, Shri Chaturvedi was telling that Bengal is facing the fury of floods while Madhya Pradesh is facing the scourge of drought' while I would like to emphasize that my State is in the grip of both the calamities, i.e. floods as well as drought. Till now the flood water in Loonksar has not been drained out though the people have been evacuated quite early. It was suggested to the State Government to seek the assistance of the army but it was not availed due to the political differences. Several diseases and epidemics are on the rise due to the stagnant flood water. There is no water in the wells, tubewells have sunk down and water is nowhere to be seen. The wild animals like panthers are coming towards the villages and others residential areas. A panther got into a house in Jaipur, probably in search of water. The life has come to a state of helter—skelter in Rajasthan.

My Western Rajasthan is entirely dependent on livestock. Last year, due to famine, the cows were witnessed deserting the villages and dying of thirst and hunger during their immigration. The exodus at mass scale was taking place wherein the entire villages were witnessed to be moving out of Rajasthan. Probably, Rajasthan has never faced such a crisis before. Government notifications in regard to famine has only been issued three days back on our constantly pressurising the Government to do so. The people were making demand for the Central allocation in this regard

and they were doing so for the last three to four months, but the memorandum has been submitted to the Union Government only 3-4 days before. I would like to thank Shri Digvijay Singhji for talking to all the members of the party and meeting the Prime Minister even though the Chief Minister of Rajasthan did not even talk to us. We, the BJP MP's from Rajasthan met with hon. Prime Minister and he assured us to extend maximum assistance in view of the severe famine being faced by Rajasthan. Whether Rajasthan Government do not have any responsibility in this regard?

Mr. Chairman, Sir, though there is no way out to prevent the occurrence of natural calamities but what to talk about a crisis created by the Government itself. Whom shall we approach to the lament that the such a situation is developing in Rajasthan? Sometimes it is the famine which is resulting in the death and killings of people and sometimes it is the lack of fodder for the cattle which is causing the cattle to perish. The adage, "Nero was fiddling while Rome was burning" is most apt in regard to Rajasthan where the Rajasthan Government is busy undertaking the beautification project while the State is passing through a place of severe crisis. Beautification of Jaipur, Kota and Jodhpur is taking place while the Rajasthan Government is fidelling like Nero.

At present, the Government is not providing any financial assistance to the farmers and on the other hand, the banks are indulging in forcible recovery of loans from the farmers. The farmers are suffering on both the fronts i.e. on one hand they are facing the scourge of natural calamity while on the other, they are also being harassed by State administration. Rajasthan is in the grip of severe famine today. Despite the Passage of the proposal seeking to ban the transportation of fodder outside the State, the purpose has not been achieved i.e. fodder is still being sent outside Rajasthan. 'Gawar' which has not been banned, is being sent outside. The reserve forest areas which is opened for the animals during famine, has not been opened. Hand pumps are lying out of order and they are not being repaired. The Government assistance are not being fully utilized. Sir, I submit that during the last three years in 1998-99, 20 district and in 1999-2000, 26 districts were drought affected. Right now, hon. Chaturvediji was telling that 37 districts out of 45 district have been affected by drought in Madhya Pradesh. But in my State all the 31 districts have been affected due to famine and if the total damage is calculated then it comes to Rs. 3248 crores. Year-wise it is Rs. 2155 crores for the year 1999-2000 and Rs. 2283 crores in 1998-99. Consequently, the economic conditions of the State has worsened and become pathetic. Till now, people used to die of hunger but now a Stage has come when they are dying of thirst, for want of drinking water. The

total losses suffered during the three years comes to the tune of Rs. 9533 crore and even this year the crop is not being procured at Minimum Support Price. Sometimes back hon: Minister of Agriculture had said that the Union Government have instructed the State Government to procure the crop at the Minimum Support Price and to install the weighting machines and the loss will be compensated by the Union Government but nowhere in Rajasthan the crop is being purchased at the Minimum Support Price. In this way the farmers are facing the problems from both the fronts.

The State Government had made a demand for allocating Rs. 1900 crore but now they have revised it to 2300 crore. In the year 1999-2000, Rs. 207 crore were provided under the C.R.F., Rs. 21 crore under NCFR and Rs. 102 crore as special Central assistance. In this way a total of Rs. 332 crore was received apart from railway wagons. The interest on this amount comes to Rs. 73 lakhs. The biggest achievement of the Rajasthan Government is to earn Rs. 73 lakhs as interest. Rs. 751 crore were distributed during the year 1998-99 and 1999-2000 under various centrally sponsored schemes out of which Rs. 586 crore have been spent and a sum of Rs. 205 crore remains as balance amount under the head of centrally sponsored scheme and Rs. 105 crore under C.R.P.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now you conclude.

SHRI RAGHUVIR SINGH KAUSHAL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I hail from that State which is reeling under severe famine. If I do not say even a few words to apprise the House about the situation prevailing in my State, the people of my State will accuse me for not doing justice to them. I would only like to take two minutes. Shri Sonaramji who is sitting here, will support all the points by me raised in the House. He fully knows as to what I am saying is true. He may speak anything in the House but he is definitely depressed because he also hails from the area which is reeling under severe famine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please address the Chair.

SHRI RAGHUVIR SINGH KAUSHAL: I wanted to submit only this much that what kind of situation is prevailing at present. I would like to know as to where the concrete steps have been taken and the expenditure involved therein during the period when the famine had struck last time. Under the right of access to information nobody is prepared to inform us, as to where the

[Shri Raghuvir Singh Kaushal]

permanent work had been undertaken. In fact no such works had been undertaken. Hence, even the Central assistance given to Rajasthan Government was not spent during famine. Sir, though we can cope up with natural calamities yet how can we meet the crisis created by the Government.

19.00 hrs.

The money for accelerated drinking water scheme and DDP was sent by the Centre to the State. Amount to the tune of Rs. 54 crore remains unutilised. Though it would have lapsed but the Centre renewed it. That money was also not spent and then a demand was made to release the first instalment of Rs. 105 crore. The Centre responded by saying that so far not even the allocation made previously has not been utilised but the State Government replied that the State is struck by natural calamity. The Centre released the money. Then again the State Government asked for releasing second instalment. Centre asked for submitting the utilisation certificate of the first instalment and once again the State Government put forth the same plea that the State is facing extraordinary situation and once again Rs. 110 crore was released, only Rs. 15 crore has been sanctioned so far for the approved work but it is yet to start. Now the question is who will monitor whether the money provided by the Centre is actually being utilised or not? Whose responsibility is it to oversee all these things. When we raise with the Union Government, pet comes the reply that it is not under our purview, it will be taken care of only after the CAG report is submitted. But by the time it is submitted, the people and the cattle will die of hunger and it will be no use to pay attention towards this issue. I would like to know whether we will have to move the Court as is being done by the environmentalists? It is the moral duty of the Government to make available drinking water to every person. I support as to what Shri Chaturvediji had stated that the Union Government should ponder over this from a national perspective. Today Rs. 13000 crore are being spent in the field of telephone and communications. Had that money been spent in these sectors then we might have got relief. I would like to submit before you this much only that the schemes which may provide permanent and long term solution to the people, will only ameliorate their lot.

[English]

SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA (Tura): Mr. Chairman Sir, at the very outset, I would like to thank our senior hon. Member Shri Somnath Chatterjee for facilitating this debate. This debate was possible because he and his

colleagues from West Bengal had raised the issue of floods in West Bengal during 'Zero Hour'.

I would like to say that the whole House is with the people of West Bengal. The floods in West Bengal have really been unprecedented. People have suffered and are still suffering. I would request the Government of India to extend the maximum possible assistance to the Government of West Bengal so that the sufferings of the people can be mitigated.

It is more than fifty years since we have achieved Independence. We have completed eight Five Year Plans. Today we are at the end of the Ninth Five-Year Plan and very soon we will be going to the Tenth Five-Year Plan. We have the National Water Policy of 1987. The latest National Agriculture Policy of July, 2000 also has a Chapter on risk management which deals with flood situations. In our country, both at the national and at the State levels, there are a number of institutions for water resource management, including flood control. We have a National Water Development Agency functioning from 1982.

And yet, we are still grappling with the problems of frequent floods, its fury and the toll that it takes on human lives, livestock resources, infrastructure, soil erosion and so on and so forth.

Why has it happened? We have a Policy. We have a plan and yet, we are not able to tackle this problem. Perhaps, one of the reasons is that we have been for the last more than fifty years, tackling this problem on a year-to-year basis. We are just indulging ourselves in a crisis management exercise. The Parliament debates this issue every year and we can see, when this serious issue is being discussed, the attendance in the House. This issue is always tackled by the Minister for Agriculture. I do not know what Agriculture Minister can do to stop floods and other national calamities. The relevant Ministers are not present here. The relevant Ministers do not listen to the debate. I am, so happy that Shri Arjun Sethi has come at the last moment because my speech has nothing much to do with Shri Nitish Kumar. My speech has everything to do with your Ministry.

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN SETHI): I was busy in the other House.

SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA: The relevant Ministry is the Ministry of Finance but the Finance Minister will never be present when such discussions do take place. Therefore, not only at the level of the Government, I think, but even at the level of Parliament itself, we will

have to debate this issue in such a manner so that all the Ministers concerned are present here and Government comes out with a long-term policy and plan.

The second reason as to why this problem is not being tackled effectively perhaps has something to do with the Constitution itself. Under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, inter-State rivers fall under the Union List. Water, irrigation, canals, drainage and embankments fall under the State List. Water Development as such falls under the Concurrent List. Ultimately, water management becomes nobody's baby. I think, we will have to think over it as to whether there is something wrong in the method of handling water resources itself. Every year, flood takes place as it has taken place this year in many parts of India. This has been very effectively articulated by hon. Members from different parts of the country. Shri Somnath Chatterjee has given us a detailed account of it. But what do we see when we discuss it? When we discuss this, the Members from the States affected will usually blame the Central Government saying that the States have been neglected and that the Central Government has not given them any assistance. And what does the Central Government say? They say that the States have not managed it properly. Shri Sudip Bandopadhyay says that Bengal flood was man-made flood. That is his defence. That is the defence of the Central Government. And then, the Central Government says that though it was your failure, we are sending a Central team. The Central team goes there, makes an assessment of the losses, comes back and gives a report to Shri Nitish Kumar.

Shri Nitish Kumar, in turn, goes to the Finance Minister. The Finance Minister says: "Thank you very much. Let me keep your report here. I cannot do anything" Every year, the matter ends like this. I know about it. I had been the Chief Minister myself. The North-Eastern region is very badly affected. Every year, we have natural calamities. I had been coming to the Centre when I was the Chief Minister there. I know how it functions and how the money comes. It is a very sad state of affairs. Therefore, I think, we will have even to go into the real policy of water management. The real policy of water management has to be gone into very deeply.

Sir, I do not want to take much of the time of the House. But I have to speak something about the North-Eastern region. As the House is aware, there are seven States in the North-East. We have six river basins. One is the Brahmaputra basin; the second is the Barak basin; the third is the Sub basin of Tripura; the fourth is the Imphal-Manipuri basin; the fifth is the Kolodyne basin in Mizoram and the sixth one is the Teza basin in Nagaland.

All the States of the North-East are very severely affected by floods and natural calamities. But the State which suffers most out of these floods is Assam because of the Brahmaputra river.

As the House is aware, the Brahmaputra river is one of the largest rivers in the world. It is the principal arm of Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra system. Its length is 1,629 kms. in Tibet; 278 kms. in Arunachal Pradesh; 640 kms. in Assam and 363 kms. in Bangladesh. The total annual flow of the Brahmaputra river is 500 billion cubic metres which is 30 per cent of the total surface flow of all the rivers in the country. If somebody has to understand the problem that is being faced by the people in Assam due to the Brahmaputra river, one has to go and see it for himself. Otherwise, it cannot be believed. The miseries of the people are so much that unless you go and see the spot for yourself, see the conditions of the people and talk to them, it is very difficult to appreciate the problem that is being faced. In the last few months, I have been touring in the State of Assam, sometimes extensively. I have been to Dibrugarh. I stayed in Dibrugarh. I studied in Dibrugarh and I also worked in Dibrugarh. The original Dibrugarh town is no more there. It has already been submerged by the river. A new town has come up. Even the new town of Dibrugarh is so much in danger that thousands of hectares of land under tea cultivation are affected. The medical college and the airport are so much in danger of being eroded. I went to Jorhat. I went to a place called Nimotighat. I could see hundreds of refugees being kept in a camp because their whole village had been swept away by the Brahmaputra river. I was there. This had happened. I was in Morigaon district. I went to the places called Moirabari, Lahorighat, Ulubari, Chutiagaon, Tengaguri, Balidunga, Buragaon, Niz-Saharia, Baralimori-Moyong etc.

It is very sad. In the last two or three years, 356 villages have been washed away. They were not visible anymore.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Like in my birthplace in Tezpur.

SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA: So, these villages are not visible at all. But when I met the people and had discussion with them, they told me a very interesting thing. They said: "Sir, you do not worry about floods. We have learnt how to live with water." So, flood is no more a problem. But the problem is erosion. How to protect the villages? That is the problem which needs to be tackled. Giving relief to the flood affected people, whether it comes or not, whether we get shelter or not, we are

[Shri Purno A. Sangma]

used to be, for ages and ages, not worried about our shelter and our food; we are worried about our villages. Please save our villages.

I went to Motichar in Dhubri town. I went to Saliswar, Balijora, Sonari, Goalpara town of Golapara district and the conditions are the same. I know that the Government of India has been taking a lot of interest in that. The Brahmaputra Board has been constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1980. Today we are in 2000. Twenty years have gone. What has happened in 20 years? I have the report — Water Vision for the North-East — 2050. Here, the Chairman of the Brahmaputra Board says that the Master Plan for 48 important river basins, identification of 33 drainage condition areas, the investigation of 17 multi-purpose projects have been carried out. Construction of multi-purpose projects can also be taken up by the Board in consultation with the State Government, which means, nothing has been done so far. So, they are still discussing as to who will execute those projects.

Master Plan-I is very interesting. Master Plan-I is for the implementation of multi-propose projects and schemes — the main stem of Brahmputra. The project outlay is Rs. 91,000 crore. I do not know whether the Finance Minister of this country would ever have courage even to look at this figure.

Master Plan-II relates to Barak river and its boundaries. The proposed outlay is Rs. 4,000 crore. Master Plan-III relates to 39 important tributaries of the Brahmaputra and eight rivers of Tripura, and so on and so forth. Most of the proposals — I do not want to waste the time of the House, I have everything — are lying with the CCEA — the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. I think, I will pass on those papers. I will have a discussion with the Minister concerned perhaps.

Sir, in the meanwhile, — I will take just two minutes more because it is important for the House to know — I was saying that if one has to understand and appreciate your problem, then, you have to pay a visit. I just give a glimpse of what is happening. I would take the figures of 1988 because that is the only latest figures available with the Ministry. This is your document, Mr. Minister. Fortunately, I talked to some of your officers and they had sent me these documents. These documents have been supplied by the Ministry itself. Population affected in 1988 alone is 10.49 million; damage to the crops, Rs. 334.10 crore; damage to the houses, Rs. 225 crore; loss of lives, 232. This is one year figure. What has been done? Well, I do not want to quote. If I quote this figure as to how much money has been spent to control the Brahmaputra river by the Centre and by the States,

I am sure, it will demoralise the people of Assam so much that I do not really have the courage to quote those figures.

Sir, I think it is time that we wake up and it is time that we have short-term plan, medium-term plan and long-term plan. Of course, there is no dearth of plans; plans are being made, but what is required is the resource, what is required is the will of the Government to do it. I know there is a constraint of resource. I have been in the Government for long. I appreciate it. But, if there is a will there is a way. I hope this Government will have that will.

[Translation]

SHRI ANANT GUDHE (Amravati): Mr. Chairman, Sir, today except a few States, all the other States especially Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra are in the grip of drought. Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have been facing the scourge of drought for the last 3-4 years.

When Shri Chaturvediji who hails from Madhya Pradesh, was speaking, then it was being suggested that we should not look into this matter with political colours. When he was in the ruling party he used to say the same thing and now when he is in the opposition, he has reiterated the same point. But this problem is lying unresolved for the past 50 years. Vidarbha region in Maharashtra produces a variety of crops including sugarcane, orange, cotton and gram but the Government has always neglected the region. The orange produced in Vidarbha is exported to several countries but every year the orange crop suffers damage either due to excess rainfall or deficient rainfall or due to some disease. Every year the cotton crop also suffers damage. This year the situation has been taken such a turn that the entire Kharif and Rabi crops have been damaged completely. Only after this, the State Government have declared Vidarbha as a famine affected region but it has not provided any assistance. The State Government has declared the region to be drought affected but no help has been given. The Chief Minister makes no announcements regarding relief but time and again issue a statement that the State have no money and is almost bankrupt.

Last time, in 1997, similar famine had struck the State. At that time the crop was damaged due to non germination of seeds owing to scarcity of water. However, the then Government of Maharashtra had provided cash assistance to the farmers even without getting any assistance from the Centre and also made available seeds to the farmers. Those who had lost the Kharif crop, got assistance for Rabi crop. But now when this entire region

is famine stricken no one is there to back up the farmers of Vidarbha. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (Pandharpur): The assistance should be provided by the Government of India for it is not facing resource crunch.

SHRI ANANT GUDHE: If the Government honestly wish to provide assistance then it should do so like the 1997 regime. The then Government put aside the provision of providing assistance at the rate of Rs. 200 hundred per hectare and instead provided assistance of Rs. one thousand per hectare.

This assistance which was subject to a ceiling of two acres was raised to five acres. The farmers were provided seeds, fertilizers and the cash owing to which the farmers could produce bumper crop. All this happen when there is a will to provide assistance. Due to it the farmers have been committing suicide everyday. Earlier, when the farmers committed suicides due to their inability to repay the loans, their families were provided compensation of Rs. one lakh each. Today when the farmers are committing suicides in Maharashtra, Vidarbha and Marathwara, the assistance worth not a single pie is being given to them by the State Government. It simply means that the State Government do not bother about the farmers. It is only paying attention towards the rich people. It is fairly evident by the example of Marathwada where all the crops, from paddy to cotton have been damaged and the farmers have received no assistance from the State Government.

[English]

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL (Patan): Sir, hon. Members from Gujarat must be allowed. ...*(Interruptions)* It should be either from this side or that side. Otherwise. I will be compelled to stage a walkout. ...*(Interruptions)* I am very serious about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please resume your seat.

...*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VARMA (Dhandhuka): We are ready to sit upto 8 O'clock in the night provided you give us an opportunity to speak in the drought in Gujarat.

SHRI ANANT GUDHE: I demand from the Union Government to constitute a Committee of various Departments to combat the drought situation as it had

done earlier. It should send assistance to the States keeping in view the perennial droughts situation in the State. The pending proposals for the construction of dams should be immediately cleared. It is my submission that if the Centre also do not provide any assistance to tackle with drought situation in Vidarbha, as the State Government is doing then the farmers will be left with no other option except committing suicide.

19.28 hrs.

[English]

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (Berhampore, West Bengal): Sir, I rise to dwell on the debate under Rule 193 regarding damages and losses caused by floods and droughts. I promise to keep myself above petty political wranglings and to restrain myself from extracting any political mileage out of this discussion. There is a good many number of political stalwarts who have already dished out their all possible arguments in a lucid manner. I would like to add a few lines.

Politics does not mean playing hide-and-seek with the affected people or throwing dust their eyes by taking recourse to sheer sophistry, deception and statistical jugglery. What I would like to say is that time has been ripe enough to have introspection about all the natural disasters visiting our lives at regular intervals. The ecological balance has been totally disrupted. Denudation of hills is continuing unabated. It results in soil erosion as a consequence of which a huge siltation is going on in the riverbeds. This is the main reason for floods every year.

Sir, I would consider it prudent to confine myself to the flood of West Bengal in general and the worst affected district Murshidabad in particular. Sir, this year in West Bengal, nine districts have been inundated by the flood; more than two crore people have been affected; 23756 square kilometre of geographical area under West Bengal has been affected; crop area of 15110 square kilometre got submerged; 18.87 lakh houses have been damaged; and 171 blocks and 68 municipalities have also been affected seriously. But now, people of my State are under the impression that the Central Government is not attending to their sufferings and woes, for which they deserved and are entitled to.

Sir, what we are observing in West Bengal is that once the water gets receded, the State Government and the Central Government remain busy of trading charges with one another. The State Government is assiduously passing the buck to the shoulder of the Central

[Shri Adhir Chowdhary]

Government and the Central Government is also doing the same trick. But, in the milieu, people of my State have been under the vortex of profound misery, indescribable woes and excruciating tribulation. Sir, I must seek for the liberal co-operation from the Central Government because the flood in my State has acquired already a national dimension and, therefore, it should be considered as a national problem.

Sir, what is deplorable to say is that when lakhs of people of my State rendered homeless, scurrying for shelter, lakhs of men and women along with cattle huddled together without having even a tarpaulin sheet to save them from rain and Sun, the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Jyoti Basu exhorted the people of my State to blame the God and pray to the God. And further more, he preferred to leave for a sojourn, ...*

Sir, today the discussion was initiated by the hon. Member, Shri Somnath Chatterjee. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY (Basirhat): Mr. Chairman, Sir, he is not present in this House. Why is he mentioning his name? ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (Berhampore, West Bengal): Sir actually the flood of my State was initiated from his constituency, which is under Birbhum district and here also he initiated the discussion. So, there is a nice coincidence.

Sir, the State Government of West Bengal is exhausting all its energies to convince the people.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: My district, Murshidabad, has been the worst affected district in West Bengal. So, please let me have the opportunity to speak.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: I will just take two minutes. The State Government is trying to convince us that it was due to heavy rainfall that flood had occurred. But you see the chart. I would like to present the chart to you. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Sir, the remarks made by him should be deleted from the record. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude now.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: What is this, Sir? My privilege should not be scuttled in such a way. My district has been the worst affected district in the State. I will take just two or three minutes' time. Please allow me two or three minutes more.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Other hon. Members have their say.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: I am soliciting you for two minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: I am soliciting you for two minutes. My district has been the worst affected district in the State. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude. It is a concluding one. I am not allowing you for two minutes.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: May I ask the Central Government two questions? How much time would they consume before implementing the recommendations of Pritam Singh Committee? How much time would they consume before implementing the recommendations of Keshkar Committee? It is because this is very relevant to my flood-affected State. We are under attack from both the sides. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, kindly resume your seat. Now, Shri Nawal Kishore Rai.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please resume your seat. I will not go on record even. It will not go on record.

...*(Interruptions)**

19.37 hrs.

At this stage, Shri Adhir Chowdhary left the House.

[Translation]

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI (Sitamarhi): Sir, I have rise to participate in the debate being held under Rule 193 on the problems of flood and drought. Hon. Members of all parties have since put forth their views in this regard. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing else will go on record except Shri Nawal Kishore Rai's speech.

...*(Interruptions)**

*Expunged as ordered by the Chair.

* Not recorded.

SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI: Sir, all the hon. Members have put forth their views on flood and drought. I associate myself with them and through you I will place my views precisely before the House and the Government. During every session of the House, we discuss about floods and drought just as a ritual. How long will we continue to discuss these issues in this manner? A permanent solution to these problems have never been considered seriously during the last 50 years. Be it the Tamil Nadu the point of the coastal areas of Pondicherry drought in West Bengal, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh or floods in Bihar and Gujarat, we will continue to debate in this manner till such time a long term plan on management is implemented.

Sir, through you, I would like to draw the attention of the Government towards Bihar. I belong to Northern Bihar. There people are facing problems due to frequent floods. It causes damage to the tune of crores of rupees and loss of life and property. This year also hon. Agriculture Minister had visited my Parliamentary constituency Sitamarhi and he made a survey of floods. Just now our hon. Member from Rajasthan made a mention that his Parliamentary constituency is in the grip of flood and drought. Northern Bihar becomes totally devastated by floods. The Central Bihar faces the fury of drought. The third is 'tal' area. In this area water logging takes place on more than 1.5 lakh hectares of land. All these cause problems for the inhabitants.

However, we want solution which is not being done. People of Bihar have been raising this issue for the past 50 years and we have discussed it in Parliament also that a permanent solution to the problem should be found taking up the matter with the Nepal Government. With the present Government coming to power, we entertained some hopes in this regard. Even a discussion was started. Talks were held between our Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Nepal. Therefore, we came to know that a high level team is likely to visit Nepal for holding talks. We made a demand that the public representatives of affected areas should be included in the delegations but that was not done. Shri Brajesh Mishra, Advisor to the Prime Minister had gone to Nepal to hold talks. Later we came to know that in the Secretary level talks held in this regard, the Secretary, Water Resources, Bihar also participated. When we tried to contact the Secretary, Water Resources, we came to know from the hon. Minister and the Secretary who are present in the House today also that there were proposals to construct a medium size dam in Ramnagar Ramaia on 13 rivers of Avadhara group. It is a long standing proposal. A high dam on Bagmati river in Nunthun has also been delayed for the last 50 years. There was also a proposal to desilt

the Bakhia river and repair its embankments and construct a dam in Kamalabalan area of Nepal in Shisapani. However, in the talks held with the Nepal, consensus was arrived only for the Kosi river. I have come to know that the Nepal Government has refused to give its consent to construct the Nathan dam on river Bagmati, the Ram Nagar, Ramaiya dam on Awadhara group and the dam at Shisapani in Kamalabalan. However, Union Government is maintaining secrecy in the matter. Today the people of Tirhoot, Darbhanga and Saran 'parimandals' are agitated. Recently a 'Rasta Roko Andolan' took place under the aegis the 'Sarvadaliya Barh Surksha Sangharsh Samiti.' Thereafter, an all party committee on "Bihar Nav Nirman" has been constituted. People are agitated there. Through you, I would like to request the hon. Minister of Water Resources to involve the members of Parliament, the legislators of Bihar and the public representative of flood affected areas and the 'tal' area to hold constructive talks. A group should be constituted involving the Finance Minister, Water Resources Minister, the Agriculture Minister and the Flood Minister to solve the problem. Otherwise, the Central Government would be held responsible for any action taken by the agitating people of Northern Bihar. I would like to warn the Government that if the issue of water management is not taken seriously by them, members belonging to both the treasury benches and the opposition join hands to speed up the agitation.

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH (Vaishali): Mr. Chairman, Sir, prominent Parliamentarian hon. Shri Somnath Babu has raised the issue regarding people affected by drought and flood. Sometimes cyclone hit areas of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, sometimes areas of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh fall in the grip of drought or sometimes floods play havoc in West Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. Discussion is going on here. Hon. Shri Sangmaji was telling that only those Ministers who are on roster duty are present in the House and the remaining are absent. This shows how serious the present Government is about national calamity. The Government are unable to deal with the situation as they are careless.

The Agriculture Minister has requested the 11th Finance Commission to do away with the system of CRF and NFCR. I do not agree to the suggestion given by the Agriculture Ministry. The Government accepts one suggestion made by it while the other is rejected.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture visited Bihar and West Bengal to assess the flood situation there. He talked to people and inquired about their condition.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): The hon. Member had made a demand so I had gone.

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: The hon. Minister did a good thing. The 11th Finance Commission has said that the Bihar would get Rs. 123 crore out of which Rs. 96 crore will be Centre's share and the rest will be from the State. That means $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total funds will be shared by the Central Government and $\frac{1}{4}$ will be given by the State itself. Hence Centre's money is 76 crores and that of Bihar is Rs. 30 crores. He said that the Government have since released the funds. I would like to read out the situation prevailing West Bengal also. A sum of Rs. 101 crores was to be given for the relief works. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total amount was to be given by the Central Government and $\frac{1}{4}$ by the State itself. That means Rs. 75 crore had to be given by the Central Government and Rs. 25 crores were to be arranged by the State itself. Generally floods and drought occur in several parts of the country at the same time. Therefore, the 11th Finance Commission made the provision that $\frac{3}{4}$ share of the Central Government and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the State would be spent on relief works. Though the hon. Minister is saying that the funds have been released yet till date not a single paise has been given. The National Calamity Relief Fund has been abolished. The hon. Minister cannot be held responsible as he was not in its favour. In such a situation, how will we face the national calamity. In recommendation No. 14.72, the 11th Finance Commission has stated that the "National Calamity Relief Fund should be abolished in its present form." This recommendation was implemented immediately. Thereafter it said that "a national centre should be set up for disaster management under the Ministry of Agriculture which should be empowered to recommended Central assistance to a State." Why it was not implemented? The part of the recommendation on abolition of NICR was implemented immediately but the good part has not been implemented till now.

19.48 hrs.

(MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*)

Somnathiji was reading out recommendations number 14.74. It says, "in order to provide assistance to States by the Central Government for calamity relief works, financing should be done by levying a special surcharge on Central Taxes for a limited period. The amount so raised should be deposited in a separate fund which will be known as National Calamity Contingency Fund."

The National calamity fund has been abolished but assistance that was to be given by NCCF has not been given. Recommendations of the Finance Commission were implemented by the Government from their side. The Government are not serious about the issue. What assistance will provided under National Calamity Fund? Recommendations number 14.75, 14.76 and 14.78 are about national calamity. These recommendations have not been implemented till now. I demand that these may be implemented immediately. Just now Shri Raghunath Jha and Shri Nawal Kishore Rai raised the issue that an agreement should be signed between India and Nepal because large parts of Bihar are ruined by floods and drought. This year damage to the tune of Rs. 712 crore has been caused. 31 districts are affected by floods and 216 people have drowned. I do not know what happened to the special Calamity Relief Fund of the Central Government. Havoc played by floods in Bengal and Bihar but in the absence of Financial assistance, people are agitated there. Therefore, a memorandum has been given to the Central Government requesting for an assistance of Rs. 975 crore.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, farmers in Bihar are not getting remunerative prices. The Central Government should take action in this regard immediately.

[English]

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY (Sriperumbudur): Thank you, Sir, for the opportunity given to me.

The States of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Rajasthan and Gujarat are facing drought like situation in varying degrees. Drinking water, food and fodder are in shortage and there is forced migration of men and cattle.

I also learn that in the State of Rajasthan, 31,058 villages in 31 out of 32 districts are found to be scarcity-affected. Human population of 325 lakhs, cattle population of 400 lakhs and crop in an area of 87.49 lakh hectares are severely affected by drought.

Floods and droughts are perennial calamities which adversely affect the country. Floods, caused by heavy monsoon rains, destroyed large parts of Andhra Pradesh, U.P., Bihar, West Bengal and North-Eastern States. They damaged crops worth thousands of crores, took a large number of human lives and made over eight million people homeless. Yesterday also there was a heavy cyclone in coastal areas of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry which caused floods and destruction. Large number of trees

were uprooted, houses were damaged, communication links were destroyed and many people lost their houses due to soil erosion. Many fishermen have not returned. In this regard, our State Government has taken speedy steps to recover those people who were affected by the cyclone, but unfortunately, my learned friend Shri P.H. Pandiyan misled this House. I deny his charge. Our Transport Minister and our Backward Classes Minister went to the spot immediately yesterday and have taken speedy measures to get relief to the affected people. But the usual practice of Shri Pandiyan is to speak utter untruth in the court, so, here also he uttered some untrue things. I deny his allegation. ... (*Interruptions*)

DR. V. SAROJA (Rasipuram): Sir, when a Member is not present in the House, his name should not be taken? ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY: Sir, it is unfortunate that even after fifty years of Independence, the rivers causing floods on a regular basis could not be tamed and controlled. We all know that reckless deforestation of the Himalayan region and other mountains, and the age-old agrarian practices have been responsible for increasing the chances of floods. Serious attention is, therefore, required to check deforestation.

Despite the regular feature of floods, this subject is treated merely as seasonal problem and there is hardly any debate for long-term solution. This year a sum of Rs. 1,093 crore has been spent through financial institutions for flood relief only in four States. This figure spent on flood relief may cross Rs. 2,000 crore. This amount has been spent mainly on medium and short-term relief on emergency caused by floods and drought.

I am of the firm view that if money is utilised for preventive measures in advance to prevent floods or at least to minimise their impact by way of a long term strategy, we shall be able to utilise it for other developmental activities.

I urge this Government to think seriously about linking of rivers and construction of barrages to ensure the availability of water in summer season because when we find flood in a district in winter season, we find scarcity of water in the same district in summer season. When I was a member of the Consultative Committee, we usually discussed with the Chairman of our Committee and the Minister of Water Resources about the linking of Ganga-Cauvery project.

But whenever the hon. Minister gives the reply, he used to say that it will be a very expensive plan. I would request that the hon. Minister should look into this aspect.

Water goes and falls into the sea and there is a lot of wastage of water. We suffer without any ground water. Particularly in my constituency the crops have been damaged as there is no rainfall and the farmers have allowed the cattle to graze in the agriculture land. I give here some of the suggestions made by some scientists of the Delhi University regarding floods and drought.

The steps involved in implementation of the zoning measures include:

- Demarcation of areas likely to be flooded
- Preparation of detailed contour plans of such areas
- Fixation of reference river gauges and determination of areas likely to be inundated by different water levels and magnitudes of floods
- Demarcation of areas liable to be flooded by floods of different frequencies like once in two years, once in five years, once in ten years or once in twenty years etc., and its effect on accumulated rainfall.

Sir, flood management is a better mitigation tool than flood control. Similar steps may be taken for drought-prone areas also.

There is a proverb in Tamil which means 'Prevention is better than cure'. Therefore, I urge upon the Government to earmark sufficient funds for Centre-sponsored schemes for flood and drought control throughout the country. I am sure this will be a better investment in the long run. The Central Government is requested to rush immediate financial assistance to the victims of the cyclone in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Ajoy Chakraborty to speak now.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAMSINH RATHWA (Chhota Udepur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, out of 18358 villages of Gujarat, 12240 are affected by drought. ... (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I called Shri Ajoy Chakraborty. Nothing will go on record except what he speaks.

... (*Interruptions*)*

* Not recorded.

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VARMA (Dhandhuka): Sir, floods continue to play havoc in Gujarat. Not a single Member from our State spoke till now. We are waiting. We are in no hurry. Please allow some Members from Gujarat also to speak.

[Translation]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will call from both the sides.

[English]

Shri Ajoy Chakraborty to speak now.

SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY (Basirhat): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in our country, people belonging to different States have always been the victims of natural calamities some time or the other. This year, nine districts of West Bengal are severely affected by floods which have devastated the State by the unprecedented floods. In some parts of Bihar as well as in Jharkhand, floods played havoc. The States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh etc. are badly affected by drought. Recently, there were floods and cyclone in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

Sir, I am the victim of the floods. My constituency is also badly affected by these unprecedented floods. Nine districts out of 17 districts of West Bengal are particularly affected by the floods which have devastated the State. I will not go into the details as to how many lives have been lost etc. as our senior colleague, Shri Somnath Chatterjee has spoken about it.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Ajoy Chakraborty, please wait for a minute.

Hon. Members the House was extended up 8 O'clock. There are four to five Members yet so speak. We can give them two or three minutes each and the hon. Minister can then reply. Therefore, is it the pleasure of the House to extend the time of the House upto 8.30 p.m.?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : Yes.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Thank you. Shri Ajoy Chakraborty, you please continue.

20.00 hrs.

SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY: Sir, I need not go into details because the mover of this Motion, our senior and hon. colleague, has narrated elaborately about how many lives have been lost, how many persons are affected

and how much land is badly affected. In one word, I can say that people of nine districts out of 17 districts have been totally devastated. All the mud houses have collapsed. Roads have been destroyed. Railway lines have been destroyed. The entire paddy and other vegetable crops have been totally destroyed due to severe flood in the nine districts of West Bengal.

My constituency is also badly affected. When I visited my constituency, I saw people taking shelter on the branches of the trees. Monkeys and people were taking shelter on the branches of the trees. Sir, this has been the position. The Army personnel and BSF personnel were called in for the rescue of the people, but due to turbulent character of water, Armymen and BSF personnel could not reach the remote corners of the villages and were compelled to return to the mainland. Such was the gravity of the situation.

Our hon. Agriculture Minister visited West Bengal and expressed his view that it was a national disaster. We appreciate his visiting West Bengal and also his comment, but in spite of such a declaration, nothing has happened. The Government of India has not yet provided a single farthing, paisa for the flood affected people of West Bengal.

I need not go into the details of what are the reasons for the flood. Our hon. colleague has already stated the reasons. Some persons with ulterior motives are campaigning that was man-made. I categorically, with all my conviction, refute this charge. In reply to the Unstarred Question No. 519, the hon. Minister of State in the Ministry of Water Resources has categorically stated the reasons for such a flood. I hope, our Agriculture Minister will also tell the reasons for that flood in his reply.

Sir, my demand is this. Now, the cat is out of the bag. Hence, I advise our Chief Minister that if he wants to visit the Prime Minister of India, he should go through the future Chief Minister of West Bengal because without her green signal, nothing can happen and no money will be provided for West Bengal.

I want to say that not only the flood but the erosion of rivers is also one of the reasons of this occurrence. Sir, village after village has been washed away due to the erosion of rivers, and one two-storeyed school building was submerged by the erosion of the river. I met the hon. Water Resources Minister of Government of India. I had requested him to visit this area to personally see the gravity of the situation.

Another reason is siltation of rivers. All the rivers and canals are silted and excavation is very much

needed. It is not possible on the part of the Government of West Bengal to spare money. So, I would request the Government of India to come forward to provide and spend money for the excavation of the silted rivers and canals.

Lastly, I want to identify myself like this. First I am an Indian, then I am a Bengali, Bihari, Assamese or Punjabi. I ask the hon. Minister that West Bengal is a part of India. Why is the Government refraining from promulgating an Ordinance in respect of financial assistance for West Bengal. So, I urge upon the Government of India to immediately constitute Calamity Relief Fund for financial assistance not only to West Bengal but also to other States which are affected by natural calamities.

[Translation]

SHRI PRASANNA ACHARYA (Sambalpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this serious issue in the end.

Sir, our's is a very vast country and one or the other part of it always experiences natural calamities. Bengal experienced floods. Maharashtra, Gujarat Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Orissa are affected by famine. I do not want to talk much on this issue but I would like to draw the attention of the Government and the House to the issue that last year cyclone and super cyclone played havoc in 2/3 of Orissa and approximately 50 thousand people died there. I do not know what are the Government figures but the reality is that 50 thousand people and 7 lakh animals died more than 100 villages went down the sea water. The whole of Orissa was devastated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Orissa is grateful to the Union Government, Government of Andhra Pradesh and other States also which helped in the crisis. However, a severe famine occurring within one year of previous disaster is a matter of serious concern. 1/3 of Orissa is affected by drought. 24 out of 30 districts are affected by it. Especially in Western Orissa 10-11 districts are most affected by it. A Central team has visited there to assess the situation and today is the last day of that visit. I do not know the places which this committee has toured and what report will be submitted. However, it is painful to me that the Government did not take any preventive measures in advance though the record show that there was 33 per cent shortage of rainfall during the month of July. It is but natural that difficulties would arise in the coming months. 71 per cent shortage in rainfall was from July to October. Since then Orissa Government has been writing to the Central Government time and again. The

issue was raised several times but the Central Government did not respond in time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not levelling charges against the Government but it is a fact that had the Government reacted timely on the issue. Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Gujarat would not have faced such a grave situation. Drought is a slow poison. Sir, I am the lone speaker from my party. Therefore, please do not ask me to sit down. I will complete my speech in two minutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, floods and cyclone occur all of a sudden and without any warning but drought always come with a prior warning. I do not know what the Central Government was doing when it was repeatedly appraised of the deteriorating situation by the State Government of Orissa. Therefore, now I would like to request the hon. Minister of Agriculture to direct the visiting Central team on telephone to properly undertake the tour and give an authentic report. We are making a demand for the past two months but the Central Government has sent the team now to assess the situation there.

Sir, I myself have visited my own district and the adjacent district also. 150 villages are affected. 90 per cent people of Beerpur village of Nuapara district flood their houses. Even a farmer having 10 acres of land is not living there. Only old people, the unemployed and incapable people are there. An adivasi residential school with 350 students is situated there. I have been told by the school teacher that only 50 students have been left in the school. 300 students have left the village. Some of them left the village with their parents and some left the place alone for begging alms outside. The same situation is prevailing in Titalagarh, Jharasguda, Kalabhanji and Sambalpur. Villages bear a deserted look. Anybody will be moved by the plight of the people if he visits them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister that at least crops worth Rs. 750 crore have been damaged. We have not made any unjust demand from the Government. We have made a demand for Rs. 570 crore only. The Government say that there is plenty of food-grains, there is no shortage of food-grains. However, people are dying of starvation in Orissa and Chhattisgarh.

This is the situation prevailing at present. I do not understand what type of rule is this. As you are not giving me more time I conclude by saying one sentence. Shri Amritya Sen is the prominent Economist of the world. He has received Nobel Prize also. He has written—

[Shri Prasanna Acharya]

[English]

Poverty and famine: Starvation is the characteristic of some people not having food to eat. It is not the characteristic of their not having enough food to eat.

[Translation]

There is no lack of food-grains in our country but people are dying of starvation. I request the Central Government to make a self analysis of the issue. As many hon. Members have stated that very often we get only an inkling that analysis is going on but no results are achieved. Therefore, a long lasting blue print should be prepared. With these words I conclude though I had to say much more.

SHRI JOACHIM BAXLA (Alipurduars): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak on such a serious subject. Since the time is less and people of various regions are speaking on this serious subject. Once more, we have been going through the experience of rains, flood, land sliding and massive destruction which has become the destiny of this country all these years. The kind of problems the poor farmers of West Bengal are facing due to flood, we were expecting that Union Government will immediately address this problem. Along that we were also expecting from constituent groups of Union Government in West Bengal that they will also take initiative in providing funds to West Bengal from the Central Government and this fund can be utilized in providing relief materials to the flood affected people. Instead of waiting for relief fund from Centre, the Government of West Bengal immediately provided food, medicine and other necessary things to the flood affected people and even now it is doing so.

But it is a matter of regret that this natural calamity is a national loss. It was declared by the Hon. Prime Minister equivalent to national loss but nothing happened afterwards. Sh. Nitish Kumar ji visited West Bengal but did not utter anything after his return. Not a single rupee was received by West Bengal. Today we lack strong will power at national level. I am telling you that national will power is necessary otherwise every year we will keep on facing natural calamity. If you want to find a solution then we have to resolve and chalk out a master plan to find a permanent solution of such natural calamities.

I would like to ask the Union Government whether they have prepared any scheme to combat such natural calamities?

The flood situation of West Bengal not only created inconvenience to the people of West Bengal but also created hindrances in moving food supplies to seven North Eastern States. Due to closure of road and rail services, the people of north east have also to bear the burnt. Therefore, I think Union Government is responsible for this crisis and I would like to request them that if you want to seek the solution of this calamity, then you have to discuss it the way we are discussing today in House for seeking its permanent solution.

Today I met the Minister, Shri Arjun Charan Sethi and apprised him that cities and villages of Jalpaigudi, Alipurduars and Coochbehar are being destroyed by the rivers of north Bihar, originating from Bhutan. The overflowing flooded rivers are destroying industries, houses of farmers and jungles. Therefore, I would request them that a master plan should be chalked out and in association with neighbouring country Bhutan, an Indo-Bhutan joint river commission should be constituted. With this request I conclude my speech.

[English]

SHRI P.S. GADHAVI (Kutch): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity. I thank Shri Somnath Chatterjee also for raising this very important issue for discussion in this august House.

As everybody has said, the whole country is facing floods and drought. In Gujarat, this year's famine is the third consequent famine. North Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch are very badly hit by famine. Out of 80,000 villages, about 12,214 are affected by drought this year. Out of 25 District, 20 Districts are affected by drought. The problem of drinking water is so acute that we people in North Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch are unable to get drinking water. Groundwater level has been going down year after year. We have got no other source of drinking water. The level has gone to a depth of about 700 feet to 1,000 feet.

Kutch, the place where I come from, has been cyclones in 1998 and 1999 successively. In the cyclone of 1998 we lost 3,000 precious lives. More than 50,000 cattle, three lakh fruit-bearing trees, and property worth crores of rupees have been lost in the cyclones. The only other source of drinking water for people living in North Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kutch areas is the perennial rivers Narmada and Mahi. Narmada waters, as we all know, we entangled in six years of litigation. Ultimately when we saw a ray of hope in the Supreme Court Judge, certain activists, under the umbrella of Narmada Bachao Andolan, are attempting to see that these five crore

people, who have got no source of drinking water, suffer permanently. Even after the judgement, certain activists have started making wild allegations and contemptuous statements. They are misusing the Government media like Doordarshan.

I urge upon the Government to ensure that this type of misuse of media is stopped. My humble request to hon. Minister of Agriculture is that he should send a team to Gujarat, as is done for other parts of country, to assess the situation prevailing there.

The area I come from is adjacent to the country's border with Pakistan. More than 50 per cent of the population of this area has already migrated from there. If people migrate like this, it would be dangerous for the country from defence point of view. The Central Government should, therefore, give as much assistance to Gujarat as possible to ensure that all facilities extended to other parts of the country are given to the State of Gujarat.

SHRI RATILAL KALIDAS VARMA (Dhandhuka): Sir, I associate my name with Shri Gadhvi on this subject.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Okay. All Members of Parliament from Gujarat are taken to have associated with Shri Gadhvi.

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL (Patan): Sir, while thanking you are allowing all the Members of Parliament from Gujarat to associate themselves with Shri Gadhvi, I wish to put the record straight.

Gujarat is the only State which has suffered almost all types of calamities. First it was Kandla tragedy, the greatest cyclone where Kutch, Bhuj, Kandla and Jamnagar were affected.

It was followed by periods of no rain during 1999-2000. Then, it was followed by 20 inch rain within a few hours in the city of Ahmedabad. Then, it was followed by an earthquake in the city of Bhavnagar and the entire city had sleepless nights for about ten days. Now, again this year, one of the worst droughts has occurred in the State of Gujarat.

Sir, I want to quote only one figure for the information of the hon. Minister of Water Resources. During the year 1999-2000 under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, the Government of India had released an amount of Rs. 68 crore to the Government of Gujarat. But as against that amount, the Government of Gujarat had spent Rs. 200 crore. I do not want to give the

comparative figures of other States where the money released by the Central Government is more than the money spent by the concerned State Government. But, Sir, Gujarat is the unique case where the Central Government had given only Rs. 68 crore and the State Government of Gujarat had spent Rs. 200 crore.

Sir, here, I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Shri Nitish Kumar as well as the hon. Minister of Water Resources, Shri Arjun Sethi that the Government of Gujarat has sent three specific projects. So, this year, if they do not give adequate assistance to Gujarat, it will be very difficult. They want an amount of Rs. 492 crore from HUDCO in the form of loan and not assistance. That is where they want the help of the Central Government.

Sir, the Government of Gujarat has also sent a project known as Bhaskarpura Scheme. This is a project of Rs. 1,422 crore. The Government of Gujarat has already submitted a detailed project report to the World Bank, the Asian Development and the Government of Japan through the Government of India. The Government of Gujarat is only requesting the Central Government to see that they get the required loan from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank or the Government of Japan. So, this should be done. In this regard, the Government of Gujarat has already given an undertaking that if this scheme of taking Narmada water from Narmada to the Saurashtra region is completed within two years, then the problem of drinking water of the entire Rajkot, Jamnagar and Kutch districts will be solved permanently, and the Government of Gujarat or the Central Government need not worry as far as the supply of drinking water is concerned.

So, Sir, I want to request the Central Government that we want only drinking water. The people of cities of Rajkot and Jamnagar will be forced to migrate in the month of January if no arrangement is made for the supply of water. So, water must be sent there by tankers, steamers and trains. Then only, the people of the entire Saurashtra will be able to survive. The situation is very serious there. Both the Ministers are sitting here. I am requesting them to kindly depute team of officers there to look into the supply of drinking water.

I also want to know from the Central Government about the legitimate dues to the people of Gujarat. Forget about the assistance. But what about the legitimate dues of crop insurance? What about legitimate dues of loss of trees? What about the legitimate dues of people who died in Kandla cyclone? What is the amount of assistance given to them?

[Shri Pravin Rashtrapal]

According to my information, as against Rs. 600 crore requested by the Government of Gujarat for relief measures after Kandla cyclone, we got only Rs. 154 crore. Sir, last year the Central Government had given us some advance. That was only an advance and not an assistance. But the situation is worse this year.

So, I would request both the hon. Ministers, particularly the hon. Minister of Agriculture to kindly look into this issue.

Now, lastly, I want to request the Central Government to kindly call a meeting of the four beneficiary States. Now, the Narmada case is out of Court. I received a written letter from the hon. Minister that the meeting would be called when the matter is out of Court. Now, it is my request that the Central Government should get us our dues, our undisputed amount from the States of Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

With these words I conclude.

[Translation]

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN (Coochbehar): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fully support the proposal raised by our senior leader, comrade Shri Somnath Chatterjee regarding drought, flood and natural calamity, at 4 O'clock today.

No matter what is the name of NDA but it is a fact that the NDA Government came into power, national disaster started.

[English]

Now, NDA means national disaster assured.

[Translation]

You see, it has started from Orissa, a super cyclone hit Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Drought hit Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Flood occurred in West Bengal. More cyclones hit Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Minister of Agriculture visited West Bengal after the massive flood occurred there. I congratulate him. He made an aerial survey there and evaluated the entire situation from air. But then on ground conducted a meeting and termed it a national disaster which is also right. I congratulate you for this as well. But you should also estimate the number of people and cattle killed. The crop worth four thousand crores of rupee was destroyed there. Nitish ji you are in the Government. People are crying for help October and November have

also passed, kindly tell how much money you have provided? The condition of people there is very pitiable. Thousands of people have become homeless. They are living beneath trees in these wintry days. They are not getting anything to eat, they are not getting cloths. You have not provided funds on human grounds either. Forget the human rights. At least you come forward to save human life. You can start from tomorrow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir much has been said about 11th Finance Commission and N.C.C.F. I support this but I don't want to discuss it. Our colleague Sangma ji has raised the question that only providing relief is not the solution since we have to provide it every year. We have to take some measures to control the flood. I would like to add two more things with it. Firstly, there was a proposal to Brahmaputra, Ganga and Kaveri in second five year plan. A national water grid should be constituted on the lines of national power grid. In this regard, I would like to request Nitish ji and Sethi ji that they should consider it. I would also like to request Mr. Prime Minister to consider this. Until such scheme is drafted you cannot save the country from flood and drought. We had a meeting with Sethi ji today. I told him that the rivers causing flood in Bengal, Assam and north Bihar flows from Bhuan and Nepal. A joint river commission should be constituted with these countries. These are our neighbouring countries and we should reach any decision with these countries in cordial atmospheres. Otherwise they will release water from there and consequently we have to face flood here.

I would say that the river will keep on flowing like this. If no agreement is reached at with Nepal and Bhutan then you have to speak. Mr. Speaker, Sir, if they will ask where is river then you have to tell that look, there flows the rivers and then they will say that they have erected embankments, constructed dams but it is not going to help. You have to check the siltation and for this you have to enforce afforestation. You have to stop mining. For this we have to improve and establish cordial relations with Nepal and Bhutan at the earliest. I would like to request Nitish ji to send relief and funds and save the people of West Bengal.

[English]

SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN (Sivaganga): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry are now affected by cyclone. Three persons had died in Pondicherry and five in Tamil Nadu. More than 20,000 trees were uprooted in Neyveli and Cuddalore areas alone. Pondicherry is also affected in the same way.

I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that Tamil Nadu was worst affected in the cyclone which hit in 1955. At that time, Shri Kamaraj was the Chief Minister and Pandit Jawahar Nehru was the Prime Minister. They then created a system for disaster management. Whenever there was any cyclone or flood, how to control it, was the thinking the State Government had. The State Government stated thinking about it and it had a very clear plan about that. They had got a system to communicate to the villages immediately and the people living in coastal areas also. Then they would be asked to go to safer places. The same system was further improved during the period of Shrimati Indira Gandhi and Shri Rajiv Gandhi. Scientifically it was improved.

As you know, in the Agriculture Ministry itself there is a separate cell to monitor it for the whole of India, to find out what are the areas to be affected by cyclone or the areas to be affected by drought, etc. They are having a scientific analysis. They are having a plan to communicate to the State Governments and they would be geared up to tackle the situation.

Tamil Nadu was in executive line and it was a perfect system, which they created. Therefore, this time when cyclone hit, a proper communication was sent to all parts of the State and to Pondicherry also. Thus, the damage to people reduced to that extent. The trees and other things could not be protected because it is out of our capacity. Therefore, I would like to suggest that the Central Government should not have political in this regard.

West Bengal is now affected by floods. Here, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the interventions of the Supreme Court in each and every aspect. The Supreme Court has given directions in regard to drainage, drinking water, garbage removal, sanitation, maintaining schools, reducing pollution regulating traffic, regulating the movement of motor vehicles, regarding Yamuna water, Ganga water, Cauvery water, Narmada water, raising social afforestation, protecting forests, etc. They intervened in everything. So, I am surprised that it may also intervene in giving money to the West Bengal Government to tackle the situation, if the Central Government is not going to have an unbiased view to look at the States. The Central Government has to take humanitarian view rather than political view.

SHRI M.V.V.S MURTHI (Visakhapatnam): Sir, all the while we are doing only crisis management as stated by Shri Somnath Chatterjee and Shri P.A. Sangma. We are discussing this issue every year, in every Lok Sabha and in every Session. Why are we not having any long-term

policy? It is high time that we should have a long-term policy. Agriculture Minister alone cannot do anything. He can only provide relief to agriculturists. These floods are creating havoc. The Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Energy can sit with Ministry of Finance and should find out a solution. They can stop floods. That would in turn stop drought also. On the one hand we have flood and on the other we have drought. Andhra Pradesh is reeling under drought now. I appeal to the Government of India to take steps and involve all the political parties and all the Chief Ministers and form a comprehensive policy.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: It is a very good suggestion.

[Translation]

SHRI HARIBHAU SHANKAR MAHALE (Malegaon): Sir, I rise to support the suggestions put forward by hon'ble Somnath ji. I remember the emancipation of Gajendra. Once a crocodile caught the leg of Gajendra and tried to drag him deep into the river. At that time Gajendra prayed the God for the emancipation. The God appeared and emancipated him. Once the crocodile saw the God it also demanded for its emancipation. My submission is that whatsoever may be the ideology of the Government the Centre should not discriminate any one and should provide justice to all.

Sir, there are 22 districts of Maharashtra in the grip of drought and Nasik district is also among them. 15 Tehsils are in the grip of drought. There is shortage of water, fodder, foodgrains and employments. Though the Government of Maharashtra is performing well but it is very difficult for the State Government to cope up with the existing crisis without the assistance of the Central Government. Therefore my request is that a committee should be sent there to assess the situation. You please provide assistance to those districts also.

COL. (RETD.) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY (Barmer): Sir, please allow me to speak for two minutes as I represent a region that has lot of problems. ... (Interruptions) I am a disciplined soldier so I would not like to disobey the Chair. I belong to Rajasthan and the western Rajasthan, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Pali and Jalaur suffer from the severe famine. My constituency has suffered 36 famine during the last 50 year. A little ago Sangma Saheb and Somnath ji were talking about water Resource management. Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru had a vision who had started the construction of Rajasthan canal which is now called Indira Canal in 1952. Earlier the work was in progress but for last two-three years no

[Col. (Retd.) Sona Ram Choudhary]

work is being done in this direction. The Government of India used to give approximately hundred crore rupees for this work every year, but for last two years releasing of the fund has been stopped. The Government of Rajasthan have no money so it stopped the work. Now situation is such that machines are lying idle there. The entire strength of engineers and staff are not getting their salaries so it should be considered.

Sir, I have raised this question several times in House. My colleagues had earlier too stated about Rajasthan that out of the 32 districts 30 are suffering from famine.

Out of the thirty five thousand villages 30583 villages are suffering from famine and in 19817 villages more than 75 per cent of the Kharif crop has been destroyed. Presently nearly four lakh livestock are suffering. If water and fodder are not provided to them they will be perished. In Western Rajasthan nearly 80 per cent of population is dependent on livestock. There are of no river, rivulet and the source of water and for the third consecutive year the people of this region are suffering from drought. Presently there is serious discontent and the people are migrating to other region as there is scarcity of water.

There are nearly 3 thousand villages in my Parliamentary constituency and the entire region is having famine like situation. Last year 2900 and the year before last 2800 villages had suffered famine. You may understand the situation of a region which has suffered famine for the last three consecutive year. Recently you have sent a Central team there. I would like that a committee of Parliament should be sent to those regions which are suffering from severe famine. They should also visit Gujarat for making assessment of damage.

I would like to submit that this year we have demanded Rs. 2380 crore and last year it was Rs. 1140 crore and the year before that it was Rs. 960 crore. Three year back we had received only Rs. 23 crore, last year it was Rs. 125 and this year nothing is known about Rs. 2380 crore. Hon'ble Nitish Kumar ji is present here, I request him to please release the fund as soon as possible so that livestock may not die and the people may not commit suicide. Your policy and intention should be honest. Though the Congress party is in power in that State but you should not treat the people of that State differently. I have some doubt, but Nitish Kumar ji will do justice and immediately release the fund.

You should give some thought to the issue of Calamity Relief Fund. The sources of drinking water are gradually getting dried up and new machines are required for the Department of Water Resources, so that dried

sources may be drilled much deeper and water may be provided to the people by newer sources.

I had requested the Prime Minister that western Rajasthan should be provided a package similar to that given to the North East region. Two years back the Prime Minister has also consented to provide assistance but till date nothing has been given.

Lastly, my submission is that war footing operation is required to cope up with the situation arising out of the famine. Every possible assistance should be provided for improving the situation prevailing in Rajasthan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to submit the hon'ble Minister that he should immediately provide relief to the people by way of releasing fund for the region.

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (Pandharpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Somnath Babu has initiated the present discussion in the House regarding the measures that should be taken by the Government for coping up with the situation arising out of the flood and drought and natural calamity. Nitish Kumar ji, we have not come to take anything from you, rather we have come to provide information regarding drought and flood. We have not come to allow you to remain in the House for a longer period. Rather we have come to remove you from the House as soon as possible. ... (*Interruptions*)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, several parts of the country suffer from the floods. The flood prone rivers should be tamed by branching out the main course of the river. ... (*Interruptions*) It is not a matter of laughter. It is a question of flood. The flood causes damage. A plan should therefore be formulated for this. It is the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture to protect the crop. You cannot protect. What can you do, even Atalji cannot protect it? Planning is required for controlling the flood. We discuss this subject in every session. You please make efforts to divert water from excess rainfall region to the drought prone areas. Bombay enjoy heavy rainfall every year. Konkan region also witness rainfall. It causes closure of all the roads to Bombay.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please call it Mumbai not Bombay.

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE: Since, Shiv sena Members are not present here, that is why you have raised this issue. Since Shiv Sena Members are not present here that is why I called Bombay. I mean that planning should be made to collect excess rain fall. Mumbai, Gujarat, Kerala, Tamilnadu Lakshdweep, Andhra

Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal have sea. Can we divert sea water to the drought prone areas. It should be considered. Salty water may be converted into non-salted and may be used for drinking purpose. The Government should pay attention in this direction. Unless you pay attention in this direction, very soon, you can not escape from the responsibility. How will you protect us? It is a personal matter. I do not think that you will quarrel yourself. You will quarrel when we will be united. You will not fight unless we are united. The Government should think seriously on this matter. There was earthquake in Maharashtra, Latur and Usmanabad districts were affected by it. At least 10 thousand people had lost their lives. My colleague was telling that more than 50 thousand people have lost their lives in Orissa but compensation could not be given to the family of deceased. The Central Government have immense fund. The money should be given to the people. That money is not meant only for Ministers and you people. We also have right over that money. In democracy the opposition party has full right to make demand. I do not want my share from the budget but fund should be released meant for the people. The Government should make efforts to release fund. It is good if you perform well otherwise you will have to pay for your ill-performance.

[English]

SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA (Tura): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, can I intervene for one minute?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA: Sir, today's debate has been a very good and a fruitful debate. Three things have come out of it clearly. First thing is that the situation all over the country is really bad. Secondly, it requires urgent attention of the Government.

Thirdly, the Ministry of Agriculture alone will not be able to tackle this problem. It requires the coordinated effort of all the Departments of the Government of India. Therefore, on behalf of the whole House I would like to plead that the final reply to this debate be given by the Prime Minister. The Agriculture Minister's reply be treated as an intervention. Because the House will not have another opportunity to debate on a serious issue like this, we would like the Prime Minister to give the final reply.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): We are keen to hear Shri Nitish Kumar. But in view of the fact that every Member has expressed serious concern as it seems every State is affected, I think the Government

should think of some comprehensive action and the Prime Minister may give the final reply. Let the Prime Minister take a few days' time and let him reply next week. This is the wish of the Members in this House.

COL. (RETD.) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY (Barmer): The Minister of Water Resources is not here. I need reply from him. We want your ruling on this issue. Sir....(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the Minister reply.

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): His reply should be treated as an intervention.

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY (Basirhat): Ultimately we want the reply to be given by the Prime Minister. ... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, a very long discussion has taken place here regarding the destruction caused by natural calamities in various parts of the country. Many hon'ble members participated in this discussion. First of all, I would like to share with the House the latest information regarding the situation in the cyclone hit areas in Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh and coastal regions of Tamil Nadu which I have received during the course of discussion. In Pondicherry one person is dead, many people had got head injuries, some people got fractures and trees were uprooted on large scale, power supply had been snapped and coconut trees suffered extensive damage. According to the report received from Tamil Nadu seven people are killed there. Out of these, three people were killed due to the collapse of a wall and one other was crushed by the falling of a tree. There is also informations regarding other such incidents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, some parts of our country specially Rajasthan and Gujarat had been reeling under drought continuously for three years. Much affect of drought was also seen last year. According to our information the water level in reservoirs is much less than last year. Therefore, the situation today is very grave. Besides that, I had talks with the Chief Ministers of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The situation of these States is very grave.

On receiving the information in this regard the first possible action we have taken is that we have constituted an Inter Ministerial team. The team had undertaken the tour of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh and is touring

[Shri Nitish Kumar]

Orissa. We also have a proposal to send the team to Rajasthan and Gujarat to collect the entire information of drought there. We do not want to collect the information only, but sending a team there is first step in this regard. Earlier, these States were affected by flood and this year the worst flood hit State is West Bengal. Many other places other than West Bengal were also affected by flood. I must not fail to mention the name of any State, but many States were affected by this. Bihar was affected, Assam was also routinely affected. I had been to Andhra Pradesh. There was also affet in Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh. Some districts of Kamataka were also affected and a report about some other places is there too. Many States were affected by the flood. But the maximum destruction took place in West Bengal. It does not mean that the destruction which took place in other places can be taken lightly. Wherever people are suffering, the relief work, whatever possible should be started for them. The action should be taken for the reconstruction and restoration.

I had also visited Arunachal Pradesh where natural calamity struck before West Bengal. The incidents of Arunachal Pradesh was the fall out of the incidents in Tibbet. Cloud burst was reported in Tibbet which caused the destruction in Himachal Pradesh. The home state of Hon. Sangma ji also witnessed some destruction due to cyclone in the month of October. We have decided to send a Central team there. There is no doubt about it that proper action should be taken after the report is received about any place. A lot has been said about Bengal. As soon as the Hon. Prime Minister gave directions about Bengal we went there immediately.

Some Hon. Members alleged that we conducted aerial survey. However, in such conditions only aerial survey is possible. We went there with the entire team. There we held talks with the State Government. We met the workers of various parties and had extensive discussions with them also. The Chief Minister and other Ministers, alongwith the officers of various Departments who accompanied us did had extensive talks with the officers of the Union Government. Afterwards on being probed by the journalists about our assessment of the situation comprehensive reply was given.

Sir, it is a fact that it is not possible for the State Government of West Bengal to single handedly tackle the destruction caused there. We had uttered these words that such a situation when destruction caused in widespread the assistance at national level is necessary. That is what I said and all the people were present there. With regard to West Bengal, politics of many types

is seen both within and outside the House. I would like to tell Somnath Babu that there is no discrimination. Here Sudip Babu put forth his views, like you did. Besides that Ms. Mamata Banerjee also told us that West Bengal should get assistance on the basis of whatever assessment you have made from here. I don't think that it involves a matter of political discrimination and we, you and the entire House has seen that the people of all parties have spoken in this regard whether they belong to the National Democratic Alliance or to any other party. The Minister of Water Resources Sethi Saheb is sitting here and our friend from BJD party are speaking too. To give the reply of this question the president of the State Branch of our party is on the toes. There is nothing like that, people from TDP are speaking, people from Trinamool are speaking. People from BJP are also speaking. There is no single party which is not expressing their heart felt feelings in the House regarding the destruction which took place there and which is not highlighting the pain and suffering of people there. Therefore, first of all I would like to make it clear that the question of discrimination on political grounds by the Union Government does not arises in the matter of providing assistance.

21.00 hrs.

No matter which part of the country the destruction took place, the Union Government will shoulder its responsibilities.

Sometimes certain contentious issues crop up between Union and the States. I would like to humbly request that the issue of natural calamities should not be politicized between the Union and the States. Managing the relief work is the fundamental and statutory responsibility of the States and we cannot interfere with it. But it is also the duty of the Union to help them in their works. Thus, it is not right to say that nothing has been done and that no help has been provided by the Union. Union provided every possible assistance. We don't want to elaborate the relief given by the Centre. The Government data of destruction is also highlighting the same story as had been explained by Somnath Babu, because our data is the compilation of the data sent by the State Governments. We do not have any independent mechanism to collect data, but rely on the statistics furnished by the States. There is no politics involved. Help is provided through various means. As far as the question of West Bengal is concerned, the Minister of Finance of West Bengal came here and held discussions with Union Minister of Finance Shri Yashwant Sinha ji. Today, the Chief Minister of West Bengal met the Hon. Prime Minister and discussed the matter with him. I was

not present when the Finance Minister of West Bengal met the Union Minister of Finance Yashwant Sinha ji. I discussed over phone with Shri Yashwant Sinha ji. The information regarding every aspect and everything is being provided. It is a fact that the National Calamity Fund which was created on the basis of the recommendation of 10th Finance Commission does not exist today and there is no doubt about it that a new calamity contingency Fund has to replace it and in the transition period between these two stages in which the arrangements are not made the way they were made earlier to provide help at the time of any calamity. A new arrangement has to replace the old one. In the mean time there arise some problems. We want to assure you that when discussion was scheduled to be held in this House or in the other House tomorrow on the same issue, we were not going to raise any issue merely on the basis of figures provided by the Ministry of Agriculture. I had spoken to the Finance Minister before putting forth my views. I asked the big wigs in the Ministry that what are you doing? The question arises whether the Government helped the States as per their demand? It was not only disclosed in the House but at other platform also. In some of the cases, norms laid down, are relaxed or removed. Payment is released after obtaining utilisation certificate. In some of the cases, the relaxation is provided so that maximum funds may be credited in the account of the States so as to facilitate carrying out relief work and problem of liquidity in the form of ways and means does not arise. The Hon'ble Finance Minister informed me that the amount being spent by the State Government will be adjusted against the allocations to be made by the Central Government to the State Governments under National Calamity Contingency Fund shortly going to be created. Therefore, I want to assure you that I would not take much time of the House as I share all the worries. Our Ministry is continuously maintaining the things. Action is going to be taken on the creation of National Centre for Calamity Management according to the recommendation of 11th Finance Commission. Objective behind its creation is to enable the permanent centre to monitor natural calamities occurring in different parts of our country. Sufficient funds should be allocated to NCCF. But as long as such organisation is not constituted we would keep sending teams. As per old practice first a team used to tour affected areas than an inter-ministerial meeting used to be held under the chairmanship of Minister of Agriculture, which used to decide regarding quantum of funds to be provided as relief. Since today, such practice is no more in vogue, so what is the logic behind sending a team. This proposal was put to me for approval. I said that till new arrangements are made, a team should be despatched.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, inter-ministerial team should fully assess the situation and submit its report so that the amount can be released on creation of such a fund. Therefore, we continued old practice. There was a confusion, as to what is to be done. We contacted the hon. Finance Minister in this regard. Therefore, we want to assure you that National Calamity Contingency Fund will be created in this very session itself. An action plan is being prepared with regard to creation of National Centre for Calamity Management and other issues related to it. Soon it will be before you. Our endeavour is to create the fund first, rest everything can be taken up later.

Dr. Raghuvansh Prasadji asked about Bihar. I would like to inform him that Centre has no intention of holding back CRF share of Bihar. My concern is that the Government of Bihar should get its Central Share. Infact the Government of Bihar was required to open an account reportedly for CRF which they had failed to do. But, during this debate itself, I got an information from the Ministry of Finance that the Government of Bihar has taken action to open a separate account for CRF. My endeavour is to see that Bihar gets its Central Share at the earliest. Infact, the funds should have been released three to four months ago, but since the Government of Bihar belatedly opened an account, therefore the payment got delayed.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I never said that we released much more funds to the Government of Bihar than what was due. I often said that three fourth of the total share due to Bihar is to be released by the Bihar Government. Though we appreciate that this amount is inadequate to carry out relief measures. I have never expressed the desire to score a debating point over the Government of Bihar. I belong to a simple peasant family. Raghuvansh Babuji, as you know I did never say such things nor propagated such things. On the contrary, campaign was carried against me. By virtue of my belonging to a farmer's family, I am in the Government. I did never level baseless charges against the Government of Bihar or gave any statement of this kind to the press.

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH (Vaishali): Sir, Bihar's CRF share has not been released so far. Please expedite its release.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: I have already told CRF has not been released so far. The Government of Bihar was required to fulfill some formalities which they did not fulfill expeditiously. Since, now those formalities have been fulfilled the funds will be released soon.

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: CRF could not be released because of lethargy of the Government of Bihar and lethargy of Central Government lead to non-release of NCCF. So both the Governments have made the people of Bihar suffer. It should be stopped.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: The Central Government is not going to be lethargic. As I have assured you, now the funds will be released at the earliest.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): I know, he is so persuasive that it is very difficult to annoy or get angry with him. The question is that in July, the Action Taken Report was given. Since then, one Session was over. Until we have raised this issue, the Government has not even thought of bringing this law. What is the reason for delay? As Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh said, the other NCRF was abolished. But in place thereof, which has to come, has not been brought, although you have said that immediately we are bringing it. That is why we want to know.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Somnathji, I have spoken to hon'ble Finance Minister. Only the question of time was there. It would have been done after the report was placed in the House. The Hon'ble Finance Minister stated in the House that provision will be made in this very session. I am speaking on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance too. I am representing the Government but as far as this matter is concerned, I am particularly speaking on his behalf. He has assured that the report will be placed during this session itself and NCCF will be constituted during this session only. Based on the report of our team we will take necessary action. I want to assure drought affected States that no reports of starvation deaths have poured from any where.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: You should plead our case for some adhoc release. Adhoc release should be given.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Shri Somnath Babu may obtain complete details regarding the decision taken during the talks held between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister. I do not want to give those details in the House and waste more time.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: Atalji patiently listened only and did not utter anything. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Several issues were discussed. But whatever type of aid is required under Food for work scheme will be definitely given. If in any of the State or area, people are badly affected by drought are migrating in search of employment, then the Central Government would surely provide the desired help to the State Government. Every possible help will be given by the Central Government to the State Governments. Everyone of you know that natural calamities come uninvited. Several hon'ble Members expressed desire that there should be a permanent solution for all this. I don't understand floods can be prevented totally. And we can't even think of preventing natural calamities, such as earthquake or cyclone. Similarly, flood also cannot be prevented totally but we can surely prepare action plan to minimise the damage caused by it and whatever possible steps we can take in this direction, we would definitely march ahead. Just now what Shri Sangmaji had said was right. Definitely, Brahmaputra is a major river of the country. People of that area face a major problem concerning land erosion and it is to be seen to be believed. Take our case we are living in areas adjoining Ganga, so we understand their plight. We know now even the villages are washed away because of land erosion. All of us know that such issues and structural changes. To sum up such an arrangement should be made whereby the impact of natural calamity is minimised and it causes minimum damage even if non structural measures need to be taken in this regard. The House is aware that a High Level Disaster Management Committee has been constituted. This high level committee has divided natural calamities into five categories. It's report is expected by March end. After that, right from national level right down to village level, district level, Disaster Management Committees would be constituted and then we will take up the measures required to be taken. Several Governments are working on interim report. Thus we are prepared for that also.

Whatever it may be, at the end I would like to say that the Central Government is always prepared to meet any eventuality and would never shirk its responsibility of providing any sort of relief whatsoever may be possible within the resources.

With these words I conclude.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am sorry that he has made only some vague promises. The whole House has showed its tremendous concern for the damages caused in the State of West Bengal due to floods. Everybody supported our cause and I am obliged for that. But it is not that only West Bengal has suffered, many states have suffered due to natural calamities. Today, we are shocked to learn that a lot of damage has been caused in one day in the Union Territory of Pondicherry due to cyclone. Then, the State of Tamil Nadu has suffered again. There is a very serious situation in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Therefore, we wanted that the Prime Minister should also reply to this debate, because this does not come strictly under the purview of the Minister of Agriculture. But there is no response from the Government and only a vague reply has been given. We are not going to see a single paise being given as relief. He is a sweet-tongued Minister, but he has made only vague promises and assurances. Even though we respect, him, we are walking out in protest.

21.14 hrs.

At this stage, Shri Somnath Chatterjee and some other hon. Members left the House.

[Translation]

DR. RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: (Vaishali): Why be verbose simply release the funds to the States. We stage a walkout in protest.

21.14 hrs.

Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh then left the House.

[English]

SHRI PRAVIN RASHTRAPAL (Patan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we accept the reply given by the Minister of Agriculture, but before you came to the Chair, a suggestion was made by Shri Sangma and others that this is a national issue and so, the hon. Prime Minister should reply to the entire debate so that a comprehensive policy is evolved. We want your observation.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there anything from the Government?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): Sir, I respect what Shri Sangma has expressed. He has a point in saying that as far as natural calamities are concerned, they go beyond the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture.

But I have a small problem. You and he, as a former Speaker, will also understand that during a debate under Rule 193, the Minister has to make a final reply. It cannot be kept inconclusive for a reply by the Prime Minister.

At the most, what I suggest is that I will consult the Prime Minister on this issue. If he agrees, according to his convenience, he can make some kind of a statement on this subject during next week. But he cannot reply now. He can intervene. I do not have to tell you about the Rules because it is the Minister who replies. So, my request would be that please do not treat this debate as conclusive after this reply.

In the light of the discussion, I will request the Prime Minister to make a statement on this issue during the next week, that is, any time from Monday onwards according to his convenience. If the House agrees, I think, that is the solution.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members as has been mentioned by the hon. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, the hon. Prime Minister will make a statement, as desired by you, at his convenience later, that is, during the next week. Accordingly, the Short Duration Discussion concludes today with the reply of the hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Now, the House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow, the 1st December, 2000 at 11 a.m.

21.18 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on December 1, 2000/Agrahayana 10, 1922 (Saka)
