

pal, Hoshangabad, Jabalpur, Raisen, Sagar, Khandwa, Dhar and Indore. The total loss due to the natural calamity is feared to be about Rs. 40 crores.

The State Government took all possible relief measures promptly and in order to widen their scope made necessary relaxations in its rules and circulars. The State Government has already spent the marginal amount of Rs. 1.83 crores allotted to it and has submitted a memorandum to the Union Government asking for assistance. The Centre thereupon is said to have decided to send a survey team to the State to assess the extent of damage caused by the hailstorms.

Apart from, and in addition to, the suggestions made by the State Government in its memorandum for assistance, it is suggested that:

1. The Survey Team to be sent to the State should be given a time-bound programme to complete its survey and submit its report and recommendations without delay so that the Union Government is able to take a decision about the quantum of aid to be given to the State before it is too late. It would be better if the survey team at least went to the worst-affected districts immediately to assess the extent of damage on the spot. The first estimates of total loss incurred amounts to Rs. 40 crores. Central grant aid should be at least three-fourth of this figure, namely, Rs. 30 crores.

2. The Union Government should give financial assistance to the State to start crop insurance scheme against natural calamities as it is beyond the financial resources of the State to take up any such scheme.

3. The rabi crop unaffected by the hailstorms is in danger of being damaged by pests. Hence, the Union Government should make provision for aerial crop spraying in the State.

(ii) SUPPLY OF CEMENT TO WEST BENGAL  
BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

SHRI R. P. DAS (Krishnagar): Sir, the West Bengal Essential Commodities

Supply Corporation, a State Government undertaking of West Bengal, is facing a serious crisis due to the sudden order of the Government of India to partially de-control cement effective from February 28 last. The West Bengal Essential Commodities Supply Corporation has so long been the sole distributor of cement in West Bengal. The Corporation has accepted deposits of value of cement from thousands of small and bulk consumers of West Bengal on the basis of allocation made for the current year. The Corporation has received only 1.65 lakh MT against the allocation of 2.58 lakh MT and the Corporation was waiting for the balance quota of 0.93 lakh MT. But due to the latest instruction of the Government of India, the Corporation cannot get more than 0.258 lakh MT during March being 10 per cent of the total allocation for the current quarter. Thus the Corporation cannot meet the demand to the tune of 0.67 lakh MT during the current quarter. The depositors who include a large number of small and bulk consumers have already started agitating for the immediate supply of cement against deposits already accepted by the Corporation. So, the Corporation has urged upon the Central Government to despatch the balance of 0.67 lakh MT during March even if necessary by making special *ad hoc* allocation in favour of West Bengal. All these difficulties have arisen due to the sudden change of policy with regard to cement made by the Government of India.

Hence I request the Minister concerned to look into this serious problem which is being faced by the Corporation and take urgent steps to order for the despatch of 0.67 lakh MT of cement to West Bengal this month itself by treating this as a special case since this Corporation is a State Government undertaking.

I also demand that the Minister concerned make a statement in the House in this regard.

(iii) DECLARATION OF RIVERS AS NATIONAL  
ASSETS FOR BETTER UTILISATION OF  
THEIR WATER.

SHRI K. T. KOSALRAM (Tiruchendur): Water is the most precious re-