

assurances were given. Nobody is very much convinced about this, Sir, because the construction of this type of sky-scraper buildings for which Delhi has become a paradise, is the occupation which black money operators, whether they are building contractors or the owners of these buildings, are able to carry on with impunity it seems: I want to know not about the future but about the past, whether the inquiries which were conducted into, for example, the recent fire in Ansal Bhavan on Barakhamba Road, the earlier fire in that Siddhartha Inter-continental Hotel in which a number of people lost their lives, whether these and any other similar inquiries did not actually establish that the designs of these buildings were thoroughly faulty from the point of safety, there was no effective arrangement for fire escape or fire exit or for even locating the fire in time. And if so, what action was taken in those particular cases against the people who were responsible for this kind of criminal negligence? I would like to know whether anybody has been punished, whether any kind of deterrent punishment has been given so that in future these contractors, designers and builders have some fear that they will be hauled up unless they really bother about the safety precautions. I want to know what action was taken.

PROF. N.G. RANGA : And also the engineers, Sir.

[*Translation*]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : The question asked by the hon. Member comes under the jurisdiction of Home Ministry. They are inquiring into the matter. As regards other important provisions, I would like to say that there are fire-fighting requirements, zonal planning regulations, building by-laws and several other provisions which the Government is constantly observing. He has asked a specific question regarding the action taken. The Question comes under the jurisdiction of Home Ministry and they are looking into it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : What is the result of the inquiry ?

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : I am not aware of it, the Home Ministry is looking into it.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : He is not aware of the result of the inquiry. He even

does not know whether the Home Ministry is capable of taking any action or not? What are the results of the inquiry, why there were fires, why there were so many casualties, the hon. Minister does not know about all these things. He is in charge of Urban Development in Delhi and he does not know all these things.

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : The Home Ministry is inquiring into it and as soon as the conclusions are available, the Government will make them public.

SHRI SHRIPATI MISHRA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister obtain information and tell us if there is a notice board in front of the hotels where fire, took place or where there were troubles displaying 'stay at your own risk'? Is the hon. Minister aware of it? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : If the hon. Member mentions about a particular hotel, then Government will definitely look into it.

[*English*]

#### Hunger Deaths

\*373. SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether instances of hunger deaths occurred during the past six months in different parts of the country have come to notice of Union Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by Union Government in this regard ?

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL) : (a) No, Sir. No hunger deaths have been reported by the State Governments.

(b) and (c). Do not arise.

[*English*]

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : From the reply given to this Question, it appears that the only channel of information available to the Central Government is the State Government. They have no other means of finding out what is actually happening or not happening in these areas which were so

seriously affected by drought and near-famine conditions. They have no other way of finding out whether the State Government informs them the cases or not. It is nobody's case that in the recent drought, there were very large scale deaths due to starvation. Nobody is saying that—that thousands of lakhs of people have died of starvation. That is not the intent of the question at all.

But the point is, large number of reports have appeared—they may not be official reports—regarding the incidence of starvation deaths. As you know, one mass phenomenon already exists in our country in rural areas of many States is malnutrition. Mass nutrition prevails in this country among poorer sections of people. Everybody knows it. Therefore, when a calamity like this takes place, it is obvious that many of these people who are living always in conditions of malnutrition may be just pushed below that and may have actually died because of starvation. But I want to know whether some of these reports were inquired into which came to their notice even if the State Government did not say anything.

For example, I just mention the annual report of the Desert Medical Research Council, which is an affiliated body of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). In a report released on 28th January, it has stated that the deaths were occurring in the worst-hit districts of Barmer and Jodhpur and the Senior Deputy Director General of IDMR. Mr. S.P. Apte has said in the report : Many villages including Kondra village are experiencing deaths are due to malnutrition. Of course, you can say that these deaths are due to malnutrition and not due to starvation. This kind of hair-line quibbling always goes on, I know. But at least on the basis of such reports, it is necessary that Government makes its own inquiry.

Regarding Kalahandi, these have been a lot of controversies I only want to say two things. About Kalahandi, an inquiry was set up. A District and Sessions Judge of Kalahandi was appointed to inquire into after the Supreme Court heard the public interest litigation and directed an inquiry to be held by the District and Sessions Judge. Now, at pages 177 and 178 of this District

and Sessions Judge report, he has said that death of many persons over 49 years of age is death due to old age. This is written in his report. But a Committee of the Orissa Assembly, House Committee—I presume all Parties are represented on this—and the Orissa House Committee in its report dated 11.7.1987 has pointed out that proforma inquiry...

[*Translation*]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : What do you want to ask ? You have given a long speech.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : I am quoting from the report.

[*English*]

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : You have not told this. We are getting it from him. It is very relevant.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : It pointed out, proforma inquiry into the alleged cases of starvation deaths has not been conducted properly, in time, as required under section 39 (1) of the Orissa Relief Code. The Committee reports that all allegations of starvation deaths published in newspapers should be inquired into by some gazetted officer within 48 hours after it comes to notice. But this was not done. Similarly, there are many other reports. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi wrote a letter in Hindi to one Member of the other House who had also enquired into this question and in that letter he is quoted as having said about Madhya Pradesh :

[*Translation*]

“Received the details about the drough situation in Madhya Pradesh sent by you, the State Government is being asked to look into the matter.”

[*English*]

Chief Minister Shri Motilal Vora told this correspondent on 1st of June that no such letter was received from the Prime Minister. What are we to do ? Everybody is worried about these things. Foreign newspapers also sometimes deliberately try to play up this thing in order to show that in India so many people are dying of starvation deaths. The real position should be made clear. The Government should not

try to evade it. If a few people have died of starvation here and there out of so many million people, it is nothing surprising because they are living below poverty line and they are living in conditions of malnutrition. By saying "No. Sir. Nothing has happened. We don't admit anything," what is the fun? (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is our senior colleague and very well informed. He has tried to give a political touch to his arguments. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you are well aware of the fact that during the last 40 years of independence, nobody in this country has died of starvation. (*Interruptions*) I have not given any speech. Kindly listen to me. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : Let him make an inquiry. In Tanjore, thousands of people died of starvation. People died in Kerala also.

DR. DATTA SAMANT : Let him hold an inquiry.

SHRI THAMPAN THOMAS : If you appoint some responsible persons in the House Committee, it will be proved.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : The hon. Minister does not seem to be aware that 400 persons have died in Kalahandi.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : I say with authority that not a single person has died of starvation. It does not matter whatever the hon. Member may claim...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : He is giving you the information.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Let this matter be referred to the Committee. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : What are you doing?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : I asked when that letter was...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : If the hon. Member does not want to ask, then let me proceed further. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : What are you doing? Let us listen.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Will you listen to me...(*Interruptions*) The hon. Member can raise it during zero hour...(*Interruptions*). The hon. Member spoke for 20 minutes and asked his question in 10 or 12 minutes. I will take 10 minutes to reply. I should have at least half the time taken by the hon. Member. Kindly listen to me.

MR. SPEAKER : He is replying. Why do you shout?

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : You go on speaking looking towards the press gallery.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I was trying to explain that I agree with the hon. Member regarding the news published in one or two newspapers that some people have died of starvation in Orissa, Gujarat and Rajasthan. One or two cases have been reported. As soon as the matter was reported in the press, the Government wrote to the State Government which inquired into it and the Government of India deputed an officer of the rank of Under Secretary to visit the spot (a village) on the Rajasthan Gujarat border where the population is 1100. A suicide case was found to have taken place there. I am stating before you the factual position. It was a case of suicide. If suicide case is to be reported as a death of starvation, then (*Interruptions*)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : It was indigestion or starvation which led to suicide! (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Please listen to me. I tell you about the report. Under Secretary contacted the Pradhans in the villages. Village Pradhan, Shri Keshavbhai Shah,...(*Interruptions*) Shri Meenabhai Shah, Shri Rahim Bhai and Shri Zamil Bhai were contacted and enquiries were made from them about the incident which took place in the village. The Under Secretary also contacted the people in nearby villages. He submitted his report in

which he has stated that no incident of starvation death has taken place in any of the village. Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to inform the hon. Members that during the last two years, Government of India has supplied 2 lakh tonnes of wheat to Rajasthan to meet the situation arising out of drought conditions in the State. Similarly, 3 lakh tonnes of wheat has also been given to Gujarat. On the same lines, the Government provides all possible assistance where there is drought or flood to mitigate the sufferings of the people. I want to inform...*(Interruptions)* kindly listen to me, then I can proceed. Has the hon. Member ever enquired of the State Government? He should also ask from the State Government. Government of India sanctioned Rs. 380 crore during the last two years for the three schemes, N.R.E.P., R.L.E.G.P. and I.R.D.P. to provide work and employment to the people. The number of the poor and those living below the poverty line is approximately 22.5 crore in this country. The Government, in order to bring people alone the poverty line, has provided employment opportunities to 9 crores of people. Government of India provide all possible assistance to the people. In spite of that, if political leaders indulge in malicious propoganda to defame the Government, then it is not justified.

I would like to say something about Bengal, the state wherefrom the hon. Member comes...*(Interruption)* Whatever money was sanctioned to Bengal, only 60 per cent out of that has been spent and the rest 40 per cent has remained unutilized. The Government have not even submitted the accounts till date...*(Interruptions)* If the hon. Member comes to me, I will present the records before him.

So, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government will not let anybody die of starvation in the country nor anyone has died of starvation. There is a malicious propoganda to defame the Government. I would like to request the hon. Members to undertake on the spot enquiry to personally verify the facts about the starvation deaths. If he can prove, after the the enquiry, that the people have died of starvation, then only he can say that the Government is wrong. The Government is time to its

claim that till date no one has died of hunger.

*[English]*

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Mr. Bhajan Lal would not be Mr. Bhajan Lal, if he did not reply like that. He is accusing me...

*[Translation]*

He says that we have politicalised the issue. But, what he himself has stated? Does it not sound like a speech meant for next elections? The hon. Minister has not answered to what I had asked. If some officer from the independent professional scientific body, like I.C.M.R. under the control of Government, not a private body, submits such a report, then will the Government remove the person from service who has reported the facts or will the Government order some independent inquiry into it? If a senior most official of I.C.M.R., reports such things in his inquiry report, then is it not the duty of the Government to have a thorough inquiry about the report? Why does the hon. Minister not tell us the result of his findings? He is speaking as if he is campaigning for an election. He should answer to the question I have asked.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have explained in detail that there has not been a single starvation death in the country. Death can occur due to many reasons. So many people die everyday in the country. Can we conclude that they have all died of starvation? A man may die while quarreling or may commit suicide. It does not mean that he has died of starvation. There may be a tragedy due to enmity or due to certain other reasons. But, accusing the Government that the tragedy is a starvation death is not justified. How much truth is there in hon. Member's statement will be seen in due course.

SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER JAIN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the incident which has been aired so much is related to Barmer district in my constituency. On a visit to the village, I found the condition scriuus there because of malnutrition. There can not be two opinions about that. People are falling sick and dying due to malnutrition, but there has been no death because of starvation...*(Interruptions)* I am telling the truth...*(Interruptions)* I shall not give a wrong

picture...*(Interruption)* Deaths have been due to malnutrition, not due to starvation. I have also seen the meals which the villagers partake. Their meal consists of 'chapathis' made of wheat flour and the poor people, as they are partake these chapattis with green chillies. What is needed is that some sort of pulses or green vegetable should be supplied to them so that their meal may be rich in nutritive value. Previously they used to get buttermilk which kept them healthy. The report of the Desert Centre is very alarming. In fact, the situation is alarming. The Rajasthan Government is distributing wheat and providing gratuitous relief to the people of those areas. But this situation is restricted to certain areas only. The Central Government should join hands with the Rajasthan Government to meet the situation.

**SHRI BHAJAN LAL :** Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member said that lack of adequate proteins in the diet made the people weak and this weakness led to their death. How can we jump to such conclusions? There are so many places where 'chapattis' are eaten with raw onions or green chillies. In many areas, specially in rural India, green vegetables are not available. People take Chapattis with 'chutney.' We have seen it with our own eyes. It is true that because of drought Rajasthan is facing the problem of cattle. Buttermilk is in short supply because milch cattle have perished. Poor people usually partake chapattis with butter milk. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you must be knowing about this as you have lived in a village. Gram flour is mixed with buttermilk to prepare 'Karhi' (Curry) and millet flour is mixed with buttermilk to prepare 'Rabrhi...*(Interruption)*. Yes, Yes—how would the hon. Member know that buttermilk is used to prepare 'Karhi' (curry). How would a citizen of this jet-age know about the recipes of rural India?...*(Interruption)* Shri Rao is sitting near the hon. Member, he can tell the recipe for making 'Karhi' (Curry)...*(Interruption)*. How can the hon. Member, used to eating choicest delicacies, know about ordinary Indian dishes?...*(Interruptions)* Mr. Speaker, Sir, could you please satisfy their curiosity by telling them as to what preparations can be made with buttermilk. The Government has opened fair-price shoppes in the remote areas of the country. In these areas it is hard to get essential commodities like flour,

cereals, salts, spices and other items of daily use. Retail outlets have been opened for the supply of these items. The cooperatives and the Government have opened these shops for the convenience of the people. I want to repeat that there has been no starvation death in the country. Deaths could be occurring due to illness and some other reasons. Till now this Government has not let anyone die of starvation. Nor will it let anyone die due to this in future.

[English]

#### Agro Climatic Zones

\*374. PROF. NARAIN CHAND  
PARASHAR† :  
SHRI VIRDHI CHANDER  
JAIN :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to refer to the reply given on 16 November, 1987 to Starred Question No. 135 regarding the demarcation of the country into different-Agro-climatic Zones and state :

(a) whether the agro-climatic zones have been set up;

(b) if so, the names of the agro-climatic zones alongwith the regions covered by each of them and the details of the scheme envisaged for the development of these zones; and

(c) if not, the time by which the zones would be demarcated and the schemes worked out in detail ?

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL) : (a) to (c). A Statement is given below.

#### Statement

(a) Yes, Sir. The Planning Commission has undertaken the exercise for organising agricultural development planning, based on agro-climatic zones in the country.

(b) and (c). Details of 15 agro-climatic zones along with the regions covered are given in the statement below.

Planning Commission has constituted a sub-group representing Department of Agriculture, Planning Commission, I.C.A.R. and the State Agriculture Universities to suggest crop pattern, forestry, animal husbandry, and Agro processing activities suited to each agro-climatic zone.