

18.22 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

[English]

Droughtprone districts in Bundelkhand region

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We shall now take up Half-an-hour discussion. Kumari Uma Bharati is to initiate the discussion. Kumari Uma Bharati is to initiate the discussion on the points arising out of the answer given on 29th March, 1990 to unstarred question No-2807 regarding drought prone districts in Bundelkhand region.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI (Khajuraho): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had to demand Half-an-hour discussion because I have raised several times the problem of drought in Bundelkhand during zero hour but the Hon. Minister has not given any reply to me till date. I had also given notice of a question in this regard which was admitted as unstarred question. In this regard I have a complaint to make against the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and his Ministry that the answer that I received was very strange. I have asked as to how many districts of Bundelkhand were drought effected. I would like to draw the attention of the Hon. Minister of Agriculture towards the answer that I received. I was surprised to read that answer because according to the information of Minister of Agriculture, Bundelkhand includes only the districts of Uttar Pradesh whereas the districts of Madhya Pradesh are also the part of this region and the centre of Bundelkhand is Tikamgarh, which is in Madhya Pradesh. But it was not mentioned. Then only I decided to raise this matter in the House through Half-an-hour discussion to apprise the House of drought condition prevailing in Bundelkhand. Presently several States of the country and many parts of Madhya Pradesh are affected by drought. I would like to point out that the Government of Madhya Pradesh had asked for Rs. 80 crore for drought relief but only a

sum of Rs. 37 crore was been given to it. Almost all the areas of Madhya Pradesh drought affected but our region is more affected.

Some districts of Madhya Pradesh also form part of Bundelkhand region in addition to the districts of Uttar Pradesh. I would like to point out that drought conditions are worsening there because of local circumstances. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to tell the Hon. Minister of Agriculture about the tragedy of that region before raising the issue of the drought condition. Bundelkhand is one of the most prosperous regions. In a way, there is no dearth of anything. The region has produced poets like Tulsidas, Chetak, Mathilisharan Gupta, warriors like Chhatrasal and Laxshmibai and litterateurs like Virndavan Lal Verma. Several rivers like Vor and Ken flow through this region. The mineral resources are in abundance there. The diamonds are still found in mines of Panna and these are being extracted from mines of Mhow also. There is no dearth of anything. But still this area remains neglected because it has had no representation in the Central Cabinet and nor did any person of this area get a chance to become the Chief Minister. There is no industry despite availability in abundance of mineral resources. Dams have never been constructed there. The drought conditions are so bad there that a couplet recur to my mind.

"Pandit tu to bola tha pashan badal jayega,
Aur Mulla tu bji bola tha Rehman badal jayega,
Ab bhi avsar hai samjh le, Varna tere Ish aur
Allah ko bhukha insaan nigal jayega."

This region is going to face similar situation. As I have said, almost every part of Madhya Pradesh and of other states are facing drought conditions about the condition of that area is worst because of peculiar circumstances. I feel that the Ministry of Agriculture has no information about drought affected districts of Bundelkhand region. Jhansi, Hamirpur, Band, Jalon and Lalitpur

districts of Uttar Pradesh and Tikamgarh, Chhatarpur, Panna, Damoh and Sagar districts of Madhya Pradesh from part of Bundelkhand region. The number of persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is very large in these districts. These are the landless people, who did not get land under land reform laws due to corruption. The big landlords and Zamindars had transferred the title of the land in the names of their sons, daughter-in-laws and grandchildren. That is why this situation is continuing. The persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and backward classes did not get land and they are illiterate also. Therefore they have to work in fields. They do the work of sowing, irrigation or harvesting but they do not get sufficient remuneration for their labour. They do not get sufficient remuneration for their labour. They are not able to make their both ends meet. When they do not get work in fields because of recurrence of drought, they begin to migrate to Punjab, Calcutta and Delhi. I met some persons in Punjab and asked them, whether there was a risk to their life? They replied even if they die there it would not be due to starvation. Migration shows upward trend.

Reports appear in the newspapers regularly that the dacoity menace is likely to reemerge. On this region because of recurrence of drought. The youth of that region is frustrated. That is why they are forced to adopt the path of crime. Those persons who could not migrate due to family circumstances, are going on the path of crime and it is happening in the entire Bundelkhand. The situation of drought is more severe there than in any other area. Therefore, a large number of people have no alternative but to work in the fields to make their both ends meet. When people do not get other means they will be forced to flee their villages. The drought has been occurring there for four years successively. Those people, who left their villages have not come back so far. Therefore, the villages of this region are becoming ruins. The situation will deteriorate further. We had tried to draw the atten-

tion of the previous state Government and the Central Government and we are trying to draw the attention of the present Government also towards it, but it seems that nobody has given any importance to this problem because this region has gone unrepresented in the Government. The people have been facing hardships but they were not able to raise their voice. Sometime ago, a foreigner came to India and while going back after touring the country he commented "India is a rich country where poor people live." It is due to economic disparities. This is the situation of that region.

There are former princes and zamindars in each village who have 300-400 acres of land. They are holding land by violating every rule and law. They have benami land in the names of their servants and slaves. The lease deeds are with them so that the servants or slaves may not claim their ownership on that land at any point of time. So, the persons belonging to Scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribe and Backward classes are being exploited. Actually Bundelkhand region has not got real independence so far and it will take time. Some people ask me why I have joined politics because I am more interested in religious discourses. I would like to say that I have joined politics to raise the voice of my region in the House because this area has been discriminated. The people like me attach more importance to the poor farmers, and those persons who have been ruined due to drought than to Ram Janam Bhoomi Temple to be constructed in Ayodhya. We feel something must be done for them. It is our duty to draw the attention of the Government towards their problems. There is a river named (Ken) which flows between the districts of Chhatarpur and Banda. Had the proposed Greater Ken multipurpose project been completed, that area would not have faced such a severe drought. But this project was thrown in cold-storage due to adverse report from Environment department. It is also in the air that this project was stalled due to some conflict between the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Thus, this project which would have been beneficial for many

[Kumari Uma Bharati]

districts like Chhattarpur, Banda, Panna, and Haripur is lying in the cold storage. Had this project been completed. Lalitpur district would have faced no drought. Similarly the work on orchha project is also incomplete in the absence of connivence of Uttar Pradesh Government. This project would have surely saved the districts like Chhattarpur Tikamgarh, Lalitpur and Jhansi from the problem and drought as indicted in the survey which was already undertaken. Again the Sujara bridge project which could have rescued the districts like Tikamgarh Chhattarpur etc. from the problem of drought was kept in cold-storage.

Therefore, I hold that the droughts is not simply a natural calamity and cause of its genesis lies on going neglect by central and state Governments also. This situation is the result of neglect on the part of the people's representative from that area. I have returned from there yesterday. Thousands of animals are dying there due to starvation. Though, human death has not been reported, as yet, but animals have died. While on a tour to Japan to have a review of situation of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, I saw that death of person was registered and the cause mentioned was the bomb explosion while the person in question was at that time in natal position. Therefore, I would like to say that though the people are not dying as yet, but they will die later due to scarcity of food and milk and malnutrition caused thereby. Some people have said that it could not attract the Governments attention as no one has died so far. How is it so? Why nothing less than human death attracts Governments attention? Why the Government is unconcerned about the death of animals? I would like to say that the main reason of labourers migration from there to Punjab, is chronic drought. Many people of Bundelkhand have been killed there by the terrorists. Had there been no drought in Bundelkhand region they would of have been forced to leave their homes and families to serve in a place so distant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, through you I

would like to ask as to how long would it take for the Government to rise to meet the situation and to take care of the drought-hit region? The fund of Rs. 37 crores provided region to meet the drought situation is not sufficient. The drought-hit areas of Bundelkhand would require at best an amount of Rs. 20 crores. There must be a permanent solution to this drought problem. In 1964, while I was just a child of 4 or 5 years age, there was a severe drought which had forced my own family members to eat the bark of the trees. I am afraid that the same situation may repeat itself once again. Whenever there is a drought, the condition of that area becomes pitiable, Mr. Speaker, Sir, its main reason is massive and indiscriminate deforestation which, reduces the respect, of rain. The people have been contesting elections for the last 40 years with the help of the money received illegally from the half of the money received illegally from the fellingard selling the frees of teak-wood in connivance with the corrupt officials. For fear of getting caught, they put those trees in the names of the poor people, so that while poor people are convicted, they may go set free. As a result even those paths have become unshaded which used to remain dark in daylight due to over arching frees. Therefore the free plantation and afforestation is a must for that area. This would remain a drought prone area till the projects like larger ken multipurpose projects, sujara bridge projects over Dhasan river and Orachha bridge over river Betwa are restarted and completed. otherwise, the people of Bundelkhand would be the worst victims, due to recovering droughts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, most of the people of Bundelkhand are either landless labourers or marginal farmers and they find it difficult to eke out their living. The drought of just one year is enough to starve them as they do not grow enough food to save for emergency. Thus the plight of the people of Bundelkhand is the creation of the earlier Congress Governments at the Centre, in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh as they did not care for this region and did no planning for it. These people are facing the bad situation created by these Governments. In

addition, the economy is unbalanced and bankrupt. I would like to convey to you that the people of that region have resolved to press their demands and they are determined to get their demands fulfilled. I had mentioned this problem to the Minister of Agriculture and Deputy Prime Minister and I had met him about it I also asked about the action being taken as the problem in those districts was very serious. I told him that hand pumps are not going to solve the problem. All the projects for that region end up as paper-projects and hand pumps cannot be seen there. While the statistics mention the number of hand pumps but actually no hand pump has been installed in any village. In this region there is a district like Tikamgarh which, you would be surprised to know, has as many as 7 thousand wells and 6 hundred ponds. I think that no district in India has so many wells and ponds. Despite all this, this district was the worst victim of drought. The reason is that neither the ponds nor wells have been repaired properly. Had this work been done, Tikamgarh would not have been affected by drought.

Chhattarpur district has been adversely affected as the majority population in the district consists of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people. The unbroken feudalism has brought about such a degeneration amongst them that they do not think of themselves as human beings. They think of themselves as animals. Their conscience has been suppressed too much. If the water is available in some wells there, then that well falls in the area of Upper Caste people and they cannot draw water from it. As a result they are forced to drink muddy water full of worms. We have often exhorted them to give up this wretched form of life devoid of any self-respect or realisation of their entity but it would take time to make them conscious of their true work. As these people are suffering these days I had to highlight the problems which they face. Many people have questioned the need for special treatment to this region where as the entire country is suffering from drought. I would like to say that this is so because this region is in worst condition in entire nation. It has perhaps

been most neglected and ill-treated region. No Chief Minister hailed from this region and this has added to the woes of this region as the Chief Minister and other Minister give more attention to their respective constituencies. Unfortunately, most of the people's representatives from here proved to be dumb and were unable to plead for the cause of the region. As a result it was entirely neglected and has not got even a railway-line. It appears that this is causing discomfort to some of my colleagues. They should feel the discomfort after all who has raised a voice about that area till date. Had anybody supported their cause, definitely there would have been an industry today in that mineral rich area, at least a dam would have been built in that area where so many rivers are flowing. There is no dearth of land had there been a proper distribution of the land. The people should not have been rendered landless there. I would like to submit that to do away with the injustice done to this area first of all a study team should be sent there. It should link into the problems of the people facing severe drought conditions. As far as possible maximum fund should be provided to the State Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh for undertaking relief works in Bundelkhand as certain districts of Bundelkhand fall in the territories of both the States. As regards building of dams for that area I submit that in order to tackle the problem of recurring drought situation Sujara Dam Project and Vetuwa Project should be undertaken.

Since I am not at all satisfied with the ridiculous reply given I am forced to raise this matter. I was wondering how the Ministry of Agriculture has become so ignorant as not to include the names of five districts in the Bundelkhand. I was at a loss what to do next.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, disgracing a little I would like to mention that if this injustice continues unabated, the day is not very far when the people of Bundelkhand will make a demand for separate Bundelkhand. How long they will remain annexed with Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. They are bound to raise their voice for separate State

[Kumari Uma Bharati]

so that they could shape it is their own style and are able to solve their problems by themselves. I am sure that in views of my humble submission something will be done for that area and I shall not have to raise this matter time and again during Zero Hour. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel as if the matters raised in the Zero Hour get vanished in vacuum. A number of times I have raised the question about the drought conditions prevailing there and have asked to pay attention towards this. Thousands of cattle are dying and lakhs of people are migrating from there but neither any appropriate reply was given to me nor any solution to this problem was suggested.

With these words, I conclude and hope that very soon certain measures would be adopted to solve this problem on permanent basis and sufficient funds will be provided for immediate relief and a study team will also be sent there to assess the situation.

[English]

SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM (Salem): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, drought, as mentioned by Kumari Umabhartiji, is actually not limited either to one State or one area, unfortunately, in our country. And I must endorse her observation about some foreigner to the effect that we are a rich country where poor people live. This situation is unfortunately becoming from bad to worse. She has very strongly brought forth the fact that one of the major reasons for drought and continuous drought in Bundelkhand area is the fact that deforestation took place. I think, it would be my duty also to bring to the notice of this House, thought you and to the Mover of this Half-an-Hour Discussion Kumari Umabhartiji that not only is deforestation nowadays done for the purpose of immediate gains, but it has also become part of a political payment for political pay offs. In other words, in certain areas in Madhya Pradesh, I do not think I need to mention it-which areas-we have seen heavy deforestation by local population. Unfortu-

nately, they themselves, not understanding what is the impact of it, are being encouraged by people in authority today to do this deforestation in order that they can survive economically and those who are in authority today can rise to more power.

Let me make it clear that this became the trend only in this election. Before this, it was never thought an election technique. It was the contractor who used to indulge in it. Now it has become election technique. Anyway, I do not want to go into the dispute

Who does it, is irrelevant. The fact that it has been done in a place, in an area in Madhya Pradesh which not only gives emeralds and diamonds, not only gives valuable minerals, but has rivers today which are having drought for over four years. I would like to know thought you, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, from the hon. Minister whether there is any method by which he can reclassify heavily drought-prone areas. My own district has this problem. We are called drought prone. That is, we are constantly looked upon as an area which will be in continuous drought. Are they going to declare as desert after we become full of sand only? Or would they give us a secondary status as desert at least so that the allocation that is given is increased?

I can see from the answer that was given in writing to the Unstarred Question by the hon. Minister that funds ranging from Rs. 15 lakhs to Rs. 18.5 lakhs per year per block was all that was allotted for these drought prone area programmes. One thing is very clear. The amount of money that is allotted, if one looks at it from the per capita point of views, is a party sum. Paltry is not the only word, if is insignificant. Will it really contribute in either alleviating the immediate sufferings or will it even contribute in terms of long term rejuvenation of the area? I have sincere doubts. I think we must have a good relook at this programme not only from the point of view of adding additional areas, but also whether the allocations will do.

I agree with the mover of the discussion

that it should come to a state of affairs where we have millions dying and drying due to drought and then you say it is no longer drought, it is famine and therefore from Rs. 15 lakhs you will increase it to Rs. 20 lakhs and think that you have brought a great revolution about. Let us not make a mockery of natural calamities.

Let me make one thing clear. Many a natural calamity is man-made. It is not immediate man-made; but it is historically man-made. One of the reasons for this, as I have stated, is that it is an admitted fact that most of the areas which are today drought prone, have become so because of heavy deforestation, excessive exploitation, lack of proper irrigation facilities and lack of proper planning, whether Ministers visit or do not visit. I am sure at least in the State of Madhya Pradesh the mover of this discussion can ensure that a Minister come into being in the State Government because after all her party is in power there and she should have no difficulty in ensuring that. If she needs any additional support from outside, we are willing to give it to her.

[Translation]

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: Ministers visit time and again. The Chief Minister paid visits too. But the Central Government is showing reluctance.

SHRI PAYRELAL KHANDELWAL (Rajgarh): Sufficient deforestation with your cooperation took place in the last few years.

SHRI P. R. KUMARAMANGALAM: What your Minister did is published in the newspaper. You may read it. Don't think we are unaware of what you do or what your Ministers do... (Interruptions).. I know Hindi, I have read it.

[English]

I will briefly try to bring to the notice of the Minister that the issue really is not whether X did it or Y did it. The issue is that the existing system, for either drought prone

area programme or for desert area programme, of allocation that you do on the per capita basis is not giving sufficient amount. Essentially from the point of view of the value of real money, if one looks at what was the value in 1960 and what is the value today, even now the Finance Minister would inform you that it has gone down by ten times. That is, today's ten paise has the purchasing power of one paise of 1960.

I think it is relevant and important that the Minister should reconsider changing the norms firstly; secondly changing the amount of allocation on a per capita basis. Thirdly please do consider regularly drought-prone areas. There are many which will come within that classification. Please give them a higher allocation and ensure that at least employment potential is created locally. Otherwise migration of labour which is a major problem would become a problem that is unmanageable and one of the causes for extremism would come into being. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI UPENDRA NATH VERMA): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this half an hour discussion relates to the unstarred question No. 2807 of 29th March, 1990. The hon lady Member, Kumari Uma Bharati had asked as to why Chhatarpur and Tikamgarh were not included in the drought prone area programme? The fact is that since the time this drought prone area programme has been launched these two districts have never been included in it. The reason being that both the districts do not fulfil the conditions for being included in the drought prone area. The criterion set for the purpose is the areas receiving less than 750 millimeter rain and having less than 20 per cent irrigated land, secondly, the areas receiving a rainfall between 750 and 1125 m.m. rainfall and having less than 10 per cent irrigated land neither of the districts fulfil these criterion nor the Government of Madhya Pradesh has so far

[Sh. Upendra Nath Verma]

[English]

recommended the names of these two districts for inclusion in the said programme.

KUMARI UMA BHARATI: A part of it lies in Uttar Pradesh as well, hon. Minister

SHRI UPENDRA NATH VERMA: Expenditure and allotment for districts Chhatarpur and Teekamgarh for drinking water supply is as follows:-

(in lakhs)

	Expenditure from October 1989 to March 1990	Allotment April 1990 to July 1990
1	2	3

C hatarpur

64.79

58.87

Teekamgarh

31.03

48.99

Expenditure on drought relief for the two Districts are as follows:

(in lakhs)

1989-90

1990-91

Chhatarpur

27.94

23.14

Teekamgarh

22.92

16.89

Expenditure on deepening of wells

In addition to the above
expenditure
(in lakhs)

	Expenditure from October 1989 to March 1990	Allotment April 1990 to July 1990
1	2	3
	1990-91	
Chhatrapur	12.00	
Teekamgarh	1.50	

[Translation]

So far as Bundelkhand is concerned, it is not an administrative unit either in Uttar Pradesh or in Madhya Pradesh. The administrative unit of is the sagar division in Madhya Pradesh and Jhansi division in Uttar Pradesh But on the whole the culture thereof is akin to what of Bundelkhand as stated by Kumari Uma Bharati. That they are analogues is true. I would like to inform the hon. Member that a national Committee for reviews of the drought prone area programme has been reconstituted. On the basis of the recommendation of this committee which of course will be made in consultation with the State Government concerned the areas will be included in the programme. This committee was set up in April, 1990 and Shri L.C. Jain, a member of the Planning commission is its Chairman. The committee has not submitted its report as yet. This committee has just started touring, it has visited two State so far and will visit the rise of the states. We are awaiting the report of the committee. Once the report is received and the State Governments are consulted, the matter will be decided accordingly.

As regards drought, earlier the State Governments used to write to the Central Government for help in case of drought or any other natural calamity and thereafter Central Government use to send study them there to assess the situation. The funds were allotted after the team returned with a clear picture of situation prevailing in that area. But since April 1, 1990 we have changed this system. We have created separate relief fund for very State. The State Governments can approach the Central Government for additional funds in case they have exhausted the funds already allotted for the purpose to take natural calamities. Rs. 37 crores are till left in the relief fund there and they have to pay it in four instalments. No proposal for its inclusion in the drought prone area programme has come from the State Government. This area will be included as drought prone if it fulfils the criterion recommended by the Committee constituted for the whole country.

SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: I have a point of order.

SHRI DEPUTY SPEAKER: There should be no point of order in it.

SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Mr point of order is that the hon. Minister has said that the Government of Madhya Pradesh had made a demand for Rs. 38 crore but the fact is that Rs. 80 crores were demanded. The Chief Minister made this demand to the Prime Minister. The hon. Minister should correct this information regarding the demand of Rs. 80 crores.

SHRI UPENDRA NATH VERMA: I said that there is still an amount of Rs. 37 crore in their relief fund which will be paid in four instalments. With regard to the inclusion of these districts in the drought prone area programme as demanded by the hon. Lady Member, I have stated that this can be done only if the two districts fulfil the criteria set by the committee constituted for this purpose after its countrywise tour and the subsequent consultation with the State Government.

KUMARI UMABHARATI: Would the set criterion undergo any change after the report of the committee is received. Tikamgarh and Chhatarpur are experiencing less rainfall continuously for the last three years. May be that there was an adequate rainfall for some year as per your figures for which these districts could not be declared as drought prone areas. But in view of the lack of rain fall for the last three years there these areas should be declared as drought prone areas now. (Interruptions)

SHRI UPENDRA NATH VERMA: With regard to the construction of dam, I may add that this work does not fall in the purview of my department. The Government of India cannot declare an area as drought prone at its sweet will. This is decided as per the criteria set for the purpose. The inclusion of these two districts can be worked out as per the criterion set by the Committee... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, not as yet. You may discuss it with the Minister later. The Minister has stated that a committee has been constituted to change the criterion. If I permit you, I will have to permit others too and this will set a precedent. It will be difficult to refuse others when they ask for it later. The Minister has already state that if required a discussion will be held.

[English]

The House now stands adjourned to re-assemble at 11 AM on Tuesday, the 15th of May, 1990.

19.05 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till
Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday,
May 15, 1990/Vaisakha 25,
1912 (Saka)*