

12 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Reported Exodus of famine-stricken people
from Rural Areas of Maharashtra**

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE
(Rajapur): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

“The reported exodus of thousands of famine-stricken people from rural areas of Maharashtra to big cities like Bombay and Poona due to scarcity of food and drinking water and the steps taken by the Central Government to meet the situation.”

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
(SHRI F. A. AHMED): Sir, hon. Members are aware of the deficiency and erratic behaviour of the monsoon during the current year in various parts of the country including Maharashtra. This State has been unfortunately affected by successive three years of drought. At present, 25 districts of the State, with a population of about 2 crores are reported to be affected by scarcity conditions of varying intensity.

Both the Central and the State Governments are fully alive to the distress of the affected people. The State Government has, in fact, stepped up the various relief measures undertaken to relieve the distress of the people. In the middle of this month, over 10,000/- scarcity and departmental works are under way giving employment opportunities to nearly 20 lakhs of people. The State Government has reported that Rs. 23.23 crores have been allotted for relief works during the current financial year, of which Rs. 19.42 crores have been incurred by 15th November, 1972, whereas Rs. 2.45 crores only had been spent by the 1st of July, 1972. About 17,000 persons who are old, disabled and in firm are given gratuitous relief, for which an amount of Rs. 10.22 lakhs has been spent.

Scarcity of drinking water is reported to be acute particularly in the Aurangabad and Poona divisions. The position in some other areas is also causing anxiety to the State Government. Various measures to provide drinking water had been undertaken, which include deepening and boring of wells, transportation by bullock carts and tankers, undertaking a programme of community wells, desilting of private wells, construction of bandharas across rivulets and nullahs, and permitting the Zila Parishads to deepen and bore wells by blasting.

Measures to provide fodder to the affected cattle have also been initiated and 173 cattle camps have been sanctioned, which can accommodate nearly 2.5 lakh heads of cattle.

The Collectors have been allotted Rs. 4 crores for the purpose of tagai loans in addition to the budget provision of Rs. 3.59 crores.

There are over 23,000 fair price shops in the State. All the reasonable demands of the State Government for foodgrains to meet the requirements of its public distribution system have been fully met by the Government of India. It has been also decided to step up additional supplies of foodgrains.

The Central team visited the State in September, 1972, and on its recommendations, a ceiling of Rs. 20.09 crores has been fixed for the purpose of Central Assistance towards expenditure on relief measures for the period April to October, 1972. Ad-hoc assistance of Rs. 10 crores has been released to the State Government. The second team is due to visit the State in the first week of December, 1972.

Under the Emergency Production Programme, administrative approval has been given for Rs. 24.583 crores for minor irrigation schemes, of which Rs. 5.93 crores have been released. In addition, Rs. 10 crores have been sanctioned for short term loans for agricultural inputs.

Hon'ble Members will kindly appreciate that the State Government has been initiating and undertaking relief measures, in providing employment opportunities to the affected population, in making food-grains available through the fair price shops, in arranging drinking water supply and in arranging fodder supplies. Some newspapers have reported that some people are migrating from rural areas to cities. We are ascertaining the position from the State Government. Hon'ble Members would also kindly appreciate that all possible assistance is being provided by the Central Government to the State Government. We are consistently watching the situation and keeping ourselves in close touch with the State Government and will take all measures as may become necessary from time to time to deal with the situation.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am constrained to remark, after listening to the statement by the hon. Minister, that he has forgotten the fact that if the Calling Attention has been tabled in the Lok Sabha, it is not in the expectation that he should include in his statement only the reports of the activities of the State Government; but we expect that he should be able to give us a detailed survey of what Central assistance will be made available to the State in order to meet the situation.

In the context of the attempts that have been made not only by all the political parties of Maharashtra but even by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State, I would like to raise certain issues and seek certain clarifications. At the very outset, I must place before the House as to what is the propriety of bringing this Calling Attention motion before Parliament though apparently it appears to be a State subject. The situation in Maharashtra is so serious and grave that unless the Centre is able to intervene and give massive assistance, there will be no salvation for the people suffering from hunger, starvation and thirst who are now actually on the brink of a disaster. The situation is so serious there because

drought has taken place for three successive years. Even the official estimates given by the Government of Maharashtra indicate that out of the total of 35,000 villages, 23,000 villages in 21 districts in 1970-71 were hit by scarcity and 15,000 villages in 20 districts have been hit in 1971-72.

Sowing operations were held up in large tracts because of scarcity of rains and even where sowing operations were undertaken, there have been wastages of seeds. Even paddy growing areas like districts of Kolaba, Thana and Ratnagiri on the west coast and Chandrapur and Bhandara in the east which generally are not prone to fluctuations of rain are affected this year. Even these areas have been subjected to scarcity.

The most disappointing aspect of the problem is the kharif crop which constitutes about 60 per cent of the State's total agricultural output. It is about 40 per cent of the normal output this year. The sowing in rabi season has almost been 70 per cent lower than the normal output.

Drinking water facilities have been extremely scarce. About 1/4th of the villages of entire Maharashtra are being deserted for want of drinking water. 12,000 villages in the State have no perennial source of drinking water within a radius of one mile. Contrary to the assurance by the Government during the Gandhi Centenary year that villages will be provided with drinking water facilities, in this year no more than 15 per cent villages have been covered. This year, 20,000 villages and about 150 to 200 urban centres are stranded for want of drinking water facilities.

The more distressing aspect is about the agricultural labour and that is extremely bad. They have nothing else but to rely on relief centres to escape from starvation. There is no other source and, in the absence of that, they are likely to face starvation.

There is some reference to food supply and the fair price shops in the statement of the Minister. A large number

(Prof. Madhu Dandavate)

of fair price shops run by the cooperatives are closed down. The payment of wages is made 6 to 10 days after the musters are closed and, at that time, the stocks at the fair price shops, are not available at all. Therefore, some sort of a coordination has to be introduced between the payment of wages to those centres when relief works are going on and the supply of stocks at fair price shops.

As far as the cattle situation is concerned, one and one-fourth crore cattle will be affected during the famine for want of water and fodder. In a district like Sholapur, you will be surprised to know that, on an average, about 500 cattle are dying per day. That is the serious situation for want of fodder and drinking water.

As far as student population is concerned, 50,000 SSC students and 40,000 college-going students are badly in need of famine relief. But the old Famine Code and the Scarcity Manual do not provide relief for them.

After narrating the seriousness of the situation, I now come to the role that the Central Government has to play and the demand that has been made by the Chief Minister as well as various other agencies. Let me make it very clear that if I as a Member of the Opposition has tabled this Call Attention Motion, on this particular subject, as far as the MPs. from Maharashtra are concerned, all the 45 MPs, will stand like a rock as one man. They will fully cooperate in making available all the facilities from the Central Government. We will not treat the issue on party lines. Full cooperation is available notwithstanding the uncharitable remark that Mr. Dhar made in Bombay. I want to make it quite clear that we will not look at the national calamity from a party angle but extend all possible co-operation to the Government. No matter whether the Government deserves it or not full cooperation will be available to the Government to see that everything is done to face the serious situation.

Here are some concrete suggestions. The Maharashtra State used to pay 75 p.

as weekly holiday allowance to workers on scarcity works. Because of the intervention of the Central Government, this allowance has been stopped. They are told that this is not a permissible expenditure. Again the relief amount that was available to the students has been stopped. Due to the Central Government intervention, they have been told that this amount cannot be given to the students as relief measure.

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra has already demanded that from the allocation of the Fifth Plan, Rs 50 crores advance should be given to Maharashtra State so that 50 irrigation projects can be undertaken here and now so that drinking water facilities will be available, facilities for irrigation will be available and, at the same time, some work can be provided to those who are denied all work. This particular assurance has to come, of course, from the Planning Minister. Therefore, I had made a request to the Planning Minister that he should be present in the House so that the reply given by the Minister can be coordinated. Unfortunately, he is not here.

Second suggestion is that there has been a demand that some sort of a relief work should be started where agricultural labour which is not able to get work will be provided work. A concrete suggestion has been made by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra State to the Prime Minister

The Chief Minister of Maharashtra has already made an appeal to the Prime Minister that the West Coast Konkan Railway and other railway projects should be started as a relief activity, so that the agricultural labour which is without work can be provided with work. I raised this issue during the discussion on the Supplementary Demands for Grants in respect of Railways, and I am very happy to find that the Railway Minister, Shri T. A. Pai, has responded very favourably; but he has put forward a concrete suggestion which has to be implemented by the Finance Ministry and the Planning Ministry. He has said that, even as a famine relief work if the West Coast Konkan Railway is to

be started immediately, out of Rs. 5 crores of expenditure on West Coast Konkan Railway, Rs. 2 crores expenditure is on labour and if only the Planning Commission permit them to debit this Rs. 2 crore expenditure on employment, the railway construction will become mere viable; on this I demand that this particular arrangement should be made, and if that is done, the work can be started immediately.

Lastly, Sir, the outdated Famine Code has to be radically and drastically revised so that certain expenditures which are absolutely essential can be met. Actually provision for those expenditures will be available, especially the relief to the students and also relief to those who are working at different work camps. Also the holiday allowance that has to be given to them weekly has been stopped by the intervention of the Centre; that can be re-started.

These are the specific clarifications that I seek. I know that the Agriculture Minister will not be able to make the commitment, but when the Minister appears in the House, he is not merely the spokesman of that particular Ministry, he is supposed to co-ordinate the activities with others; and when he knows that this is the motion tabled on the floor of the Lok Sabha, he ought to have anticipated as to what are the demands made by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, which are the pressing problems in which the Central assistance is needed and if this assistance is to be given which are the other Ministries that are involved. Therefore, they ought to have consulted among themselves before coming forward with a statement. Unfortunately, that type of co-ordination and consultation is missing. But even then on his own if he can give some adequate replies and somehow make the necessary provision, we will be able to meet the situation that has developed out of famine and scarcity.

I will conclude by saying this. Many of us who have been coming from the southern States have always been feeling that on some of the pressing problems in the northern States there are lot of dis-

cussions but the problems of the southern States have to be taken up with great difficulty. With great difficulty we had to see that the call attention motion about famine was there. I am thankful to the Speaker that he has admitted this call-attention motion and did not raise the technical objection that this was a State subject. That is why I put it in such a form that Central assistance was the main issue; without any irrelevance, I had put the issue. I hope, necessary replies will be forthcoming.

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not put me in a difficult position. Mr. Bosu will come tomorrow and say, 'You allowed that; why not allow this also?' I decided to allow it because it had something to do with us also.

SHRI F. A. AHMED: I share the concern of the hon. Member who has given expression to the conditions which prevail in Maharashtra State. In fact, he will appreciate that, in making the statement before this House, I have not concealed the present situation in the State of Maharashtra. But I would like to point out that action, in order to provide relief, has to be taken both by the State Government and the Central Government. I have placed before the House the various steps which have been taken by the State Government in order to meet the situation, and I have also placed before the House the various actions taken by the Central Government for the purpose of providing assistance to the State Government.

I may point out to the hon. Member that the Chief Minister of Maharashtra was in Delhi only about two or three days ago. He had discussions with me regarding the food situation, the test relief works, and I can assure the hon. Member that he has gone back satisfied not only with me but also with the discussions which he had with the Finance Minister and other Ministers regarding the relief to be provided to Maharashtra. I would say in a few words that all the reasonable requirements of Maharashtra in this unfortunate situation will be met and there should be no need for any anxiety or worry in this behalf.

[Shri F. A. Ahmed]

I may also point out that so far as food-grains are concerned, since the month of January till the end of October we have given as much as 130,231 tonnes of foodgrains for meeting the requirements of Maharashtra Government and, I am told that something more will be required in the months of December, January and February and for that also, arrangements will be made and there should be no need for any anxiety in that behalf.

So far as the test relief works are concerned, they will provide opportunity for employment and about 20 lakhs of people have been provided with this opportunity and I understand that the Chief Minister is going to take up a scheme which will cover not only schemes within 5 km but which will go even beyond 5 km. and which will provide further opportunity for test relief works for all people who are unemployed..

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Akola): What about restoring Sunday allowance?

SHRI F. A. AHMED: These are the matters which have been discussed by the Chief Minister and I have no doubt whatsoever that he has gone back satisfied that all the reasonable requirements have been met

The only thing that I would like to add is that so far as the test relief works are concerned, sufficient quantity has been provided. As I pointed out in my statement, we are sending a Central team in the month of December and they will assess what will be their further requirements in that behalf as far as Maharashtra State is concerned and that will also be met as early as possible.

So far as the emergency food production programme is concerned, for the purpose of providing irrigation facilities, we have provided about Rs. 23 crores out of which nearly Rs. 6 crores have already been sanctioned and I think the next instalment will also be going very soon after we have received the report of implementation of the schemes which have

been undertaken by the Maharashtra Government.

PROF MADHU DANDAVATE: The Maharashtra Chief Minister made three concrete demands: No. 1 An advance payment of Rs. 50 crores from the Fifth Plan funds. No. 2. The West Coast Railway should be immediately taken up as a famine relief works and No. 3, the weekly holiday allowance of 75 paise which has been discontinued at the instance of the Centre should be restored. What are you going to do about it?

SHRI F. A. AHMED: I do not know the details of the discussion which the hon. Chief Minister had with the Finance Minister and the Planning Minister. These are matters with which they are concerned. But, I know this much that he has gone back satisfied. So, he must have placed these demands before the Chief Minister and he must have agreed.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): The situation is in fact much more than grim. They say the worst months have not yet come. The prospects of the coming 8 months are going to be worse. I have been informed by very knowledgeable persons that in one particular town alone, viz., Sholapur, they have got 35,000 cattle which came from the adjoining areas and the cattle cannot be given water, leave alone food. 15,000 villages in Maharashtra, I am told, have no suitable drinking water. They almost touch Rajasthan's performance. One hon. Member said 12,000 but my figure is 15,000... (Interruptions). Mine is more accurate to the facts

This is the ninth year of drought in this area. The taluks of Karola, Sangola and Mahul of Sholapur District and Jamkhed, Karjat and Shadol of Ahmednagar District are facing drought consecutively for the last 8 years... (Interruptions). This is what the Economic Times correspondent says, a man who has seen nine years of drought.

MR. SPEAKER: You said 35,000 cattle?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Yes, 35,000 cattle came to the town from the rural areas because the cattle cannot be given food and water in the villages. You must be knowing because Punjab is very rich in cattle wealth; you know the difficulties there. The area under irrigation is very small in Maharashtra. Government's own figures show this. Money has been earmarked for rural package programmes which includes minor irrigation. We find they have not been able to spend the allocations so far. This shows how really interested they are to solve this problem I agree with my hon. friend that test relief works should be provided. I would go a step further. Immediate sinking of shallow tube-wells and deep tube-wells should be undertaken because this is the first and the foremost task. Because of the class character and capitalist path of development programmes undertaken during the last 25 years they have completely neglected the bottom man in this country.

AN HON. MEMBER: They do not have even drinking water.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: For Maharashtra, the allocation was Rs. 43 crores and they have not even spent Rs. 34 crores. This is a priority sector. I want to know from the hon. Minister as to why this money has not been spent. They are dependent on the rain-God. I have said that in the drought-prone areas such as the ones I have already mentioned the performance has been extremely poor. In certain States where the allocation was 284.64 lakhs, the expenditure did not exceed Rs. 186.63 lakhs. In certain other cases, where the allocation is Rs. 422 lakhs, the expenditure did not exceed even 348 lakhs.

Therefore, the question is this. Is the Government really wanting to do anything in the matter? Are they really interested to do anything to better the life of the poor, ordinary peasant toiling in the village, or is it mere lip-sympathy that they show? There is no special stress laid on these aspects of the problem. What is the percentage of irrigated land in this country? If we call ourselves civilised, if we

think we are a modern nation, if we call ourselves progressive, let the hon. Minister truthfully, honestly and correctly inform the House about the percentage of land in the country which is irrigated during the last 25 years. So far as Maharashtra is concerned, they should immediately rush a fact-finding team. It should not be composed only of their chosen bureaucrats, but this should include Members of Parliament. This should be rushed immediately to know the drought conditions and to assess the minimum amount required to save precious lives in Maharashtra. I want to know, why is it that the money allotted for drought-prone areas has been spent and why the allocation has been so meagre.

SHRI F. A. AHMED: The hon. Member has raised several questions which have no relevance so far as the present matter is concerned. So far as Maharashtra is concerned, I would like to say that Maharashtra has one of the best administered Governments in the States. Whatever expenditure is provided is being spent as fully as possible. I do not have fuller details about particular items. But I know this much that they have decentralised the system with the result that village panchayats and zila parishads have control over the expenditure and they try to spend the amounts as quickly as possible and as fully as possible. So far as the area under irrigation is concerned, it is true that up till now we have only about 20 per cent of the area under irrigation. So far as Maharashtra is concerned, because of the difficult terrain and because of the difficult conditions their average is even much less than what the national average is.

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी (स्वा-
नियर) : अध्यक्ष जी, इस में दो ही नाम हैं।
अगर आप मौका दें तो तीन सेक्टर और
पूछ सकते हैं। यह मामला बड़ा गम्भीर है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय - यह मेरे लिये बड़ा
मौकिक है।

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : श्री मंत्री यह भी पता नहीं लगा है कि सेंटर को टीम जाने में इतनी देर क्यों हो रही है ?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : वाजपेयी शहर कोई ऐसा करे तो मेरी समझ में आता है, कम से कम आप ऐसा न करें ।

SHRI VASANT SATHE: May I seek one clarification through one question?

MR. SPEAKER: No, let him please sit down.

12.31 hrs.

RE RABI CROP IN BIHAR

श्री नानोदर प्रसाद यादव (कटिहार) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं भारत का ध्यान आकृष्ट करते हुए खाद्य तथा कृषि मंत्रों महोदय से निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ कि बिहार में किसानों की स्थिति बदतर हो रही है । यद् रबी की बुवाई का प्रधान समय है, गत साल भरकर बाढ़ के कारण और इन बार उत्पन्न सुखाड के कारण किसानों की रीढ़ की हड्डी टूट गई है । बिहार सरकार ने घोषणा की थी कि जिन खेतों में वर्षा के कारण धान की बुवाई नहीं हो सकेगी, उसमें रबी की खेती की जाय, लेकिन मुझे दुःख के साथ कहना पड़ता है कि अभी तक (व्यवधान) . . . न बीज पहुंचाया जा रहा है और न खाद पहुंचा है । जिस का नतीजा यह हो रहा है कि बेघर-हाउस और १००००००० के गोडउन से खानेवाला गेहूँ बीज के रू में दिया जा रहा है और वह भी छोटे किसानों को मुहिया नहीं हो रहा है ।

मैं चाहता हूँ कि रबी का अधिक उत्पादन हो, इस के लिये केन्द्रीय सरकार विशेष ध्यान दे कर बिहार के किसानों के लिये बीज की शीघ्र व्यवस्था करें ।

12.32 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

Finance Accounts of Central Government for 1968-69

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI K. R. GANESH): I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Finance Accounts (Hindi version) of the Central Government for the year 1968-69. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-3870-A/72].

RE: CASHEW WORKERS IN KERALA

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): I have already written to you a letter ..

MR. SPEAKER: He writes to me so many letters But he cannot raise it today I shall see to it tomorrow.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: We Kerala people are very much worried....

SHRI R. BALAKRISHNA PILLAI (Mavelikara): About 1½ lakhs of workers in the cashew factories of Kerala are affected. . .

MR. SPEAKER: I have allowed only Shri G. P. Yadav today. I shall see to this later.

12.34 hrs.

RE: LAYING OF PAPERS ON THE TABLE OF THE HOUSE

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): On the 27th instant, when I was holding myself in readiness to lay an authenticated document on the Table of the House, Mr. Deputy-Speaker repeatedly stated that the Speaker had not seen the notice, and therefore, the Deputy-Speaker was not in possession, or rather, he was in possession of only two papers, as far as my notices under rule 377 were concerned. This is not correct. Mr. Deputy-Speaker was wrongly briefed and in actual fact, three sheets of paper concerning two notices under rule 377 were in possession of Lok Sabha which I had given to them