

criteria for opening an Extra Departmental Branch Post Office in a rural area is that the village is either the Headquarter of a Gram Panchayat or has a population of 2000 or more; the village is situated at a minimum distance of 3 kms from an existing post office and the estimated income of the proposed post office is at least 25 per cent of its estimated cost.

In case of hilly, tribal and backward areas, a post office can be opened in a village provided the village is either the headquarter of a Gram Panchayat or has a minimum population of 1000; the village is at a minimum distance of 3 kms from an existing post office; and the estimated income of the proposed post office is at least 10 per cent of its estimated cost. For this purpose an integrated cluster of villages within a radius of 1.5 kms can also be taken into account.

As regards Railway Mail Service, this is a suggestion for consideration of the Government.

Loss of Crop due to drought in West Bengal

*108. SHRI PIUS TIRKEY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated loss of crops due to drought in West Bengal;

(b) the assistance sought by the West Bengal State for giving relief to farmers and the assistance provided by the Central Government to West Bengal State; and

(c) whether the assistance so far provided by the Central Government has been considered inadequate and if so, what further assistance is proposed to be given to West Bengal State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(c) No, Sir.

PART (a)	PART (b)	Assistance provided by the Central Government to West Bengal Government
Estimated loss due to drought in West Bengal	Assistance sought by the Government of West Bengal	
1	2	3
1979-80	1979-8	1979-80
<p><i>Pre-Kharif</i></p> <p>4.75 lakh ha. of cropped area was reportedly damaged and 4.2 lakh ha. remained unsown. The value of the crops lost was estimated at Rs. 225 crores. by the State Government.</p>	<p><i>Pre-Kharif</i></p> <p>(i) The State Government projected an expenditure to the tune of Rs. 4352 lakhs including short term loan for Rs. 13.00 lakhs.</p> <p>(ii) Allocation of 1.35 lakh M.T. of foodgrains under Food-for-Work Programme and 10.500 M.T. of foodgrains for assistance to unemployable categories of persons and their families was also asked for.</p>	<p><i>Pre-Kkharif and Kharif</i></p> <p>(i) On the basis of the reports of the Central Teams which visited the State during June 1979 and December 1979 and on the recommendation of the High Level Committee on Relief thereon a total ceiling of expenditure of Rs. 2767 lakhs was approved for purposes of Central assistance for the drought covering both Kharif and pre-Kharif periods.</p>

1

2

3

Kharif

7.05 lakh ha. could not at all be sown and 8.50 lakh ha. were reported to have been partially damaged. The value of crops lost was estimated at Rs. 467 crores by the State Government.

Kharif

(i) The State Government sought assistance of Rs. 5022.40 lakhs.

(ii) The Central Govt. allocated and released 2.45 lakh M.T. of foodgrains under normal Food-for-Work Programme and Special Food-for-Work Programme including 0.30 lakh M.T. of foodgrains carried forward from the previous year.

(ii) Allocation of 24500 M. T. of foodgrains under the Food-for-Work Programme.

(iii) Short-term loans of Rs. 8 crores was sanctioned for rabi crops and Rs. 5 crores for Kharif and pre-Kharif period.

(iv) 6,700 M. T. of food grains was allocated under Food for Nutrition Programme for feeding pregnant women, lactating mothers, old, infirm destitutes and handicapped person and children below six years.

1980-81

In the middle of May, 1980 the State Govt. reported that the drought conditions in the 10 districts are continuing during the current year in varying degrees. No report about estimated damage to crops has been received.

1980-81

The State Government has not asked for any Central assistance during the current financial year.

1980-81

(i) the Central Govt. have allocated 70,000 M. T. of foodgrains under the Normal Food-for-Work Programme and the Special Food-for-Work Programme.

(ii) Short-term loans of Rs. 5 crores was sanctioned for Kharif 1980.

(iii) The Govt. of India is procuring rigs from indigenous manufacturers boring drinking water wells in the hard rock areas.

SHRI PIUS TIRKEY: The Minister has stated that the State Government sought assistance of Rs. 5022.40 lakhs. On the basis of the reports of the Central Teams which visited the State during June, 1979 and December, 1979

and on the recommendations of the High Level Committee on relief thereon, a total ceiling on expenditure of Rs. 2,757 lakhs has been approved against the assistance of Rs. 5,022,40 lakhs sought by the

Government of West Bengal. May I know from the hon. Minister the findings of this Committee and why 50 per cent of the assistance sought by the Government of West Bengal has been rejected?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RECONSTRUCTION (SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO): Sir, you would agree that loss on account of such natural disasters cannot be fully compensated. The Central Teams that visited the States made recommendations on assessment of various factors and taking in view the overall need for Central help in all the 11 States affected by drought and in my opinion the West Bengal Government got the maximum help compared to any other State on account of drought. As I have stated earlier in this House, the ceiling fixed for West Bengal was Rs. 13 crores which can be compared to a large State like U.P. U.P. only got Rs. 10 crores. So there should be no grievance on that account.

SHRI PIUS TIRKEY: May I ask the hon. Minister, out of the total allocation of 70,000 metric tonnes of foodgrains under the normal food-for-work programme and a special allocation of 24,500 metric tonnes, how much actually is received by the Government of West Bengal up to this date including 6,700 metric tonnes of foodgrains allotted for nutrition programme?

SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO: The entire quantity of foodgrains allotted for food-for-work programme has been placed at the disposal of the West Bengal Government and so far as my information goes, they have utilised the entire quantity according to them, but we have received certificates of utilisation only in respect of 50 per cent of the allocation as I have stated.

SHRI SANJAY GANDHI: Is it a fact that there were a large number of complaints that the West Bengal

Government had diverted the money provided for drought relief and famine relief to the CPI (M) party card-holders?

SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN: Sir, it is true that we have also received some complaints regarding what the hon. Member has mentioned.

(Interruptions).

SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO: Sir, it is a fact that several complaints were received about mis-utilisation of the quantity of foodgrains supplied to the State under the food-for-work programme. We sent a team for holding inquiries into those complaints and it has come out during the course of inquiry that party workers in villages were paid to look after the work in the Panchayats out of the amounts obtained for the food-for-work programme and also this assistance was utilised, as I have stated earlier in reply to a question on the Call Attention motion, to repair private land-owners' tanks. Even sand was removed from the fields of private land-owners out of this grant only to help certain individuals. The report is being processed.

Another very serious irregularity committed by the West Bengal Government is that they have failed to constitute committees for looking after the Food for Work Programme according to the guidelines laid down. They are reluctant to associate even legislators belonging to parties other than the ruling party. We are looking into these complaints, and we shall soon decide, if the West Bengal Government refuses to accept the guidelines laid down by the Centre, what should be the policy of the Centre.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE—rose.

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing should go on record without my permission.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: **

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: The hon. Minister has given reply to a very *** question from a very big man..... (*Interruptions*).

AN HON. MEMBER: It should be expunged.

MR. SPEAKER: The expression is unparliamentary. You can put a question, not make an insinuation.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: Let me put a question. (*Interruption*).

MR. SPEAKER: You can come out with a very constructive supplementary. That is what I want.

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY: He has stated that the Food for Work Programme was used even to repair private tanks and for removing sand from the fields of private land owners. As you know, there were heavy floods in West Bengal in 1978 and entire districts were devastated. Sand covered lakhs and lakhs of acres of land, and sand and flood do not follow the directives of the Central Government. In a devastating situation like that, when lakhs and takhs of acres of land are covered by sand is it wrong on the part of the State Government to remove the sand, so that food can be produced?

PROOF. K. K. TEWARY: He is in the habit of making such remarks. He must apologise for that.

SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO: Removal of sand from private owners' fields may be necessary in view of the State Government's policy of helping the farmers, but the Food for Work Programme does not entitle the State Government to go against the guidelines laid down, and this was contrary to the instructions given by the Central Government for utilisation of the Food for Work assistance.

SHRI PIUS TIRKEY: The State Trading Corporation is adding to the trouble because of slow supply of

essential commodities like sugar, edible oils etc. May I know from the hon. Minister what steps have been taken to streamline the public distribution system in the modified ration shops in West Bengal?

SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO: The question relates to the Department of Civil Supplies and so, the hon. Member may put a separate question.

SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY: The Minister has categorically stated that the funds or the foodgrains supplied to the Government of West Bengal had been misused. I would like to know, what method the Minister is going to adopt to recover the money from the Government of West Bengal.

MR. SPEAKER: Next Question.

Lack of Foodgrains for Food-for-work Programme in West Bengal

*109. **SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY:** Will the Minister of RURAL RECONSTRUCTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Food-for-Work Programme in West Bengal has been suffering because of lack of adequate supply of foodgrains from the Centre; and

(b) if so, this measures taken to release the requested quota of foodgrains for the programme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI R. V. SWAMINATHAN): (a) and (b). No, Sir. A total quantity of about 2.45 lakh MT. of foodgrains was available with Government of West Bengal during the year 1979-80. Out of this, the State Government have reported utilisation so far of 1.23 lakh MT. only. As such, the State Government have a substantial quantity of foodgrains with them.