

13.45 hrs.

[DR SUSHILA NAYAR in the Chair]

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE****REPORTED DESERTION OF CAMPS AND REHABILITATION SITES BY FORMER EAST PAKISTAN REFUGEES**

SHRI SAMAR GUHA (Contd.) I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Works and Housing and Supply and Rehabilitation to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon

Reported desertion of camps and rehabilitation sites by the former East Pakistan refugees and their rushing to Calcutta in thousands

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND SUPPLY AND REHABILITATION (SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT) On 27th February 1978 it was brought to our notice that about 500 families had left settlement sites and *karmi shubirs* in Malkangiri Zone of the Dandakaranaya Project. These migrants had reached in groups Howrah Sealdah and Hasanabad Railway Stations in West Bengal in the hope that they could seek their settlement in Sunderbans/West Bengal. According to the information available with the Government these families deserted the Project in the wake of propaganda carried on by some interested elements that there was scope for resettling displaced persons from former East Pakistan in Sunderbans and in other areas in West Bengal. Since November 1977 such propaganda has been intensified in the area by these elements. The matter was taken up with the West Bengal Government and they indicated in January 1978 that no lands were available in any area in West Bengal for settling refugees from Dandakaranaya nor there was any scope for resettling them in Sunderbans. Though this was published by the Dandakaranaya Project authorities some families chose to desert their settlement sites

*karmi shubirs* recently having been misled by false hopes held out to them that they could be settled in Sunderbans/West Bengal.

About 987 families are reported to have deserted the Dandakaranaya Project area. The total number of families settled in villages and in *karmi shubirs* in Malkangiri Zone of Dandakaranaya Project are 8355 and 4,209 respectively.

On receipt of information that the families had reached Howrah Sealdah and Hasanabad in West Bengal the matter was taken up with West Bengal Government immediately. West Bengal Government have informed that they are making arrangements to send these families back. They have been requested to arrange their return to the Malkangiri Zone of the Dandakaranaya Project from where they had actually deserted. 20 families are reported to have moved on 2nd March 1978 from Calcutta by train to Rayagoda. These families are being received there and hence taken to the Project area. West Bengal Government are understood to be arranging to send back the remaining families.

The Dandakaranaya Project authorities have been advised to receive and resettle the returning deserter families with appropriate understanding. They will be given legitimate assistance due on return to the settler villages.

Factors alleged and reported to be the causes for such desertions have been examined. Allegations of harassment by *adivasis* has been denied by Orissa Government. The Chief Administrator Dandakaranaya Project has stated that except for stray incidents of cattle grazing and claims to some patches of land there have been no problems arising between *adivasis* and settlers. He has also stated that the allegation that wages have not been paid for 4 months is baseless. It has been reported on the contrary, that work is available now for all the

families in the Zone but many settlers seem to be reluctant to take to manual work in the off season. Some of them seem to be wanting doles without work to which they are not eligible.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA:** Madam Chairman. I want to make it very clear at the outset that I have not the least intention to create any kind of provocation in the minds of the refugees who have been settled any where to desert their camps and sites, nor do I want to create any kind of scare in their minds. I want to draw the attention of the hon Minister and of the Government as a whole that unless a desparate situation has been created in regard to the problems of the refugees, the Central Government on very rare occasions—earlier also and even now—has given attention to the problems of the refugees.

I want to draw the attention of the hon. Minister—I have said once also earlier—to the fact that these refugees from both West Pakistan and the former East Pakistan who had been victims of Pakistan, are the wretched communities, but in the case of the refugees from West Pakistan, as soon as they crossed the border, they were taken to sites and then on to complete rehabilitation camps. But in the case of refugees from the former East Pakistan, till 1956 they had to wait in different camps and they were reduced to some kind of 'sub-human' people I should say, and I remember that on many occasions I tried to disabuse the mind of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru when he said "No after 1951 Nehru-Liaquat Pact all the refugees from East Pakistan and West Pakistan will go back to their former homes". But this expectation was believed. Only after 1956 in the case of the former East Pakistan refugees the move for rehabilitation started.

Now, as I have said, if you take the statistics, you will find that 60 to 75 per cent or more of the former refugees who came from former East

Pakistan, got rehabilitated by their own efforts. Only just a small fraction of the refugees were given Government aid.

Again I want to draw your attention to the fact that in the case of the West Pakistan refugees, very rightly they were given compensation for the properties left there to the extent of about Rs. 400 crores, but not a single farthing was given in the case of the former East Pakistan refugees. Recently, only in regard to the enemy properties they are going to get about Rs. 9 crores or Rs. 10 crores.

You, in the Government of India, know that in West Bengal there is no desertion from where they have been rehabilitated in different areas, different sites and different camps, I say they themselves occupied them, forcibly occupied them and they got themselves rehabilitated. The Government only sanctioned them or approved them, but in other parts in different States, the Government distributed money to different States and rehabilitation was entrusted to the different State Governments in U.P., in Bihar, in Orissa, in Madhya Pradesh, in Rajasthan, in Assam and various other places. But what actually happened? It happened in the case of Andamans, in the Terai area of Nainital and a very considerable Dandakaranya area. Except in those places, if you take statistics, you will find in most of the cases that crores of rupees of money that they spent went waste because most of the areas that I have mentioned except these three, the refugees deserted and now they turned into a community of beggars and they are roaming everywhere in West Bengal. I am sorry the earlier Government did not realise, and this Government also do not realise, that one of the basic reasons for the law and order problem and the conditions of uncertainty in West Bengal, one of the contributing factors, I say this is the most important contributing factor, is the uncertain fate of the refugees; and many of the refugees deserted from here and went there.

[Shri Samar Guha]

Madam, I had tried to draw the attention of the hon. Minister on an earlier occasion also....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please be brief and ask for any clarification.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Madam, I am coming to that. You have done a lot of work at the time of influx of refugees. Do not forget that. We rarely get such an occasion. Thousands and thousands, and lakhs and lakhs of people were in miserable conditions. Do you call them as human or subhuman beings? This is the rare occasion I get to at least raise the voice of those people. Rather I say the situation has worsened now. Unless the situation takes a desperate turn, no attention is given. How many times it was mentioned in this House that almost all the rehabilitation sites in Bihar, Orissa, most of U.P. except Nainital area, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh were deserted? All the refugees deserted them and rushed away. Did you take any notice of it? Why did they desert? Because they were thrown in some places in arid lands, there was no cultivable land for those peasants, no means of their recovery or rehabilitation and they were thrown there and they were dumped there. What they were to do? They are also human beings, they are not just a load that was thrown there. What happened to those refugees except in those three places I mentioned? If statistics are taken, you will find that 80 to 90 per cent of them deserted their sites or rehabilitation camps. For nearly 15 years, 1,30,000 refugees rotted in Mana and Deoli camps. Some of them are being transferred, I am told. Hardly you will find the matter raised here. I will also draw your attention—I raised this earlier also—to another point. Andamans was the most ideal place where there was not a single desertion. It is so because there was scope for having fish and scope for cultivation. That place is the best; yet, as I said earlier, an inter-departmental committee was

formed, consisting of Secretaries—of all Departments and Ministries. I don't know the reason why—is there any political conspiracy; is there any other motive or design—that plan has been cold-shouldered. Refugees who wanted to go there, made representations—from Mana camp, Deoli camp and others—and I forwarded them to the Minister of the earlier Government. They agreed that they would send them. The earlier Government agreed. They made a commitment on the floor of the House, not once but several times; but that commitment has not been honoured. What is the reason for it? I don't want to go into more of details. I quite appreciate the stand taken by you, and the West Bengal Government is also helping them. But I did not like the statement made by the Minister of Rehabilitation of the West Bengal Government—who was one of the leaders of the refugee organisations earlier—not even of the Chief Minister. It was the most heartless statement that he has made, viz., that there is no place anywhere. It looks as if the refugees were looked upon as cattle, dogs and cats and they could be thrown anywhere and everywhere. I know that even the political parties in West Bengal utilized the refugees for their own political objectives. Now nobody cares for these refugees. Many more are coming. Many were sent to horrible places.

I only want you to be a little careful when you use the words "with appropriate understanding, legitimate assistance should be given." You should be a little careful in interpreting the words 'appropriate understanding' and 'legitimate assistance'. Secondly I would also like to draw your attention to one of the factors. In regard to the other factors, I don't want to go into the details. For people coming from the plains and having their cultivable land in the hill areas and other areas, there is a difficulty. But they will have to do it. Wherever they have got the opportunity, they

will have to do it. I will not say anything about it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please ask for clarifications. You have made a long speech, Mr. Guha.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It has to be made, Madam. It will be difficult for us, Madam if you show that kind of a temper. We are elderly people. This is a sensitive matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please be brief.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I have to take a few more minutes, Madam.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much time will you take? Speech is not on the Order Paper. I have allowed you to ask for a clarification.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Who said that it is not on the Order Paper? It is a regular Calling Attention. Had it not been important, it would not have been allowed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much more time will you take?

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It is your habit. Unfortunately, I have to say this.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): Normally for Calling Attention motions, five people are allowed. He is a single speaker. Allow him some time.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: This is not the way to interfere. You are an elderly Member. I am also an elderly Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You cannot talk to the Chair in that fashion.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: This is in the List of Business.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please understand that the dignity of the Chair is the dignity of the House. You are my elder brother, but that does not mean that you should talk in this fashion. Please understand that the Chair is the Chair, whoever may be sitting there.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I quite appreciate it; and I quite agree with you. But you should also appreciate this; I am one of the worst sufferers in Pakistan jails. For more than 20 times I went to the Congress jails, fighting for the refugees. You should understand the problems that are there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand it, Mr. Guha. Therefore, I request you to be brief.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I only appeal to you, Madam, to give me a few more minutes. Here, there is one point to be mentioned. It is said that 500 families have deserted the camps in some projects; but in the second paragraph, they have mentioned the figure as 987. The difference is nearly five hundred families. That means about 2,000.

14 hrs.

Lastly, I would say: please take a total view of the problem of the rehabilitation of refugees. Earlier also a certain commitment was made in this House by the former Rehabilitation Minister. I would again raise this point and make a humble submission to you to look at the problem with human consideration and compassion. Do not forget that it was a pledge given to these unfortunate people, the victims of partition, by the highest dignitaries of our country, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, that they will look after their interests. You are only getting reports from officers. In this House a request was voted by several hon. Members that there should be a Committee of Members of Parliament—the choice would be left to you, because I do not want to make any capital out of it—and let that Committee go into the problems of rehabilitation and make some suggestions to you. You would also be enlightened by their views on the problems that these people are facing. That is the final and most important suggestion that I want to make.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT.** Madar, though the Calling Attention has been defined in the rules, unfortunately, in actual practice everything is violated about a Calling Attention and quite extraneous things come in

I am aware of the concern of the hon Member. He has touched upon an extremely delicate matter. I am really afraid that even giving facts may sometimes hurt. Regarding the actual issue raised in the Calling Attention Motion, I have already said that whatever difficulties have been created have been repaired, and repaired at some extra cost. There is already a decision of the Government that once rehabilitation facilities have been given to an individual or eligible family, they will not be repeated. But, because of the very reason that the hon Member has expressed some extra care has been taken, railway fare, facilities during the journey etc have been given simply because of the fact that they may not be put to any more trouble.

I quite share the concern of my hon friend. As far as refugees are concerned, whether they are coming from Punjab or Bengal, for all practical purposes they are all Indians. I want to bring to the notice of the hon Member that we have got quite a large number of Indians who are really living below the poverty line. The Government has definitely a duty to do all that they can for them including our friends from East Pakistan.

A comparison was made between the West Punjab and East Bengal refugees. It is very unfortunate. It should not have been there.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA.** Why should it not be there? Don't say so.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT.** I have got figures which will prove that much more amount has been spent on taking care of the East Bengal refugees, much more.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA.** Please do not raise this issue. I have got the figures. I have gone through them carefully.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT.** There were quite a few things I do not want to touch them, because they will hurt. The facts are entirely different from what he has got. I agree with him on the fact that these refugees are in difficulties. Government is doing its best.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA.** Do you challenge my figures? Not a single farthing was given as compensation to these refugees. Only recently under the Enemy Property (Compensation) Act some Rs 8 or Rs 9 crore has been given (*Interruptions*).

**MR CHAIRMAN.** Better let him complete his reply.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT.** I am trying to avoid saying quite a few things because I am sharing his concern. We are doing our best. The unfortunate part is that some of the Members think that this Government is idle and does not do anything. They have a certain picture in their mind which seems to be the only picture which is right and nothing else seems to be right. The fact is that Rs 21050 crores were spent on the refugees from West Pakistan, and from out of this Rs 10110 crores have been recovered upto 31st March, 1978 on account of loans and housing, whereas Rs 4882 crores have been spent on.

**SHRI SAMAR GUHA.** I have placed several figures from Government data. This is absolutely wrong data.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT.** A particular issue was raised by the calling attention. That has been totally, satisfactorily and entirely resolved, and all these people have gone back. I cannot enter into this sort of debate. If you stop intervening, I will give you all figures.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister and Mr. Guha may please have a talk outside.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: My most important question has not been answered.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: I have concluded my statement.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You talk it out with him.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: It is not a question of talking with him outside. He is my Very good friend. We have been here for one and a half years.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wish I could answer the question because I dealt with rehabilitation for some time at some stage, but I cannot answer from the Chair. I cannot force the Minister to answer as you like. He has answered as he thinks he should, and you have to be content with that. This is quite clear that he has given you a full reply, and he thinks he has finished. He thinks he has nothing more to add. So, you have to be content. I go to the next item.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: I draw your attention to the fact that my most important question has not been answered, namely whether a Committee of the Members of Parliament will be constituted to go into the question of rehabilitation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is a suggestion for action, it does not call for a reply.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Why not? They are fleeing from the different camps. I will not ask any further question; only for that question I want the hon. Minister's reply.

SHRI MOHD. SHAFI QURESHI (Anantnag): On a point of order. The House is seized of the matter. The matter is not one between the hon. Member and the hon. Minister. It has become the property of the House. If the hon. Minister is not able to satisfy the hon. Member, to give him a proper reply, it is for the

Chair to make him give a proper reply, because he is replying to the whole House and not to one individual Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have heard your point of order, and my very clear ruling is that the hon. Minister answers as best as he can, as he thinks he should, and I think he has given a very full reply. The question that Shri Samar Guha raised about compensation was not an issue in the calling attention at all. You know very well that on the West Pakistan side there was exchange of population and that properties had been left on both sides. It is quite different in East Bengal. If he had asked a question on compensation in the calling attention and the hon. Minister did not reply, I would certainly have asked him to reply. But that was not in the Calling Attention Notice, and therefore, I am not going to ask the Minister to reply. The Minister has finished his reply. I am moving to the next item.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: The question I have asked is...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, would you like to say anything about the committee?

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: No.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: Let us see how the Government can avoid it. I have asked whether they will send a team to Andamans. I have asked whether they will set up a committee to go to Andamans. This hon. Minister has rejected both. It was a commitment made on the floor of the House and the commitment made earlier by any Government should be honoured.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you please sit down? This is a very strange way of forcing the Minister to make a commitment about the committee and so on.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA: They do not honour a commitment that was made

[Shri Samar Guha]

earlier not once but several times

MR CHAIRMAN I am not aware of that So, I am not in a position to reply to that

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT It is an unfortunate thing that this matter of setting the East Bengal refugees in Andamans has been raised half a dozen times since this new Government took over and it has been explained already that the commitment is of rehabilitating all these East Bengal refugees There are about 10,000—9000 and odd—who remain to be settled They will be settled in Andamans, the rehabilitation process has been stopped

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA (Serampore) He must make a true statement He says only 9000 refugees had been stopped (Interruptions)

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT All right you say whatever you like The position is that there the rehabilitation process has been stopped for a number of reasons—ecological reasons settlement of ex-servicemen on the basis of some defence requirements etc etc—on account of which the resettlement of East Bengal refugees had been stopped (Interruptions)

SHRI SAMAR GUHA A high power committee which was ever formed by any Government during the 30s consisting of all the Secretaries of all the Ministries was constituted They gave a report that 15 lakh refugees could be rehabilitated by 1975 That was the recommendation made by such a powerful committee

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil) The Minister is stating the facts based on the information supplied by his Ministry May I suggest to him to go to Andamans and find out what is happening really?

SHRI SAMAR GUHA Something they want to hide (Interruptions)

MR CHAIRMAN. The Minister will take note of the suggestions that you have made and he will do whatever he can do Now, I go to the next item—Statement under Rule 377

14 14 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

(1) REPORTED UNDERUTILISATION OF CAPACITY OF HALDIA PORT

SHRI RAJ KRISHNA DAWN (Burdwan) Madam Chairman, The Haldia Port, is one of the most modern ports in the world and has been built at a huge cost to the country but due to under-utilisation of its capacity, there is a big financial loss to the nation and to the port on the one hand and on the other hand, the country is spending more money on the transportation of goods to the eastern zone Madam Chairman, Now, I would like to speak in Bengali

\*The port of Haldia is not only the best port of West Bengal but it also one of the best in India and can be compared easily with the best ports in the world This port has been constructed at the cost of crores of rupees and I am sure the House will be pleased to know that apart from the general berths the facility of most modern callteller berths have been built which is available only in a few ports of the world Not only this the port has the biggest cargo shed in the world which spreads over an area of one lakh square feet In addition to this the port is fitted with a gigantic and a very powerful crane which is not available anywhere in India To give example I would like to inform the House that few months ago this special berth could unload 35 calltellers within a period of 2½ hours Despite all these facilities the port is not being fully utilised The port authorities have re-

\*The Original Speech was delivered in Bengali