

But this is going on everywhere. We have to produce fodder banks. Eighty per cent of our rural unemployment is located in drought prone areas, and preference has to be given to NREP and RLEGP to continue the benefits to the poor. We have to set up some sort of coordination or linkage between these various projects.

To Rajasthan, besides NREP and RLEGP we agreed to give foodgrains with which they could pay in kind for 10 lakh workers. Now, for what your Chief Minister did you accuse me, and not him. He went up to 16 lakhs and we had no foodgrains, and then he set you on me. *(Interruptions)*

When I went to Rajasthan last week, he told me: "I am asking for Rs. 6 crores...*(Interruptions)* Those people, your officers perhaps thought that perhaps I was the only guilty man." I said: "Sir, you got it from us. But you over-spent. Give us the over-spent money, because the Finance Minister and the Planning Commission are throttling us. They want that money to be paid back, because we paid it to you, and you do not know what the problem is. I thought this was the right time to tell you, and not earlier."

*(Interruptions)*

I will take only five more minutes, because Madam Minister of Parliamentary Affairs wants to take up the next item.

In 1984-85 crop year, drought affected only 12 States; in 1985-86 ten States, and in 1986-87 it is affecting 17 States. Flood also affected in 1984-85, 18 States, in 1985-86, 22 States and in 1986-87, 21 States.

Regarding relief also, I have got State-wise figures. If you want to have an idea, I can tell you; or otherwise, I will pass it on to you. The only assurance I give to Shrimati Geetaji is that she will never find us lacking, in what we do. Compared to other States i.e. to Congress-ruled States, we will perhaps do a little bit more for you, not to be accused by you. We will never discriminate.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: It is because Dr. Dhillon is there.

DR. G.S. DHILLON: Dhillon is just a small linkage in such a big chain.

These tables will also bring out that five States were affected by drought for three years. There are some chronic areas which get drought every year. It was said that these two or three districts i.e. Jaisalmer and Barmer should not be counted as part of Rajasthan when counting their problems and allocating funds. I have put your proposal to proper authorities, and I wish that your Chief Minister does not object to it, because we know that there are some chronic districts in Rajasthan which need special attention, and other areas which need less funds. But I thought that it was up to your Government especially, and it is for you to make them accept it. *(Interruptions)*

There are so many other problems, and so many Members spoke on them. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. RAGHUMA REDDY: You have forgotten Andhra Pradesh. You did not mention Andhra Pradesh *(Interruptions)*.

DR. G.S. DHILLON. Your Chief Minister invited me to dinner. After serving me a delicious dinner, he put this question of Rs. 600 crores. I was so helpless; and I just got into the car and came to the rest house.

I am so thankful to you all, and I really appreciate the suggestions given by you.

16.25 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE: DEVASTATING FLOODS IN ASSAM, BIHAR, WEST BENGAL AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

*[English]*

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House shall now take up discussion under Rule 193—item No. 8. Shrimati Kishori Sinha.

**SHRIMATI KISHORI SINHA (Vaishali):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am glad that the Calling Attention has been converted into a discussion under Rule 193 which will provide an opportunity to more hon. members to participate in this important subject. It is being discussed every year in this House.

Floods have become an annual visitation now despite several flood control measures announced by the Government. Those who live in flood affected areas know to their cost what it means when floods occur. The crops are damaged or washed away, sometimes twice a year, testing the tenacity of the kisan who sows seedlings twice, one after the other, only to find them all destroyed by swirling flood waters. People have to flee from their homes and take shelter often on roadside. Cattle die by the thousands, houses get damaged and collapsed, adding homelessness to the economic loss of crops and cattle. Even the normally better off are reduced to utter penury, depending upon relief. Floods claim lives of human beings and cattle. They damage roads and bridges, railway tracks and cause disruption of railway traffic. All life in the flood affected areas is totally dislocated. This is just part of the story. Floods in their wake bring pestilence like diarrhoea, cholera, malaria and other water borne diseases. As in all such cases the 37 per cent of people below the poverty line are the worst hit as all economic activities come to a dead stop, the roads being breached, the traffic having come to a halt. This is the scenario when floods come.

The picture this year too is grim and fearful. The reports are that floods have caused a damage to an area of about 23.4 lakh hectares and affected a population of 114 lakhs. Over 200 people have lost their lives. In Bihar alone 96 people are reported to be dead, the true death toll could be more because many areas are cut off totally. Over 432 crores worth of damage has been caused to property. All of this comes to top of much greater damage last year due to the same type of floods. Imagine the plight of the people of my area

who every year rebuild their homes and reacquire cattle only to see that in the next flood most of this is lost. It is living hell for our people. When we say that during the last 35 years average annual losses to crops alone would be of the order of Rs. 316.67 crores, we still do not comprehend the magnitude of the misery which figures cannot express. Their sorrow is something to be felt to be understood. This year, vast areas of Assam, West Bengal and Bihar are now being ravaged by floods heaping misery upon misery on the people living there. In Bihar alone several districts have been affected: Sitamarhi, East and West Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Madhubani, Samastipur, Sharsa, Madhepura, Khagaria, Nalanda and Munger. About 67 lakh people have been affected and damage to crops have been estimated to be of the order of Rs. 23.82 crores. What is more galling, there does not seem to be an end to this ordeal. How long should our people suffer like this?

I am not saying government is indifferent. The Government has been quite aware of the problem. As far back as 1954 we launched the national programme of flood control to cover 40 million hectares of land identified as flood prone. But after 35 years, what have we achieved? Just 13 million hectares or less than a third of the flood prone area have received some kind of protection.

At this rate, I am afraid, we may not cover even half the area that is flood-prone, by the end of this century. Even the flood protection measures already provided have not proved effective. It appears that they exist only on paper. For example, in North Bihar, a programme to drain flood waters through a system of canals was sanctioned in the First Five Year Plan. Thirty years later, the work has not yet started. This is the pitiable condition.

In 1976 the Government again constituted National Flood Commission. Most of the States have not implemented its recommendations even though a decade has passed.

The Government may have a point in saying that due to increased population pressure on the flood prone areas, particularly to a depth of one or two kilometres along the river banks, the intensity of flood damage has increased. But may I ask what happened to the Flood Plan Zoning Bill, a model of which was circulated by the Centre to the States in 1975? Till today not a single State has passed a similar Bill into law. Is it because the States do not have the political will to prevent people from encroaching on the flood prone but naturally fertile riverine land? Or is it an unpractical measure to ask people to shift once they are well established?

Everybody in this House, I think, would agree with me that there must be some sanctity to the promises that we make to the people. When it comes to the flood prone people like those in my constituency, the promises seem to be just lines written on water, to be forgotten once the floods abate. Did not the Government tell this very House in July 1980 that henceforward it would spend Rs. 300 crores annually "In a determined bid to control floods"? And what happened between 1980 and 1985? Even the projected provision was Rs. 1048 crores and actual still lower, much lower than the promised Rs. 300 crores a year. In the last 35 years we set apart Rs. 2000 crores for flood protection but we have suffered losses of over Rs. 10,000 crores due to floods and have had to spend Rs. 300 crores annually on flood relief. At the end of this tunnel of suffering there is no light, no ray of hope that floods will not come next year. In fact, the prospect of the same devastation stares us next year too as it has happened this year, as it happened last year also.

That is why I insist that we have a second look at our response to floods. Our flood protection measures are now proved to be inadequate, unscientific and unable to hold the flood over the long term. For instance, in Assam, some 50 per cent of the river Brahmaputra has embankments against floods. But there is no respite from floods. The plain fact has to be admitted

that there is onrush of more water during the rainy season than what our rivers can hold; this is compounded by snow melting due to high solar radiation during summer.

We have also problems peculiar to each river, and to each area of a river. The vast expanse of the river Brahmaputra with its changing course due to short length and high pressure of water mixed with boulders and silt, make all normal methods of flood protection useless.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA (Sangrur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, a serious speech is going on and the hon. Minister is not listening.

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): You are listening and that is enough.

[*English*]

SHRIMATI KISHORI SINHA: In Bihar, the water level of the Ganga is said to rise between Buxar and Mokameh by as much as nine metres in the monsoon thereby effectively sealing off the mouth of numerous tributaries precisely at the time these tributaries are flowing with water. Partly this happened due to the rise in the river bed. So, embankment or no embankment, floods are bound to come. So, the problem has to be tackled in a different manner.

Even where embankments have been constructed, either they are faulty and give way under pressure of water or they further prevent the spread of silt which accumulates and makes the rivers shallower every year causing the flood waters to breach the embankments. All the ingredients of water flow—the monsoon precipitation, the snow melt, the upper air movements—all these are variables. Any flood control measure has to take them into consideration.

And lastly, no system will work unless we provide inter-river connections, more

[Shrjmati Kishori Sinha]

particularly to tap water from the north and divert it to the south.

All this analysis leads to just one conclusion. A Centrally sponsored and implemented long term scheme of inter-connecting river links and barrages and canals, and strategic embankments with regular dredging of rivers on one hand and promoting afforestation on the other, is a must.

I strongly suggest that the Prime Minister should initiate an integrated Technology Mission for this and also constitute a National Flood Control Authority with inter-state powers to implement this Technology Mission. This Technology Mission should constitute an expert committee which will construct a mathematical model for flood control taking into consideration all the variables on the basis of data projection for the river basin system. To obtain this data, the river basins should be dotted with telematic data collection platforms linked through a satellite to a central control system, which will, in association with satellite imageries, issue flood control warnings on a regular basis

The comprehensive flood control system should, on the basis of data collected, prepare a plan of strategically located reservoirs, embankments, drainage and irrigation canal systems plus inter-river linkages aimed at total flood control. The mathematical model of the river systems I suggested, would help the technology mission to plan this

The mission should also include annual plans for dredging the Ganga and its tributaries and collection and use of the silt supplemented with afforestation of the catchment areas. It should also include construction of flood shelters in high grounds and should have plans of action ready at all times to shift people and cattle to these grounds so that even where floods become inevitable, the loss could be minimised

Once the Technology Mission prepares this plan in the next six to nine months, it should be the duty of the National Flood Control Authority to implement these measures. The States could pass laws to enable the Authority to implement them overriding the State Governments to help quick action. Even as the main reservoirs etc are under construction, work could be started on the chain of flood shelters that should dot all flood prone areas. The funds needed for this must be found. Otherwise, I caution this House that it would once again be a wasted efforts in repeating relief to the flood affected, helping neither them nor the country. I want a Government assurance on the constitution of this Technology Mission and the National Flood Control Authority.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore): I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the flood situation which is a perennial problem of our country. You will notice this year that almost entire Assam, many parts of West Bengal, some parts of Bihar and a large portion of Jammu & Kashmir are in the grip of torrential floods. Due to erratic monsoon of the current year, you can see that many States have suffered the unprecedented drought of the century surpassing all its previous records. It has been predicted by some old men of 80 to 90 years that such type of severe drought could be followed by rains afterwards, which may cause high floods all over the country.

I am just citing one example from my own constituency. There were no rains since February this year. So, the farmers could not have any paddy operations. On 17th and 18th July, 1987, within twelve hours, there was eighteen inches of rainfall which caused floods in almost every river in the State and also disrupted the road and communications system, etc. With a ray of hope the farmers had sown the paddy seeds and prepared the seedbeds to raise seedlings for transplantation, but since then till today, there has been no rain and ultimately the seedlings and the paddy crops are dying. This drought may bring heavy rains ..(*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jena, we are discussing about the flood situation. So, you take as little time as possible and leave more time for the Members from the affected States. That will be more appropriate. Your State is not affected by floods. So, my only request is that you take as little time as possible and leave the rest for the Members from the affected States.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA: For your kind consideration, I would like to submit that the hon. Minister, while making a statement on our Calling Attention Motion, had also mentioned about Orissa. There was flood in Orissa but now it is in the grip of severe drought.

SHRI NARAYAN CHAUBEY (Midnapore): He has no flood, he has drought.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Another request is that please confine yourself to flood situation, not to drought situation because we have already discussed about the drought situation.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA: I have not said about the drought situation, I was just citing one example that it may bring heavy floods after this severe drought. This is the prediction of some of the old people of 80-90 years of age. That is what I have said. Four or five States have been affected by floods. Every year we are spending hundreds of crores of rupees because of floods in one part of the country or another, but till today we have not been able to control the floods, not even five to ten per cent of it. Without going into the figures for the previous years, I am just mentioning the figures of 1986 monsoon year when 74.7 lakh hectares of crop area was severely affected and the population affected was about 555.2 lakhs, whereas in the current monsoon year, up to tenth of August, the crop area affected, according to the Government figures, is 23.4 lakh hectares and population affected is 114.4 lakhs. The total damage in 1986 monsoon season was to the tune of Rs. 3,750 crores and the human lives lost were 1,200. This year, till 10th August, 1987, the total value

of damage is Rs. 432 crores and the human lives lost are to the tune of 217. This must have exceeded by now because, as we see, the severity of floods in Assam and West Bengal has not reduced, rather it is increasing and the army has been called to help the civilians in rescue and relief operations.

The reasons of floods are many. The floods are not only because of heavy rains but also there are many other factors. I do not want to go into that. We have to check deforestation from the river basins and their catchment areas, check silting of reservoirs, stop scouring and erosions of river banks, to provide strong and stable drainage and cross drainage system, to make the canals and fields channels strong, to ensure flood and saline protection embankments so that it may not be exposed to any type of flood, heavy rains and saline inundation and cause floods because of breaches of those embankments. Besides, we have to take up the excavation and renovation of river beds, specially river mouths which are already silted up. But unfortunately, none of these measures could be effectively executed. Even though some measures have been taken but not as per requirement. This is due to constraint of resources or due to Planning Commission giving less importance to flood control measures. We are suffering. This has been so for years together resulting in wastage of millions of crores of rupees of national wealth.

We all know, construction of reservoirs has been recognised by the experts to control floods. But these reservoirs which were completed are going to be silted day by day. I am quoting Hirakud—one of the prestigious dams. If this type of silting is allowed, within 40 years the entire dam will be of no use, as opined by experts. This type of silting may please be checked immediately of all the dams in the country.

Major and medium irrigation projects, specially multi purpose projects like flood control, irrigation and power generation are taking a long time. Long time means,

[Shri Chintamani Jena]

they are behind three to four times than the scheduled time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please conclude. You may take two minutes more.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA I am trying to conclude within five minutes.

Because of delay in completion of the projects within stipulated time, the estimated cost is rising day by day. Sometimes it is going up four to five times. There should be time bound programme to complete the project.

In this connection I would like to quote relevant portion of the speech of our beloved first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. This he said while hoisting the National Flag on 15th August, 1947. When we are observing 40th anniversary of our Independence Day we should recall what he had told

"The government of India have in hand at present several vast schemes for developing river valleys by controlling works and developing hydro-electric power. These will lead to all-round development. These schemes are thus basic to all planning and we intend to complete them as rapidly as possible so that the masses may profit.

All this requires peaceful condition and the cooperation of all concerned and hard and continuous work. Let us then address ourselves to these great mutual wrangling and conflicts. There is a time for quarrelling and there is a time for cooperative endeavour. There is a time for work and there is a time for play. Today, there is no time for quarrelling our people. Today, we must cooperate with one another and work together, and work with right goodwill."

In this connection, we should feel that after 40 years of our independence, we have not able to do much in the matter of flood control in our country. The Minister of Water Resources, stated on 19th March 1987 in reply to a question by Shrimati Jayanti Patnaik that the strategy proposed in the Seventh Plan for flood control is to give priority to completion of the continuing schemes spilling over from the Sixth Plan, (ii) to execute emergency schemes in vulnerable areas, (iii) to aim at the provision of adequate funds for the proper maintenance of completed works, (iv) to prepare master plans for flood management (v) to promote enactment of legislation for flood plain zoning on the lines indicated in the model bill circulated in 1975, (vi) to intensify the soil conservation and afforestation activities, and (vii) to expand the existing flood forecasting network to cover more vulnerable areas. The hon Minister also said that Rs 947.39 crores have been provided out of which Central Sector component is Rs 149.93 crores and the balance is from States outlays. The flood control schemes are planned, implemented and maintained by the State Government/Union Territory Administrations within the total approved Plan outlays in the light of relative priorities adopted.

Sir, with this meagre amount of Rs. 149.93 crores earmarked for flood control systems, how can we prevent the floods taking place in a vast country like ours? No doubt it is a State subject. A model Bill was circulated in 1975 to all the States for flood plain zoning and necessary measures to be taken. But none of the States could bring forward a Bill and enact it into a law except Manipur. This shows the lack of sincerity among the States to have flood control system in our country. This should be looked into and leaving everything to the States to their responsibility is not enough because the ultimate user is the whole nation. It is our national wealth and our national economy will grow very rapidly.

Sir, I will come to my State. Sir, many of us know that there is high flood in Brahmaputra river because the river-bed has been silted up for which the Government should

take steps immediately. Similarly, in the case of Subarnarekha and Budhabalanga rivers, in my State, the mouths of these rivers have already silted up and causing high flood in the vast adjoining areas. Shri K.L. Rao, the eminent Engineer, had already opined that the river mouth should desilted periodically and should be cleared so that the flood water can go and join the sea very easily. But this has not been done so far. In Subarnarekha river, there is a multi-purpose project which has been established with the goodwill, good wishes and cooperation extended by the Centre. They have started with World Bank loan and World Bank finance and the Subarnarekha multi-purpose project is going to be executed. But it has been delayed due to land acquisition and other things. I would request the hon. Minister to look into it. This is an inter-State project and the States of West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa should come together and complete this project which would help flood control in the whole area.

Similarly, in the case of Brahmaputra, in the case of Subarnarekha, in the case of Ganga, these are known as treacherous rivers and due to frequent soil erosion, people suffer the most. Due to scouring and soil erosion, the river changes its course overnight. Therefore, soil conservation measure should be given top priority. Construction of spur to check soil erosion is found to be not practicable as the river changes its direction, course overnight and heavy amount to spent on those construction projects. Therefore, the entire amount will be wasted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri V.S. Krishna Iyer —not here. Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura): At the outset, I extend my heartfelt sympathy towards the millions of people who are suffering under the wave of flood in the States of Assam, Bihar and West Bengal. Since many Members will be speaking, I will concentrate my submission mainly on West Bengal.

Now in West Bengal, there are two waves of flood. In the first wave, these districts on the North side, namely West Dinajpur, Malda, Jalpaiguri, the plains of Darjeeling and Cooch Behar have been affected. This has already created a very serious problem to which, I will come later. But from the 10th of August, another set of severe rains actually created havoc and vast problems among these districts. Now, the district of West Dinajpur is like a vast sea of water with a few blocks here and there like islands, if you see from the air. I was visiting the Writers Building, our State Government headquarters and seeing the frantic efforts being made for air dropping and getting helicopters because West Dinajpur cannot be approached by any other route; neither by road nor by rail. This is the situation. Almost all the blocks are affected and mainly Raiganj, Banshihari, Gangarampur, Tapan, Kaliaganj, Itahar are worst affected. The headquarters of the district, Balurghat is also under knee deep water. Now the problem is, how to reach Balurghat and how to reach the interiors of Balurghat or West Dinajpur from Calcutta or from their neighbouring districts and how to reach Balurghat itself. This has posed a very serious problem in the second wave of flood. All the rivers are still rising in that district.

Malda is another district where we have second round of flood. Incidentally, I should also report that the National Highway No. 34 is also under knee deep water in most of the places.

17.00 hrs.

Two bridges also are washed away. In Malda, the situation has been very complicated due to the dangerous rise of Ganga, river Mahananda and Foolhar which are tributaries of Ganga and which are having tremendous rise and already the district headquarters is water-logged to a great extent. All these blocks Bamangola, Gajole, Habibpur, Ratna, Manikchak, are also under water.

In this connection, I should point to the

[Smt. Geeta Mukherjee]

Minister for Irrigation that in the Farakka barrage, for strengthening the left bank of Ganga which is terribly eroding the bank, earlier it was decided by the Technical Committee that this bank will be particularly strengthened and that job was to be completed before monsoon. Unfortunately, that was not completed. Now the situation is that so much erosion is already there that the State Government is trying to give a ring-bund quickly with Rs. 40 lakhs. Rs. 10 lakhs have already been given for that. But it is very difficult at the moment. Heaven forbids, if it happens like this, if Ganga breaches the left bank, whatever is left of Maldah, will be a catastrophic affair. Nobody can prevent. I am sorry, if that happens, you will be responsible because strengthening could have been done. This is nothing new. At Manikcha Ganga is eroding for a long time. Therefore, this problem of Ganga erosion must be taken up by the Government seriously in the future also.

There were flash floods also in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, as I had told earlier. Had it not been possible to construct Tista barrage by the West Bengal Government it would have serious consequences for Jalpaiguri. But to construct this Tista barrage in one year 70% of our annual budget for irrigation was eaten up. Tista takes 70% and the rest of West Bengal is only 30%. This is the situation with funds, about flood control and irrigation. But had we not been able to do that in Tista barrage, then Jalpaiguri district would have been very much more affected doubtlessly. But what happened is, due to incessant rains, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar are also affected. Already, 46 lives are lost altogether in North Bengal and besides, many are reported missing. Deaths of cattle is estimated to be already 250 before this second flash floods. Total population affected is 30 lakhs and the total area affected is 3,000 sq. KM. Before the second flash of floods, our West Bengal Government opened 1,500 relief camps where 70 lakhs of people had already taken shelter.

Now imagine, with this second wave, that I described, what is going to happen, what dimension the relief work has to take, if the first flash flood has already meant 70 lakh people in the relief camp. Even then our Government were trying to push up the relief work. Already in the first floods, more than 30 lakhs of people were coming to the relief camps and with this second wave, as I said, nobody knows how many will be coming, because most of the places are still marooned. In most of the places, people are marooned in those districts.

In this situation, naturally our Government are stepping up their efforts. But it goes without saying that the efforts will have to be stepped up very much more. In this background, the money position of our State is like this. The margin money that is lying with our State—according to the 8th Finance Commission—to meet the natural calamities is Rs. 11.75 crores. When it is spent, we will have to get another Rs. 11.75 crores from the Central Government. Sir, you please see the situation. Before the second flood started, Rs. 8 crores have already been spent. Therefore, it goes without saying that even with all the Rs. 23.50 crores that is our part of the margin money lying with us and the part of margin money that is due from the Central Government, even that will not at all be enough to meet the situation for both relief and rehabilitation.

Sir, with regard to our immediate problems like the availability of relief materials, I would like to point out that we need polythene sheets very much. Supply of this item by the IPCL in Calcutta is not enough. We have to get more polythene sheets from Gujarat. So, the Central Government should see to it that Baroda sends very much more quickly.

Regarding foodgrains, I would like to say that the foodgrains position must immediately be strengthened as far as relief operations are concerned. Medicines should also be rushed to the affected areas. Further, for taking up the immediate relief operations, we must get back the



margin money that is lying with the Centre. Rehabilitation requires a lot to be done. Construction of bunds, roads, buildings and giving subsidy to the people who have been rendered homeless, and construction of homes for the coming crop season—when the need arises—agricultural inputs, loans for agricultural operations—all these are to be guaranteed and with this Rs. 23.50 crores, all these cannot be done. Therefore, I would request the Central Government to immediately send a Central Team to see under what condition the five districts of West Bengal are existing. I would request that more grant should be sanctioned. I have given advance thanks to Dr. Dhillon when he said that if a drought comes to West Bengal, then the Central Govt. would be favourably partial towards it and not the other way round. Now, I would request that the words must match with the deeds. Already, the flood has played havoc there. Therefore, I think that the Central Government should immediately make preparations so that apart from this margin money, the money that is due to us, we can get substantial shares from the Central Government for meeting the situation.

I would like to point out another aspect. A lot has been said about the people living on the river banks, roads etc. etc. They are very good points. There is another aspect of the matter also. There are certain projects which need to be taken up promptly. For example there is the *Tangan* river, one of the main rivers in the *Malda* district. There is a scheme for *Tangan* pending for a long time i.e. since 1967. The scheme has been well worked out. But, as I said earlier, the *Tista* barrage took 70 per cent of our irrigation funds. Naturally, however much our effort, we could not take up the project of *Tangan* which needs to be taken up. Like *Tangan*, there are many other projects in these areas, small and medium, which really, if flood has to be controlled, have to be taken up seriously. Unless we get more assistance from Centre for irrigation and flood control purposes, it is quite impossible for the State to meet the entire situation.

With regard to the Ganga, I would like to point out that in this area one of the reasons for floods would be the Ganga's left bank, which is constantly eroded. The Ganga's erosion problem, we have been taking up for a long time with the Central Government. Unless the Central Government take it more seriously, it will be very difficult in future because that again, along with ring bunds and what not, will eat up the rest of our irrigation budget and the whole of South Bengal will be like this—sucking the thumb—because there are already very serious problems there. Therefore, this need immediate attention.

As I have already said, immediately a Central team should be sent there.

About Bihar, our friends will be speaking; I am not going into that. About Assam, I want to point out only one thing. I am not going into the extent of damage, the need for assistance and what that Government wanted. My friends from Assam will mention those things, though I also know the situation. But I want to stress one thing with regard to Assam. Everybody knows that the *Brahmaputra* is both, in a way, a blessing and also a great cause of distress when floods come to Assam. The *Brahmaputra* has been taken over by the Government of India by an Act of Parliament. But the funds that have been provided to the *Brahmaputra* Board are very meagre to meet the problem of flood control. Therefore, I request that more funds be provided to the *Brahmaputra* Board. If Assam's flood problem is really to be tackled, then the *Brahmaputra* Board has to be given much more money.

I hope that the other areas will not be engulfed by floods. But to meet the situation in the areas that have already been flooded, I request the Central Government to come out with much more liberal assistance than hitherto to reduce the miseries of the people there.

[Translation]

SHRI HARISH RAWAT (Almora): Mr.

[Shri Harish Rawat]

Chairman, Sir, I express my sympathies for the flood-affected people and urge the hon. Minister to provide adequate assistance to the affected States. These States should be given adequate and timely assistance.

SHRI VIJAY KUMAR YADAV (Nalanda): The Bihar Government is not doing anything. What can be done in this regard?

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: The same is the state of affairs in West Bengal.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: It is not so in West Bengal.

SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Yadavji is saying that the Governments of Bengal and Bihar are not able to cope with the situation and they require more assistance. I was going to plead for West Bengal only. *(Interruptions)*

Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Centre provides assistance in the flood affected areas and the State Governments also contribute to it but these funds are spent after the floods have already created havoc. Nothing is done to prevent them. Whatever amount is given for flood relief, I am speaking on the basis of my experience in Uttar Pradesh, the most of it is pocketed by officers who are responsible for controlling floods. It is shown that cement bags, boulders etc. put to check floods have been washed away. No account is maintained in this regard. On the one hand, floods damage life and property and on the other the funds allotted for flood relief works also go waste. The flood prone areas are already known. But in Bihar, those areas which are usually dry and where a lot of construction work has been done, have also been affected by floods this year and it should be investigated as to why it has happened. As regards the areas where floods are an annual feature, efforts should be made to see that minimum damage is caused by floods. Floods come every year and if we waste

crores of rupees on relief works it will be meaningless.

Secondly, most of the rivers which are flooded, originate either from Nepal or from the Himalayas. By simply providing relief and without going into the root cause of the problem, we will not be able to prevent floods. For this purpose, steps will have to be taken to stop deforestation and for conservation of soil in Nepal. Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are affected by floods every year. Unless a programme for afforestation and soil conservation is implemented on a large scale in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, we will not be able to control the flooding of the plains of Uttar Pradesh and our dams will go on facing problems. Rivers are filled with silt and crores of rupees have to be spent to desilt them. As the level of water increases in rivers due to silt so the threat of flooding remains. It is essential that the work in connection with the soil conservation and afforestation in the hill areas should be treated as a national necessity and should not be left to the State Governments. For this purpose should be released by the Planning Commission from the central exchequer. If we undertake afforestation and soil conservation work on large scale, the life span of our dams will also increase. I want also to request that those poor people who often settle down on both sides of rivers, do not get any warning about the approaching floods. Inhabitation on lands to a certain limit on either side of rivers should be banned. It can be controlled. Until we formulate a national plan to control floods and allocate funds for this purpose, floods will continue to ravage us every year and we will continue to discuss it every year as we are doing today. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI V.S. KRISHNA IYER (Bangalore South): Mr. Chairman, Sir, for seven days we discussed about the drought situation. Of course, the situation is really very very serious and unprecedented. Similarly, it has become a regular practice in this

House that every year we discuss about the droughts and the floods.

Floods are occurring every year in almost the same places—in Assam, Bihar and Bengal. In southern states very rarely it occurs. I remember very well that when the Hon. Minister was the irrigation Minister, while replying to the debate two years back on the Irrigation Ministry, he had said that the Government had spent more than Rs. 6000 crores for flood relief works. If we had spent that amount for some permanent works we would have certainly prevented the floods once for all. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what are the permanent plans the Government of India has to prevent recurring of such floods. In Brahmaputra river floods come every year. Everyday over the last two months there is not a single day on which television, radio and newspapers have not reported about the flood situation in Assam. This has become a perennial feature. I would like to know what steps the Government is taking to remove the sufferings of the people in Assam. The Chief Minister of Assam had issued a statement the other day. He was not happy or even prepared to participate in the Independence Day celebrations because he has been seeing with his own eyes the sufferings of thousands of people who have been uprooted and property worth crores of rupees has been damaged.

In early July he had asked the Government of India for a minimum assistance of Rs. 140 crores towards first flash floods. What is the reply from the Government of India? The Government of India gave a assistance of only Rs. 3.5 crores. Assam Government has already spent over Rs. 10 crores towards flood relief works. Similarly during the last October floods damage to crops and property is more than Rs. 200 crores and the assistance that was given by the Government of India is only Rs. 12 crores. I am surprised at the assistance given by the Government of India. It touches only the fringe of the problem. How can you expect the State Government

to function effectively? All the development works have come to a standstill. Assam Government is headed by youngsters. They feel frustrated. So I would like to know from the hon. Minister and request him to do something.

17.22 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Sir, only yesterday the hon. Minister along with the Chief Minister had flown over the flood affected areas of Bihar. After a survey he said that the position in Bihar is very very grim.

Sir, ours is a peculiar country. Whereas in some parts of the country we have severe drought in other parts we have floods. The flood situation is so serious that Army and Navy had to be called for the help and rescue of the flood stricken people. So I would request the Government of India to treat floods in the same way as drought situation. Floods should be treated on war-footing. More than 100 members have taken part in the drought debate but now simply because we are having two hours discussion on floods the Government should not get the impression that the flood situation is not serious. In West Bengal more than 2½ million people have been affected. In Bihar more than 1 million people have been affected. It is high time that Government of India must come out with a plan of action just as we have plan to meet the drought situation.

I would urge upon the Government of India to come out with a plan of action. I request the Hon'ble Minister that it should not just be routine reply which has been given by the Central Government all these years. It should be a concrete programme.

You know that particularly in the Brahmaputra valley, the floods are perennial. Therefore, all urgents steps should be taken so that the floods do not occur. That is very necessary. What is required is financial assistance.

[V.S. Krishna Iyer]

Sir, you know that we have got Brahmaputra Board. I read from the newspapers that the first Master Plan report of this Board has been received. I would like to know what action has been taken on that. I learnt from one of the Hon'ble Members from Assam that no action has been taken on the first report. So, what is the use of having a separate independent board like the Brahmaputra Board. Sir, I urge upon the Government that mere platitudes will not help the people of Assam. They have lost confidence in all of us and in the Government of India. You must try to mitigate the sufferings of the people. They feel discriminated against. The people of Bengal are also feeling like that.

Sir, you know the resources of the State Governments are very limited. They can't print notes whereas the funds of the Central Government are flexible. If the Central Government does not come to the rescue of the States, who else will? If the father and the mother do not take care of their children, who else will? So, Sir, I request the Hon'ble Minister to study the whole thing carefully. I am sure he is going to tackle this problem on a permanent basis. That's what I request. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS (Tezpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, it appears that Nature is in a state of rebellion against this country because while we see extensive drought conditions in large parts of India, we also see, at the same time, flood situation in other parts of India. We have seen devastating floods in Assam, Bihar and West Bengal. The total number of deaths due to floods so far is about 150. Thousands of hectares of crops have been damaged. Thousands of houses and cattle-heads have been washed away and lakhs of people are on the streets. Roads and rails have been disrupted almost everywhere.

Sir, I am not speaking much about Bihar and West Bengal because my friends from

these areas will speak on that. To cut short my time, I confine myself to Assam. Nevertheless I must say that in Bihar, the flood has affected the whole of north Bihar including cities like Patna, Katihar and even Darbhanga. In West Bengal, the entire district of Cooch-Bihar and West Dinajpur have been affected by floods. Naturally the situation in those areas is serious. In Assam, we are facing one of the worst floods this year. Not that this is the first flood that we are facing. Here every year we are facing the floods.

Here, every year, we are facing the floods. I will come to that subject. This is one of the worst because practically the whole Brahmaputra valley has been inundated by flood waters or rain water this time by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Dibrugarh town, the second most important town in Brahmaputra valley, has been threatened. Government has asked the jail authorities to take steps to remove the inmates of the jail to other areas and also the Assam Medical College to remove the indoor patients to other areas. It has not been done but Government have passed orders to take such steps to be in readiness in case the Dibrugarh town is affected or eroded by floods. That shows how serious the flood situation is. The Army had to be called out not once but several times.

The total extent of damage has not yet been quantified. I would like to know something from the Hon'ble Minister what is the total extent of damage so far caused by floods in Assam.

I hope they have got some idea about it. The immediate need is relief and rehabilitation and I need not explain this. There is need for extensive repairs to damages caused to roads and rails and supply of seeds, seedlings and fertilizers to the peasants so that at least they may prepare for the next rabi crop and maintain supply line of food and other essential articles as also medicine to these areas.

I may point out that in Assam, Bihar and

West Bengal, a large number of areas have been completely cut off even by road links and relief measures cannot reach them. Yesterday, the Minister himself saw this in Bihar. Some steps should be immediately taken to restore the road links to those areas where relief is to be sent. The Minister of Water Resources very kindly visited Bihar and he saw the devastation for himself. But why has he not visited Assam? What crime have we committed? Is it not his duty to go there? The Minister for Agriculture went there; the Minister of Water Resources should also visit Assam as also West Bengal and see for himself the damages caused in those States. That is his responsibility.

The financial assistance so far given to Assam is wholly inadequate as my friend, Shri Krishna Iyer just now said. I would urge upon the Central Government to give adequate financial assistance to meet the situation. The assistance so far given is not adequate at all. I hope the Minister in his reply will come forward to say that he is giving adequate financial assistance to Assam, Bihar and West Bengal, the States which are suffering from floods.

At the same time, there are reports that in earlier years, some State Governments—I do not want to name them—did not make proper use of the assistance given by the Centre and diverted funds for other purposes, for other reasons. I hope the Central Government will see that this time no such thing happens in any State whosoever may be in power in those States.

The basic question is: Why these floods in Assam and other places? Shri Krishna Iyer and Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee also mentioned that. Why these floods causing losses of crores of rupees every year? Apart from sufferings to lakhs and lakhs of human beings, loss of cattle and crops, the overall loss runs into crores of rupees every year. What is the cause? What is the reason? The basic cause is Brahmaputra river and its turbulent tributaries. Unless we control this river and its turbulent tribu-

taries, this phenomenon will be there every year causing huge loss to the nation and people. This is the most important thing. This river and its tributaries not only cause floods every year, what has become frightening today is the erosion of cities, villages and towns and affecting tea gardens also. I do not know what will Assam be after some years. May be it will be in the midst of this river itself if the erosion is not controlled. I have drawn the attention of Shri Shankaranand several times to this fact that this erosion has become more and more serious in Assam because of the Brahmaputra river and its tributaries. I hope, they will try to tackle it.

We are told that the Brahmaputra Board has drawn up a master plan. Just now my friend has mentioned that. It is true, but how can the Board execute a master plan if they are not given adequate finances? It is a huge task and it requires a lot of money. Fifteen years ago, Dr. Rao, the then Irrigation Minister told us in Rajya Sabha that he required Rs. 500 crores at that time to control this river. Two year later, Shri K.C. Pant—he is not here just now—told us that they would require Rs. 1,000 crores to control this river. I told him in the House not to talk in terms of crores. You are not going to spend Rs. 500 crores or Rs. 1000 crores in one year or in five years in any case! Have a long term plan, stretching over 20 to 25 years and start doing some work. Do not go on saying, "So much money will be required. From where shall we get it? Planning Commission and the Finance Ministry will not give it." This type of talk is absolutely irrelevant. Whatever amount is required, will be spent over a period of 20 or 25 years and not in five years. So, please start the work today.

The so called Brahmaputra Board was constituted after a long agitation by the M.Ps. of Assam. But what for? No funds, no work! I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what steps the Brahmaputra Board has taken to execute its so called Master Plan. First of all, I would like to know what this Master Plan is. Are we not

[Shri Bipin Pal Das]

entitled to see the Master Plan? I know that this is a technical subject. I can understand it. But Sir, common people's experience also counts. I, my family and our forefathers were born and brought up on the banks of this Brahmaputra river. Similarly, thousands of people of Assam are living on its banks. Don't they have some experience about the behaviour of this river? Have we not seen this river for so many years? But nobody was consulted. They said that it was a technical subject. All right. Let it be a technical subject. But even after the plan was ready, could not we see it? Should it not be shown to us? We should know what is there in the master plan. But, we do not know uptill now what it is. The other day, when I asked my friend Shri Shankaranand, he said that it was such a big thing and he wondered as to where he could place it. I asked him to place it in the library and not to send it to my house. We will take care of it, we will go to the library, study it and try to understand things. But so far as my knowledge goes, I may be absolutely wrong, this Brahmaputra Board has not yet started implementing even a small part of the so called master plan. If anything has been done, the hon. Minister may please tell us about it.

Secondly, what happened to the proposed dams over Subansiri and Dihang? I know, Arunachal Pradesh raised some objections. But is it not possible for the Central Government to persuade the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to agree? These dams are vital not only for controlling Brahmaputra, but also for producing power. If the Subansiri and Dihang dams are completed, and power is generated, it will supply electricity not only to the North Eastern Region, but also to North Bengal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Bihar. 20,000 megawatts can be produced by these dams. But what happened to the proposal? Why can't a settlement be reached with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to have these dams?

But at the same time I will say that hydel

dams alone are not going to be a solution so far as the task of controlling the Brahmaputra river is concerned. Along with these dams, there must be retention dams, embankments, guide banks, spurs, revetments, irrigation channels, etc. at appropriate places in order to control this 800 km. long mighty river. More than these measures, unless there is an afforestation programme on both the sides of the river and on both the sides of its turbulent tributaries, we will not be able to check erosion. While talking on afforestation, I must make it clear that there are some kinds of trees which draw a lot of water, i.e. trees which require a lot of intake of water. There are some kinds of trees which release water. Those trees which release water or water vapour are fit for dry areas or drought affected areas. Those trees which will intake water, draw water from the soil will be fit for flood affected areas. Therefore, in selecting trees for afforestation these points must be taken note of.

Then regarding soil conservation measures, I need not go into that.

Regarding crop insurance, I would say, it is a must in an area like that or in all areas which are affected by flood or drought. In both cases, crop insurance is very important. Why Brahmaputra is behaving like this? There was a great earthquake in 1950 in that area. The epicentre was in Arunachal Pradesh. It was a very severe earthquake. After the earthquake, because of silting of the river, the river bed came up. It came up very much. It not only happened in the main river but also in the tributaries. Therefore the water cannot flow easily. It just spread out and flood and erosion take place. This was the basic reason. Therefore apart from all the measures which I have suggested just now, I strongly suggest dredging up rivers at appropriate points.

I am bold to say that, with a little scientific knowledge that I have got, without dredging of river at appropriate points, you will never be able to control the Brahmaputra river or divert it into proper direction. It

is impossible. So, dredging is very important so far as controlling of Brahmaputra river is concerned.

I have already said about the expenses and I need repeat them. Don't talk of huge expenditure which is required to control these rivers in Assam. You start the work with whatever amount you have at your disposal or whatever amount you have been given by the Planning Commission or the Finance Ministry. Start the work seriously. If you can make progress on your work, I think money will flow. Money will not stand on your way. The Planning Commission and the whole Government will see that the work is being started and progress is made and flood is being controlled. Then there will be no lack of money, Money will flow automatically. This is my conviction. This is my understanding of administration.

Therefore, I would appeal to the Hon. Minister to see that adequate assistance is given to the Government of Assam for relief, rehabilitation and all those things and to see that the money is spent in an appropriate manner for the purpose for which the money is given.

The Government should take immediate steps to see that the measures which I have suggested should be taken note of.

Finally, the control of Brahmaputra, activating it by giving enough funds to the Boards and to start implementation or execution of this so-called master plan is also very necessary and I hope the Government will take note of it.

DR. PHULRENU GUHA (Contai): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to send my sympathies to all the people who are suffering from floods in different parts of India.

Friends have already spoken on flood and given vivid description of the flood situation in different parts of India. So I know time is very limited, I will take only

few points which I think is very important. I shall confine my talk only to West Bengal.

Devastating floods and heavy rains have claimed number of lives. In several parts of West Bengal, people are homeless, domestic animals have been washed away; jute, Paddy, vegetable and all other crops have been heavily damaged. A number of houses are under water and some houses were already damaged. Rail and road communications between these districts with the rest of West Bengal are cut off. Fodder for cattle and food for human consumption are not available. These are the damages which are caused by the floods. Whenever there is a flood, one can easily understand the condition of the people and also the animals. Unless proper care is taken immediately, there is the danger of epidemics breaking out. Even if there is no serious epidemic, after the flood people usually suffer from several diseases. So, immediately some precaution is needed. Medical centres must be opened.

As you know, after the floods, particularly children, nursing and pregnant mothers and old people suffer. People also suffer from malnutrition. Roads become unusable, after the floods, for a long time. That is my experience in the last flood, particularly in the district of Midnapore.

The relief work is not satisfactory. It was not satisfactory last year. It is not satisfactory this year also. In this connection, I would like to urge that relief should be given without any discrimination. I do not like to go into details, because I do not want to bring in all the things I have seen as a worker in the last year's floods. So, I do not want to go into details. My request is that you should see that whatever happened last year, should not be allowed to happen now. There should not be any discrimination. (*Interruptions*) I do not want to say more on this.

I would request that after the floods, a list should be prepared properly. I use the word 'properly' again. People who suffered

[Dr. Phulrenü Guha]

should be helped. Medical arrangements must be started immediately. Otherwise people will suffer. To deal with malnutrition, a programme for children, pregnant and nursing mothers must be arranged from now itself, so that they do not suffer more after the flood.

I would like to make an appeal to the West Bengal Government, and to the Central Government. To the West Bengal Government I would like to say that there should not be any discrimination when relief is given. Medical units must start work in right earnest now, immediately.

Arrangements for fodder are very much needed. Water is not there. I have already said that a list should be prepared; apart from that, people who have lost their houses should be helped.

I would like to point out very strongly that the agriculturist must be helped as soon as water recedes. Otherwise, we will suffer next year, for want of crops. The help that is needed actually, should be decided by the technical people concerned.

I would like to say that roads should be repaired. Even now, the roads which were damaged last year, have not been repaired.

To the Central Government I would make an earnest request, that the National Water Policy must be declared very soon. It cannot be postponed year after year. Here I would like to say that a proper plan for irrigation throughout India has to be made. The point is not whether we can start the work immediately; there should be a master plan throughout India. Otherwise, this type of flood or drought would go on and on. It is a pity that one part of India is suffering from drought and another part of India is suffering from floods.

I hope I will be excused if I say that we are very proud of our scientists in our country

because of scientific progress which the country has made in several fields. I am sure, with the progress of technology and with the scientific knowledge that we have in our country, if government takes proper care and see that these problems are solved, I am sure, our scientists will be able to solve these problems.

We are spending a lot of money every year either for drought or for floods. If we can pool that money and ask our scientists that these problems they have to solve, I am sure, sooner or later, they will be able to solve these problems; and India, in the near future, will not suffer from drought or floods. A permanent solution is needed for these things. It is no use spending crores of rupees every year for floods or drought and all these things. My earnest request to the government is to find out some permanent solution to these problems and also a plan should be prepared. The work may be started. I know there will be difficulties to give all the money together. If the work is started, it will be finished and I am sure India in the near future will not suffer from floods and drought, as we are doing year after year. With these words I conclude. I have made my earnest request to the Central Government and to West Bengal Government through you for solving these problems.

SHRI M. R. SAIKIA (Nowgong): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the outset I express my deep sympathy for the millions and millions of people of Assam, West Bengal, Cooch Behar, Bihar and some parts of Jammu & Kashmir.

Assam, as it is well-known, is a flood prone State. This year, the people of Assam have been facing the worst floods three times during this current monsoon season. The first flood started towards the end of June and continued upto the middle of July. During this period, the devastating flood caused huge and extensive damage to the standing crops such as jute, paddy kharif, seeds, etc. Thousands and thousands of house were damaged; roads, bridges, school buildings were also des-



troyed; roads and bridges were damaged resulting in dislocation of means of communications. Thousands and thousands of people were shifted to safer places and were rendered homeless. In order to cope up with the situation, civil authorities had to take the help of the army. Army boats were pressed into service to rescue the marooned People. In some areas such as Majuli and North Lakhimpur, helicopters were deployed to air drop food and other relief materials. The Government of Assam have submitted a memorandum to the Government of India on the 17th of July stating the damage caused by devastating floods and asking for financial help. But the Government of India remained silent; they did not respond to the request made by the Assam Government.

Then the second flood came and inundated the entire Brahmaputra Valley particularly Mongodai. In Nowgong District, several people of Majai Sub-division and Morigong Sub-division of Nagar were washed away by floods causing extensive damage to the life and properties of the People. People were shifted to the embankments. Thousands and thousands of people had to be shifted to the higher lands. Not only human beings, thousands and thousands of cattle were shifted to higher places, higher reaches and hundreds of cattle were washed away by floods.

Then, again due to incessant heavy rainfall the water of Brahmaputra and its tributaries have been rising fast and inundated entire Brahmaputra valley, from Sadyats Dhubri districts. As you would have read in the newspapers, the Army help has been taken by the civil authorities and Army boats have been used for rescue and relief operations right from Sodia to Dhubri and in Majuli area. Thousands and thousands of people have been marooned by the surging waters of Brahmaputra, thousands and thousands of people have been shifted to the highlands, and highways. Temporary relief camps—hundreds of relief camps—have been set up in the two

districts of Mangaldoi and Dhubri Sib-sagar, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, North Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Nagaon and Darang to provide shelter to thousands and thousands of people whose dwelling houses have been inundated.

Right from June, till this day the floods are continuing. May I know from the hon. Minister of Water Resources what crime the people of Assam have committed, that he did not care to visit this State during such a long period of floods? So, it clearly indicates how far and to what extent the Government of India is sincere about the welfare of the common people in Assam where lakhs and lakhs of people have been living under water, having been rendered homeless. They have taken shelter on the national highway, and on high lands, thousands and thousands of cattle have been shifted to the highlands. I can give you one instance in Majuli which is one of the largest rivers island in the world where 25,000 cattle have been shifted to the high lands and more than one lakh of people have been marooned by the surging waters of Brahmaputra and helicopters have been used to air drop food and relief supplies.

In Kaziranga National Park, hundreds and hundreds of wild animals, like deer and pigs have been washed away; thousands and thousands of deer and pigs have been shifted to the adjoining hillock. This is the third time during the same monsoon season that Kaziranga is under the grip of a flood. The flood has caused lot of damage, and as stated by my colleague Shri Bipin Pal Das the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries are responsible for this devastating damage. In the last Budget session I spoke about the problems of Assam which is the victim of floods and perennial waters. I pointed out to the Minister of Water Resources the problems created by the Brahmaputra and its turbulent tributaries. May I ask how sincere the Government of India is and what was the purpose of setting up the Brahmaputra Board. The Brahmaputra Board was consi-

[Shri M.R. Saikia]

tuted to prepare a plan after a study and survey of the area in order to control the floods in the Brahmaputra and to prepare a Master Plan for Assam. But nothing has been taken up so far.

18.00 hrs.

My colleagues here will be surprised to know that only Rs. 33 crores have been allotted to the Brahmaputra Control Board. What for? For the maintenance of its establishment? The hon. Minister must know that the maintenance of its establishment does not necessarily lead to flood control. To control the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, it requires thousands of crores of rupees. The Government of Assam, after the first wave of floods, submitted a memorandum stating the damages and requested the Government to extend financial help of Rs. 140 crores as an ad hoc grant. But instead of Rs. 140 crores, the Government of India sanctioned only Rs. 3.5 crores. Is it not a mockery? It clearly indicates the degree of sincerity and honesty on the part of Government of India towards the welfare of the common people. The people of Assam have suffered from floods created by the mighty river Brahmaputra. And after 40 years of our independence nothing has been done for the welfare of the people of Assam. We have been talking of national integration. We are talking of development and growth of feeling of oneness among the Indian people. How could they expect development and growth of feeling of oneness?

I would like to remind one thing. India is a federal State consisting of 25 units. It is like a living organism. The development and growth of a living organism depends upon the growth and development of different organs of the organism and on the active cooperation of different organs. If active cooperation of different organs is not forthcoming, how could you expect the development of the organism as a

whole? Similarly, in the case of India, if we want to develop India as a whole, if we want to think about the welfare of the people of India as a whole, then we will have to think for the development of different units of this federal state equally. If you fail to develop any particular unit, then you will not be able to develop the country as a whole. It amply proves with what degree of sincerity and honesty you think in terms of the welfare of the country.

I am speaking with bitterness from my past experience. I am a Member of Parliament today. But I participated in the national movement. I have been working for the welfare of the society for many years. I have sacrificed a lot for the good of the people. I have seen with my own eyes what you have done during the last 40 years of our independence. Therefore, at this grave situation, we have seen the entire State in the grim grip of floods. Millions and millions of people have been rendered homeless. Thousands and thousands of cattle have been washed away. Roads and bridges have been damaged. The State, for the last few days, remained cut off from the rest of the country. But the Government of India did not move at all. Out of Rs. 140 crores, sanctioning Rs. 3.5 crores, is it a help? Is it a sincerity to help the people of Assam? You have seen the situation in Assam particularly in North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Sunitpur, Darang districts. What steps have been taken so far to give relief to the flood stricken people? Have you not considered over this? Therefore, my humble suggestion is this. If you want to develop the organism as a whole i.e. the entire federal state of India, then you should come forward with adequate financial help to rehabilitate the people, who have lost their houses and other properties, recoup the damage for restoration of the economy of the State and for relief measures.

In this respect I have to say that it is too late now for the kharif crops to be culti-

vated. People have to prepare their lands for the cultivation of Rabi crops and for that purpose they require adequate and liberal financial help. The economic condition of the small and marginal farmers in Assam is deplorable. They are acquainted with traditional methods of cultivation. They cultivate their lands with a pair of bullocks and a wooden plough. But how can those small and marginal farmers who have lost their bullocks in the flood, cultivate their lands? Probably you know, Sir, that the cost of a pair of bullocks is minimum Rs. 5,000. Those poor farmers who have taken loans from the banks, are not able to pay back, what to talk of principal, even the interest. So, the Government of India should make provisions for providing financial help to those poor farmers. Moreover, the Rabi crops will be available only after February next year and from this date till February, how will those people be able to live on? Therefore, financial provisions should be made for maintenance of those people from now onwards till February.

Efforts should be made for generating employment in flood affected areas. All efforts should be made to make available foodgrains and fodder—fodder for the cattle and foodgrains for the people of the State.

With these words, I conclude my speech.

AN HON. MEMBER: It is already more than six O'clock, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: In the morning itself it was announced that the House will sit up to 7 O'clock in the evening. We are having a lot of other business and therefore this was decided in the morning itself.

Now Shri Golam Yazdani.

DR. GOLAM YAZDANI (Raiganj): Sir, I rise to draw the attention of the Government to the awful state of affairs which is being experienced in the flood affected areas. Flood is not an unknown thing. We know floods come every year, but we can-

not be careful how to just cope with these floods or to prevent them, and that is why the floods are occurring. We do not try to prevent the floods which are occurring nowadays.

In the northern parts of the country, this time the flood has come due to incessant rains. For the last three weeks there have been incessant rains. All the rivers of North Bengal have been inflated by these incessant rains and, as a result, there have been floods. The neighbouring parts of Assam and even Bihar also have been inundated by these floods. I want to limit my speech to West Bengal only. We see that all the five districts of North Bengal, namely, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur and Malda have been affected. I may tell you that unfortunately 95 per cent of my constituency is under water in West Dinajpur and Malda. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister about the state of affairs prevailing in West Dinajpur and Malda as West Dinajpur, Malda and other parts of West Bengal are worst effected.

In West Dinajpur, the towns of Balurghat and Raiganj are almost under water. There is a vast sea of water. Malda - half of the blocks has been badly effected - for example Bamangola, Gajole, Habibpur, Ratna, Harish - Chanderpur, Part of Chanchal. West Dinajpur - Dalkola to Islampur, Chopra these places have been effected. Stream of flood water is seen passing over the roads of Dalkola and important bridges near Raiganj town - Kolak Bridge and one bridge near Dalkola—these been washed away. There had been poor attempt to repair this bridge near Dalkola. But it has again given way. There is an attempt to repair bridge near Dalkola. But it has not been repaired. As a result of this, flood water is found from Malda, West Dinajpur, upto Chopra—different of parts of NS 34 have been under water. Communication has been cut off and road links have been suspended. From Kalyanganj to Radhikapur railway line has been under 5 to 6' of water. Rail service have been impaired.

[Shri Golam Yazdani]

Northern-Eastern parts of the country are almost cut off from rail communication.

Flood has not come at once. It has come in three instalments First instalment, second and then third. In third instalment new areas have been inundated. The most effected areas are Itahar in West Dinajpur, Gajole in Malda. In Itahar the officer has admitted that there are more than two lakh people who have been marooned along with cattle and domestic animals. In Gajole more than thirteen gram panchayats have been under water. In Gajole flood has come because of breakage of Mahananda *bandh*. Flood is due to rivers Tangon, Punarbhava, Atri, Testa, Mahananda and Phulhar.

Mahananda *bandh* is not being inspected or cared for regularly. There are rat holes in many places of this *bandh*. We can see rat holes, but they are not being repaired in time. When the flood comes, these holes get enlarged. For this extreme negligence who is responsible? These things are happening.

People are suffering because most of the said areas are marooned. Lakhs and lakhs of people are suffering. There is no arrangement for their rescue. The country boats are not available. The motor boats are not suitable for the purpose. This is the main problem faced by the people there in carrying out the relief measures. Every year, we find that we are short of country boats. Why are the country boats not procured and kept ready to meet the situation? This time also it is found that motor boats are brought for transportation purpose and the country boats are not available. I would like to bring to the notice of the Government that country boats are most suitable for carrying foods and other essential commodities to the flood victims who are marooned in the midst of vast sheet of waters. But the country boats are not available. I would like to draw the attention of the Government that there are heavy losses, both human lives and cattle in the

recent flood. No doubt, in West Dinajpur and Malda, about 36 people died due to flood. But in the whole of Northern region of Bengal, the death toll is about 200. There is a huge loss of men and material. The poor people are in great distress and necessary relief measures should be provided immediately.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You can wind up now.

DR. GOLAM YAZDANI: For a discussion on drought, this House took so many days and for floods, we should be given at least two days more.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have to give chance to others also. Please wind up.

DR. GOLAM YAZDANI: Now, Sir, regarding relief measures, I would like to point out that the District magistrate of Malda put up a demand of about 40,000 tarpaulin sheets. But the authorities could supply only about 4000 sheets. There have been incessant rains in the area and the people have been moved to suitable camps. But those camps are open and they will have to be covered with tarpaulin sheets. The affected people cannot be kept in open place and expose them to the heavy rains. Is it a humane attitude? I cannot understand how the authorities could pay scant attention to the suffering people in these areas. Every year in the month of April, the meeting is held and the possible requirements to meet the flood situation are discussed. But still when we ask for 40,000 polythene sheets, they could supply only 4000 sheets. They say that they do not have enough number of polythene sheets because they are not produced in West Bengal and they have to be procured from elsewhere. But why don't you keep these polythene sheets in West Bengal well in advance? We have been saying every year about the requirement of these sheets. We had mentioned this point last year. We have said the same thing this year also. Next year also we will lay stress on the requirement of polythene sheets.

But still no advance action has been taken in this respect so far.

Now, Sir, food and other essential commodities can be supplied to the marooned people, but because of non-availability of country-boats, transportation of these items could not be easily done. For transportation of these items to the affected people, motor boats are not suitable. Every year we have been saying that country boats are not available. The country boats can easily reach the people marooned in the flood waters. So, this fact is to be kept in mind while considering relief measures to help these people who are in great distress. Otherwise, there is no meaning of only discussing floods. More money should also be given. When you do not have money, how can you purchase these things and meet the requirements?

Another point which I want to bring to the notice of the hon. Irrigation Minister is, there is a point in Ratua where the bund is very vulnerable and it requires repairing. But they do not do repairing until and unless this area is flooded. Repairing can be done in the month of April or May but the thing is, those people who want to do repair work will not get so much of profit in April or May. When flood comes, they start doing the repairing work so that they can pocket more money. So, the attention of the Government should be drawn to the fact that those weak points should be repaired in good time. For example, I can say at Mainapur in Manikchak, there is a weak point and there is likely to be a breach; it should have been repaired long ago in the month of April or May. But now it is going to be repaired when they require more boulders. That means more money to the contractor and more profit. Attention of the Government should be drawn to this aspect.

They have constructed the Farakka barrage. What is the after-effect, they are not going to care? They must keep a vigil on every bund and whenever there is a weak bund, that should be repaired well in time in the month of April or May. Then only,

you can give relief to these people. New areas are going to be affected. You can also understand the situation. You have seen the flood. The condition of the people is worse.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please wind up.

DR. GOLAM YAZDANI: You should provide relief to the people and take preventive action so that next year the same thing may not be repeated. That is the thing that I want to impress upon. They should see, how to prevent floods.

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): This discussion can continue tomorrow.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us sit up to 7 O'clock and then we can see. Up to 7 O'clock, the discussion can continue. We will see afterwards.

Shri G. Bhoopathy.

[*Translation*]

SHRI G. BHOOPATHY (Peddapalli): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the one hand, there is drought and on the other, there is heavy rainfall creating a very grave situation in the country. It is now for the Central Government to control it.

The flood ravaged states send their reports to the Central Government regarding the extent of the damage. On receipt of a report the Centre sends a Central team to assess the damage. That team visit that area and after discussing with the Government and the public representatives of that area makes an assessment of the total loss. Against a loss of Rs. 100 crores, the Centre releases only Rs. 10 crores which is also not properly utilised by the State Government. As a result of floods, railway lines, houses of the poor, school buildings etc. are washed away. There are such individuals, who do not own any land and who take money from Government by putting up bogus applications and wrong memoranda. It is not known how many crores of rupees might have been spent from the

[Shri G. Bhoopathy]

Government ex-chequer on rehabilitation after independence. I would like that this thing may be stopped.

I would like to submit to the hon. Minister that in order to prevent floods in the country, the former Union Minister of Irrigation, Dr. K.L. Rao had made a scheme of which you are well aware. If that scheme is not good, then our hon. Minister, Shri Shankaranand, may himself make any other scheme and implement it so that floods are prevented and the people heaved a sigh of relief. There had been a loss of about Rs. 40 crores in my constituency where the Dakshin Express met with an accident. All roads, school buildings and houses of individuals in the area have been destroyed. I would like to request the Central Government to send a central team to the area to assess the quantum of loss caused there and assist the people of the area in view of the loss suffered by them.

DR. G.S. RAJHANS (Jhanjharpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all I express my gratitude to the hon. Minister, Shri Shankaranand for his making an aerial survey of North Bihar in these days of sorrow and suffering. The miseries of the people there, which he unfolded to the journalists at Patna in a painful voice, will touch the heart of any reader. The hon. Minister has rightly said that the entire North Bihar is in the grip of floods and it needs maximum assistance. Through you, I would like to request the Hon. Prime Minister to make an aerial survey of North Bihar and see the difficulties of the people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to tell you that the hon. Minister may go through the newspapers of last 8 to 10 days wherefrom he will come to know that in North Bihar, especially, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Purnea, Saharsa, Motihari, Sitamarhi, Samastipur, Muzaffarpur... (*Interruptions*)

[English]

SHRI BIPIN PAL DAS: The Prime Minis-

ter should also visit the flood-affected areas of Assam.

[Translation]

DR. G.S. RAJHANS: My sympathies go to the flood-affected people of Assam.

But the condition of North Bihar is very miserable. On hearing the latest news I was thinking of visiting my constituency, but I was not able to go because the roads have been washed away. The trains have also been stopped. As has been published in the newspapers, food packets are being dropped from helicopters. There is water and water every where and the helicopter men are in a fix where to drop the food packets, so that the people may get them. Only after 10 to 15 days when floods recede, it will be known as to how many people have been washed away and how many people have lost their lives. So far as the loss of the cattle is concerned, their number is uncountable. It is the first time during the last 60 to 70 years when such a furious flood has visited the districts of Madhubani, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Saharsa in North Bihar. We have not been able to realise this problem a little more seriously, because 3/4th area of the country is facing drought. The people are so affected by drought that as they are not able to understand as to what havoc the flood has played in the remaining 1/4th area of the country.

It has appeared in the national newspapers that the people including pregnant ladies and sick persons have been sitting on trees for the last 6 to 7 days so much so that it is raining from above and they have no food to take. The situation has never been so adverse earlier. I would like to tell that though the Central Government has provided helicopters and extended military assistance, yet it is not enough. More helicopters, foodgrains and medicines should be provided there. They are human beings and should not be left to the mercy of God. Their condition is very miserable. They have been so marooned that nobody can rescue them from there. They are

unable to come here and unfold their miseries. When the hon. Minister gives his reply, he will narrate the sufferings of the people he witnessed there. In the district of Madhubani, there is nothing visible except water. The condition there is very miserable.

I would like to submit to you that instead of thinking of long term measures, we should rescue the marooned people who have been trapped there as people are trapped in accidents. They should be rescued and provided with goods, clothes, medicines and other facilities. Only then we should think of long-term measures. There are floods every year when we hold discussions in this House and express our sorrow on the sufferings of the people. But no measures are found to prevent them. All the rivers in North Bihar, whether it is the Kosi, the Gandak, the Buri Gandak, the Mahananda or the Kamalbalan, originate from Nepal. Several times discussions have been held that if reservoirs are constructed in Nepal, all these rivers can be controlled and thereby we can generate more electricity for the economic development of Nepal. We can generate 2000 mw electricity which will be more than enough not only for Nepal but also for the entire North India. This is for the future and not for to-day. If we implement this scheme after giving due thought to it, it will undoubtedly check floods and the excess water thus stored will prove to be a boon to us. For this purpose we can get loan from the World Bank also and this is the high time for it.

By signing an accord with Sri Lanka you have shown that we can cordially live in South Asia. All the countries of this region including Nepal have praised this accord. They are prepared to co-operate with India. I have received a letter from Shankaranand that talks are being held with Nepal to construct reservoirs to control the flooding of all the rivers. I would like to tell that this may please be done as early as possible, otherwise these rivers will play havoc. As it is, the condition of North Bihar is very bad and everytime whatever development

is made, it is being washed away by floods. Instead of leaving the people to the mercy of the fate, something should be done for them.

A lot of bungling is indulged into the name of providing relief in this area. Whether the relief is given by the State Government or the Central Government, it should reach the needy people.

Sir, we have been talking about the Ganga-Cauvery project. Why do we not start work on it. Floods come, because we have no control over Nepal. Secondly, there is much rainfall in catchment areas of the rivers that all the rivers are filled with water. Due to silting, the Ganga does not have the capacity of bearing the water of all the rivers. At the same time, there are some regions in the country where there is shortage of water and this is why Dr. K.L. Rao had said that the Ganga and the Cauvery rivers should be linked. It would have involved an expenditure of Rs. 500 crores. But now it will require much more money. This Ganga Cauvery project should be implemented so that water could be supplied to the South. This will not only check floods in these regions but also make more water available for irrigation. You may please prepare a scheme for linking rivers. If it is started now, then after 20 to 25 years the coming generation will certainly think that we have done something. Every year the funds, which are allocated for flood relief measures, are either pocketed by the contractors or by the Officers. What benefit do the people get out of it.

There is a provision for insurance of industrial and agriculture workers. It is my submission that all the people and the cattle in the flood prone areas should be brought under the insurance cover. Why should they face havoc every year? Why should they go on suffering loss of property and crops. The insurance premium may be given either by the State Government or by the Central Government. We cannot ignore these flood affected and unlucky people. Suppose somewhere a dam collapses, the river bank breaches at a

[Dr. G.S. Rajhans]

distance of 25 kms and water reaches the houses overnight, where the people are sleeping. Even today there is 8 feet high water in Madhubani, Saharasa and Jhanjharpur. Water is flowing over the house tops. At this moment the Magistrate goes to the people and asks them to vacate immediately. People become helpless, but where they should go from there. They have no other accommodation. They should be brought under an insurance cover so that they may get some compensation against the loss suffered by them.

Lastly, I would like to say that you may please look into this serious problem and take some short-term as well as long-term measures so that the people may get some relief.

[English]

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ (Baramulla): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not really making a long speech because there is no time.

My colleague was saying that we should think about long-term plan later. But I would come to long-term plan first, because this country suffers all the time from the vagaries of nature; in one part there will be floods and in another part there will be drought. Unless there is a coordinated effort, unless there is planning in a big way, unless there is a qualitative change in planning itself, we cannot achieve much. I would suggest that we must have some organisation at the Centre—you may call it the Central Flood Fighting Authority or Organisation; I do not know what you will call it, but there should be some authority because whenever there are floods in a State, it cannot be left to the Chief Secretary or some other bureaucrat to pick up the telephone and talk to Delhi. And, by the time some kind of relief arrives there, much damage will have been done to thousands of people. The time lag puts MPs, Legislators, the Chief

Minister and other Ministers to great shame because it may spread to months together. So, if we have a Central Authority, they receive information may be through telephone and say that the team must move, relief must go, tents must go, medicines must go and so on.

I saw a difficult situation in Jammu and Kashmir. There were floods in Jammu and Kashmir state, in some parts of Jammu but particularly the Kashmir valley was devastated by floods. Ultimately we may not suffer because we don't depend more on monsoons as other parts of the country. We have some water running where the paddy fields are there. The damage to the paddy crops may not be there. But already we have suffered a lot from the floods. I don't suppose that we got the relief which we deserved.

The shocking situation is that our Dal Lake was totally devastated. We have some people who had encroached into the Dal Lake and all those people suffered because of that encroachment spreading over two decades. Now, after two decades, we got the worst floods and the lake was devastated. Those people who went to Dal Lake and spoiled it want us to get them out of that Lake and settle them somewhere else. So, the flood problem has been connected with their settlement and rehabilitation. How can the Hon. Minister understand the situation because the Central Team which visited Srinagar... (*Interruptions*)... You understand how the Central Team visits.

A Central Team comes after a lot of weeping on the part of the victims. They say that it is the duty of the State Government to project its demands before the Central Government. The nation is one, the country is one. It is the duty of anybody who is responsible at the Centre to send the team without asking and see what is happening there. When the team comes, bureaucrats come and talk to their counterpart bureaucrats. Never has any MP been associated with discussion. It must go



on record. I represent seven lakhs of people who suffered. We are three MPs from that valley; we were not called. These bureaucrats talk to bureaucrats and they go to the secretariat, have a cup of coffee and Kabab and then return to Delhi.

They don't take us into confidence... (*Interruptions*)... The job of preparing the schedule indicating the loss is again left to the bureaucrats. We don't know what happens since we are public men and we are not associated with it.

The whole system should be institutionalised. You hand over every process to the bureaucrats who are not responsible to the people. That is why delay in sanctioning of relief, delay in assessment of damage take place. We are responsible to the people and therefore the Hon. Minister should take notice of what I am saying. Whenever a team is sent, it must be obligatory for it to consult the MPs concerned.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: And MLAs also.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ: Thereafter the relief should be sanctioned. As far as Kashmir valley is concerned, my information is that—I am correct and if he calls me I can give correct information to the Minister—adequate relief has not gone there. Providing rehabilitation to those people has not been undertaken because it requires a massive funding. If you take this into consideration and take some measures, we would be solving two problems. Firstly it gives relief to the victims and we would also be solving the problem of Dal Lake which is the beauty of Kashmir. We attract international tourists there. We should solve the problem of pollution also. So, I invite your attention not only for solving the problem of these victims, but also the problem of encroachment in order to keep the Dal Lake pure.

SHRI ANIL BAŞU (Arambagh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think you will be a little kind to me because I represent a constituency which is highly flood-prone, the

Damodar Valley area of the State of West Bengal. It is true that this year my area has not yet been affected by floods till now. Sir it is reported that flood-prone areas in the country today comprises about 65 million hectares. Ten years ago it was only 40 million hectares. So there is an increase of 25 million hectares during these 10 years. This shows how serious is the problem.

Now what is the approach of the Government to the problem. Government is taking fire-fighting attitude. They are not dealing with the root of the problem.

Sir, for the flood affected people it is the same story every year. Millions of people get affected by floods. Embankments get breached. Bridges get washed away. Lives are lost. Live-stock gets perished. Army is called for rescue and relief operations. There are aerial surveys by the State and Central Government. Then a Central team goes to the State to assess the damage. Now this is the same old story every year. Every year we discuss the flood situation in the House but there is no solution to the real problem.

Sir, the extent of damage due to floods in the States and Union territories— 31 States and Union territories— is Rs. 249160.5 lakhs in the year 1983. In the year 1985 the extent of damage is Rs. 405926.8 lakhs. In the year 1986 the extent of damage is Rs. 347220.7 lakhs. Each year the extent of damage is increasing. Now how we are operating the flood protection works. It is revealed from the records that during the year 1983-84 twenty-one States spent over the flood control works about Rs. 9259.03 lakhs out of which Central loan assistance is only Rs. 2103.50 lakhs. In the year 1984-85 these States spent Rs. 11630.12 lakhs and the Central assistance is to the tune of Rs. 2750.00 lakhs. In the year 1985-86 the anticipated expenditure of these States was Rs. 12878.5 lakhs out of which Central assistance is only Rs. 2131.00.

Sir, in this connection I want to bring it to the notice of the house the attitude of the Central Government towards some of the

[Shri Anil Basu]

States particularly the States ruled by non-Congress Governments. You see the plight of the West Bengal Government. During 1983-84 the West Bengal Government spent Rs. 1364.01 lakhs out of which Central assistance is Rs. 160 lakhs. In the year 1984-85 West Bengal spent Rs. 974.46 lakhs out of which Central assistance is Rs. 66.84 lakhs. In the year 1985-86 West Bengal spent Rs. 1990 lakhs and the Central assistance is nil. This is the state of affairs.

Sir, the Central Government is not taking the correct view to the problem. Coming to the flood situation I sincerely sympathise with the flood affected millions of people in the States of Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Jammu and Kashmir.

Now I shall confine myself mostly to the problems of West Bengal. My hon'ble colleague Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee has spoken on the flood situation in the West Bengal. In the northern part of Bengal, the districts of Cooch Behar, Malda, Jalpaiguri and West Dinajpur are facing serious floods. In the southern Bengal, we are also facing a serious problem of drought. There is a shortfall of rains in the southern part of Bengal.

In the northern part in West Dinajpur district, the problem is very serious because the whole area has taken the shape of a sea. It is very difficult to approach the district headquarters also, as has been told by Shrimati Gitaji. The flood relief supplies are sent to West Dinajpur from Malda. In the district of West Dinajpur, due to incessant rains in the catchment area, the rivers Purnabhava, Phular and Artreye have caused serious floods in the West Dinajpur and Mahananda a tributary of Ganga river has caused serious floods in the district of Malda. The State Government is taking all the necessary measures for relief and rescue operations in those areas.

Now coming to the flood situation in

Assam, the problem is very serious because of the turbulent river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. They could not be tamed. Heavy rains in the catchment area of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries caused serious floods in the whole of Assam. The Assam Government has already submitted its memoranda asking for the Central assistance. There should be a positive response from the Central Government.

But what is the key problem in this area? The key problem of the Assam flood lies in the indiscriminate cutting down of the forests in the catchment area of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. If there is indiscriminate cutting of forests, it leads to a higher rate of soil erosion resulting in silting of the rivers. The beds of the rivers rise. Therefore, flood control devices like embankments are affected and will be of no use. The water will overflow and damage the embankments or will cause breaches.

The Central Government assumed the responsibility of flood problem of the Brahmaputra river. It constituted the Brahmaputra Board in the year 1980 by an Act. The Brahmaputra Board has also submitted some of the schemes. We are told that Master Plan Phase-I submitted by the Board is awaiting the approval of the Central Government. I don't know the result. Why has that Master Plan been circulated to so many persons for their opinion? That Plan has not been sanctioned so far. That should be sanctioned as early as possible because without taming the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries, you cannot control the flood situation of Assam.

Now we have to take some short-term as well as long-term measures. The short-term measures include relief and rescue operations and also the construction work. For this, all the departments of the Government— Department of Food & Supply, Department of Rural Development, Department of Agriculture— should make a coordinated effort to tackle the problem so that the relief and rescue measures and

the construction work taken up by the State Government can be strengthened. Thus the people can get relief quickly.

Under the long-term measures, an emergency drive to plant trees in the denuded catchment areas should be taken up on a priority basis. There are so many national policies which are announced by the Government— the National Education Policy, the New Economic Policy. I do not understand why there cannot be a National Flood Control Policy of the Government. In the year 1982-83, the Government published the report of the Jaisukh Lal Hathi Commission on flood control. It is the casual approach of the Government that is responsible for this problem. All possible long-term measures should be taken to overcome this problem.

Coming to the State of West Bengal, I would like to state that there are so many flood control and irrigation schemes which the State Government has already sent to the Central Government and those have been awaiting approval since long. One such project is Teesta Barrage project. More than Rs. 180 crores have already been spent by the Government of West Bengal and they have been asking for Central assistance for this project. You have, however, given only Rs. five crores in the last three years. This has compelled the State Government to divert a lot of its funds from the budget to complete this project. Then, the Farrakha Barrage project. The erosion created in the down stream of the Farrakha Barrage is causing a serious threat to a lot of area. This is affecting eleven blocks in the districts of Murshidabad, namely Farrakha, Shamsheerpur, Raghunathganj etc. The river banks are eroded due to continuous erosion of the Ganga river and eleven blocks are in danger. The Farrakha Barrage authorities have already submitted a scheme to the Central Government authorities, but that scheme has been kept pending.

Now, I come to my area, the lower Damodar Basin area, a highly flood prone

area. Rivers like Mandeshwari, Damodar, Roop Narain etc. pass through my constituency. In the year 1979, the Government of West Bengal submitted a scheme to the Central Government for its approval. It is now 1987 and ten years have passed away since then. However, that revised flood control scheme has not been cleared by the Government of India so far. In answer to an Unstarred question, the Minister had stated that the required clarifications had not been submitted by the Government of West Bengal, and therefore, they could not clear the project. In July this year, Shri Sukh Ram, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Planning wrote to my colleague, Shri Hannan Mollah that the project has not been cleared by the Planning Commission because the State Flood Control Board has not given its approval to the scheme and the State Budget has not provided any funds for this scheme. Immediately, we rushed to the State Government and we enquired from the Irrigation Department. We were told that they have already sent an intimation to the Central Government that the scheme has been approved by the State has been approved by the State Flood Control Board. It is a procedural matter; nothing more. Already, a sum of Rs. 7 crores has been provided in the State Budget. We do not understand why the project has not been cleared.

Most of the State Governments are sending their flood control and irrigation schemes to the Union Government and those have been lying here. The Minister in one of the meetings of the Consultative Committee stated that the CWC had issued as many as 1500 flood warnings this year. What is the use of issuing flood warning systems if you do not control the floods and do not sanction the schemes and go to the root cause of the floods. How will you be able to control the floods. People of West Bengal, Bihar, district of Madhubani etc. will go on shouting every year and the Minister will give a reply after a discussion here. In view of this, I appeal to the Union Government to formulate a national Flood Control Policy. When you are issuing new

[Shri Anil Basu]

National Education Policy, National Economic Policy and so many other policies, why are you not formulating a National Flood Control Policy? More and more areas are every year affected by droughts and floods. There is no proper planning at the Union level how to fight all these disasters and go to the root of the problem. I appeal to the Union Government to rise to the occasion and take positive steps to control the floods in the country.

19.00 hrs

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shri Haren Bhumij.

SHRI HAREN BHUMIJ (Dibrugarh): Hon. Deputy Speaker Sir,....

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI DAMODAR PANDEY (Hazari-bagh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we people

also want to express our views. Hence this may be continued tomorrow also. This should not be done in a hurry.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will continue the debate. You will get a chance.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI SHEILA DIKSHIT): I agree with you. We will continue this debate because I know that many members would like to speak. We can close it now.

19.01 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, August 18, 1987/Sravana 27, 1909 (Saka)*