

Zero Hour is becoming more important than the regular proceedings. So many Members have been allowed on this.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: In the light of the concern expressed by the hon. Members in the House I will draw the attention of the hon. Finance Minister and ask him to see what he can do in the matter...*(Interruptions)* I will draw the attention of the Finance Minister. As you see, I cannot make a statement on this. He will do what he wants to do. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I think that the Members have expressed their views and the Government also think that it is a serious matter. I would ask the Finance Minister to make a statement.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA:
Today.

[*English*]

DR. VENKATESHWARLU UM-MAREDDY (Tenali): It has become a regular feature that several villages on East Coast right from Tada to Ichhapuram particularly in Diviseema and Naidamolu areas in Krishna District and Rapalle, Vemur, Tenali, Duggirala and Mangalgiri areas in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh are chronically cyclone and flood prone areas. During 1977, 1986 and 1990 floods, cyclones and tidal waves, thousands of persons have died losing cattle and poultry population and fish farms, suffered hundreds of crores worth of crops and orchards rendering millions of poor inhabitants homeless and losing the total equipment by the handloom weavers and fishermen folk with every calamity. Neither the insurance institutions nor the Government agencies could adequately compensate the losses suffered by millions of people on such occasions, thereby

several families have been deprived of their livelihood. There should be a comprehensive scheme to rescue the unfortunate victims who suffer at the fury of the nature persistently because of their locational disadvantage. Any amount of temporary and meagre assistance provided by the Government and voluntary organisations do not help them in any way for restoring their losses and livelihood. I urge upon the Government to think about certain long term and permanent measures such as large scale pucca housing programme, effective crop, cattle, poultry, handloom and hut insurance scheme and also creation of a permanent natural calamities disaster stabilisation fund so that the State Government could immediately draw up and swing into rescue operations in a big way without waiting for the visit of the Central teams. Further, these areas can be declared as natural calamity zone and provided assistance or special grants to strengthen the flood banks. This aspect deserves special attention of the Government.

SHRI S. MALLIKARJUNIAH (Tumkur): While agreeing with the views expressed by Shri Venkateshwarlu I would also like to draw the attention of the Government that my constituency in Karnataka is terribly affected by floods. I learn and heard that the Prime Minister has said about Bihar and Maharashtra having been affected, and some amount has been allotted to meet the demands of the affected people. But my demand is that the Government should come forward to send a Central team to Karnataka to assess the damage caused. Actually, property and crops worth Rs. ten crores to Rs. fifteen crores have been damaged. There is loss of animals and more than eleven persons have died...*(Interruptions)* Terrible devastation has taken place. Therefore, my humble request is that the Central Government should send a Central team to assess the exact damage caused to the property and the people. I expected the Government to come forward to send a team by this time

but so far the Government has not come forward. I am afraid whether it has come to the notice of the Prime Minister or not. Yesterday I heard on radio that our Prime Minister has shown lot of sympathy to other neighbouring States where devastation has taken place...*(Interruptions)*

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM PRASAD SINGH (B'kāmgañj): We are not being given any chance to speak, so I walk out of the House.

12.41 hrs.

[*English*]

At this stage, Shri Ram Prasad Singh left the House

MR. SPEAKER: You have to be very brief. There are others also who have to speak.

SHRI S. MALLIKARJUNAIAH: But unfortunately, Karnataka is still unattended to. Therefore, I wish to bring it to the notice of the Government that they shall have to send a team of experts to assess the damages caused in Karnataka.

SHRI H. D. DEVEGOWDA (Hassan): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I support the views expressed by my friend Shri Mallikarjunaiah. It has mostly affected by constituency. I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that Karnataka has been neglected on all fronts, including the flood control. Nearly five persons have been washed away during the recent floods and eight persons have died in Coorg, Shimoga and Hassan districts. Several houses have collapsed and the property and standing crops worth several crores have been washed away due to heavy floods in Hassan, Mandia, Coorg and Chikmagalur districts. This is the plight of the farmers and the people who are

residing on both sides of the river. So, I urge upon the Government to at least release Rs. two crores to provide relief to the flood victims.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to raise an issue which was earlier mentioned by my colleague but which I think needs to be taken far more seriously by the Government than it is being taken. A very serious crisis threatens the newspaper industry and if the proposed hike of newsprint is effected by the STC, it would cripple the whole industry. It would mean that except for a few affluent houses which run newspapers, all the others would be closed down. It is a kind of a death warrant for all those small newspapers and journals, not only small but even medium sized, which cannot bear this particular hike. After all, there is a Newsprint Price Fixation Committee which meets every three months. When in the month of June they met, the price of imported standard newsprint was Rs. 13,000 per tonne. They agreed at that time to enhance it by Rs. 1,200 and the price became Rs. 14,200 per tonne. This was on June 21 and this was fixed for the quarter July-September. Then once again there was devaluation and on July 3, the Committee was asked to meet again and a further hike was introduced and the price was raised to Rs. 16,000 per tonne from Rs. 13,000 to Rs. 16,000! And when once again on the 30th of July, that is, day before yesterday, the meeting of the Price Fixation Committee was convened, they were shocked and flabbergasted to hear the STC's recommendation that it should now be increased to Rs. 20,670 per tonne. So, in the last one month, it is sought to be increased from Rs. 13,000 per tonne to Rs. 20,670 per tonne. It is something which is unheard of. It was, therefore, that the newspaper industry protested in that meeting and the meeting had to be put off to the 8th of August. I understand that today the Secretary, Information and Broadcasting is to meet the Finance