

Rehabilitation of
Displaced persons from
East Pakistan

[Shri P. S. Daulta]

be lowered without new premises being built, and they can be built either by themselves or by the Government of the people as they have done in China and neighbouring countries; or the third, alternative is to bow before the landlords, to bow before men with money, to give them incentive to invest in this so-called industry. They have adopted the third course. This Bill is a standing invitation to the men with money, 'Gentlemen, come along, invest here, and I shall make it profitable for you' Let me tell them that it is already very profitable. If somebody wants to build a house in Rohtak or Hisar or Ghazabad, a person from Delhi, even an ordinary clerk, would say, 'Why are you building there? Why do you not build it in Delhi, live in it and let out a part of it and have a nice income out of it?'. It is already a very profitable trade, I may tell you, and these people are going to extend this invitation to them to build houses here. And they have declared it in the Statement of Objects and Reasons. I would not refer to it in detail because my hon. friend the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs has referred to it already. But I would just draw your attention to the following:

"(a) to devise a suitable machinery for expeditious adjudication of proceedings between landlords and tenants;"

And what are these proceedings? Out of hundred per cent proceedings between landlord and tenant, 95 per cent would be ejectment proceedings, and the other five per cent would be for realisation of arrears. Now, there will be another sort of litigation, because with this boom that they are getting they will go to the courts, that is, the controllers, to whom they will apply for an increase in the rent, and they are going to get it.

So, the first object of theirs is to give these landlords a machinery

through which they can eject and can realise their arrears and can get the rents increased as expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: Would the hon. Member like to continue his speech?

Shri P. S. Daulta: Yes.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker: This would be taken up tomorrow. we shall now proceed to the next business.

15-02. hrs.

DISCUSSION RE: REHABILITATION OF DISPLACED PERSONS FROM EAST PAKISTAN

Shri Panigrahi (Puri): I beg to move:

"That the important policy decisions taken at the high level conference held on the 4th July, 1958 at Calcutta regarding rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan, be taken into consideration."

While moving this motion for consideration, I would like to submit to the House that in Calcutta, in July last, important decisions have been taken with regard to the rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan. I share the anxiety of the Minister. He is very anxious to see that the displaced persons from East Pakistan no longer wait in the camps and they are provided with re-settlement colonies. Therefore, such a conference was held in Calcutta, and very important decisions were taken. These decisions which are important in their nature have set a time-limit by which the entire refugee population living in camps in West Bengal should be rehabilitated.

It is unfortunate that in such an important conference which concerns the problem of rehabilitation of a vast number of displaced persons from East Pakistan, no representative from the refugee organisations in West Bengal, were invited. If it was due to neglect, at least leaders or the representatives of the refugee organisations in Calcutta might have been consulted. It is my firm opinion that if the decisions which have been taken are really implemented, Government will go a great way in re-settling the refugees.

I am also of opinion that money has never been a hurdle in the way. As for plans, appraisals of plans, reviews and detailed schemes they have been produced by the Government of India in such a great number, during a period of only ten years, that if we count them in terms of pages, I think they will far exceed the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat taken together. Really, it goes to the credit of a Government to produce such a vast number of documents in terms of printed pages. It is really an achievement, no doubt.

But I would like to submit to the hon. Minister and to the House, that in spite of all the best efforts, the rehabilitation of refugees still remains as the most baffling problem, as it was before. In spite of all these efforts, not more than fifty per cent of the 4.5 million displaced persons from East Pakistan have been re-settled till now, and many of them have been re-settled only partially. Money has never been a hurdle in the way of refugee rehabilitation, and I think the hon. Minister has never said that money will stand in the way of rehabilitation.

I shall now refer to the important decisions which were taken in the conference. They are three in number. The first is that out of 45,000 refugee families awaiting rehabilitation in camps, only 10,000 families will be rehabilitated in West Bengal, while

35,000 refugee families will be sent outside the State of West Bengal for rehabilitation. Secondly, families which will not go outside the State of West Bengal will be given rehabilitation assistance equal to six month's dole, and payment of doles to them will be stopped thereafter. Thirdly, camps will be abolished within 31st July, 1959, and no family will be maintained on doles after that date except in homes and infirmaries.

Out of these 35,000 who will be taken outside West Bengal for rehabilitation, 20,000 will be taken to Dandakaranya, and the rest 15,000, I suppose, to the different States, because in Dandakaranya, they have allowed only 20,000 refugee families to be settled.

When this question of fixing the target comes, really it is encouraging. I feel that in an effort to settle the problem of refugee rehabilitation as soon as possible, the Ministry of Rehabilitation and the Government of India have taken such an important step. I welcome such decisions and such steps, because such energetic steps have to be taken in order that the rehabilitation of refugees can be completed within a definite time-limit.

But, so far as the fixing of target dates is concerned, I am not very hopeful about it. On different questions, dates have been fixed many times, but—I do not say that efforts are not being made to see that the targets are achieved, but—the efforts have always failed.

If we look to the practical aspect of these decisions, some difficulties arise. It is not quite practical to decide that 35,000 families will be rehabilitated within a period of less than a year. From our practical experience during the last seven or eight years, we have seen that every year, at best 6,000 families have been removed for rehabilitation in colonies, from the camps. On an average, it

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is 6,000 per year. In view of the experience of the last five or six years that on an average only 6,000 families could be removed for rehabilitation in colonies, to take such important decisions that within a year, Government will be able to re-settle more than 35,000 families outside West Bengal is something, which is ambitious, no doubt, but which is in my opinion devoid of any practical analysis of the problem.

There is another aspect of this decision. It has been decided that no further doles will be given to those refugees who do not like to go outside West Bengal. I am not for doles. It is good that doles will be stopped. But the fact that after six months the State will not take any responsibility for the refugees and the responsibility of the Government of India to the refugees goes only up to six months is something which needs consideration. I am reminded of a beggar who used to beg and get only one seer of rice every day. After independence, his wife asked him: 'How is it that while people are becoming rich overnight, even after independence, you go begging and get only one seer of rice?' The beggar replied, 'What can I do?' Then she said, 'You go and ask God what is your due in life. If you owe Rs. 900 or whatever amount for your whole life, then settle accounts with God and settle accounts with humanity and then let us live together peacefully'. Ultimately it was found out that God had said that only Rs. 200 were due for the whole life....

If we are going to decide the fate of the refugees in this way, if after six months Government are not responsible for their rehabilitation, they will only go into the streets of Calcutta. After six months when the doles are finished, naturally they will flock the streets of Calcutta and the problem will be aggravated, not solved.

These two practical difficulties come in the way and I hope they will be taken into account when such important decisions are being taken. Decisions are taken on certain premises. I am glad the Government of India took those decisions. When the Government took those decisions, they did so on a certain premise. The premise was that the West Bengal Government had said that sufficient land was not available in West Bengal for settling the refugees there. That was the first thing. Therefore, it was quite natural for the Government of India to approach other States for the purpose of resettling the refugees there. That is good. But I would like to submit that what was taken for granted three months ago now seems not true. When the West Bengal Government thought that there was not an inch of further space in that State for resettling refugees, the Union Government had no other way. But now the West Bengal Government has discovered that in Midnapore 1 lakh acres of land are available and the land is reclaimable and 20,000 families can be resettled in Midnapore itself.

On 11-2-58, the hon. Minister said in the House:

"We are going ahead with plans mostly outside West Bengal because in West Bengal there is hardly any land available".

That was so when the West Bengal Government said that no further land was available. But now those things which were taken for granted are not there. So the premise on which decisions were taken no longer exists. So I think those decisions should be reviewed. The West Bengal Government has at last found out that there is enough reclaimable land in Mindnapore up to 1 lakh acres.

Recently the hon. Minister also went to visit those areas. He was quite glad to see that such a vast

tract of land was available in Midnapore for rehabilitation of the refugees. Seeing the crops in the land which was reclaimed in Midnapore, he said to the Director of Agriculture, West Bengal:

"If you could have brought this about five or six years ago, you could have saved many families of refugees".

I think he was in a poetic mood. Perhaps when he saw the vast growing crops, he realised that if the State Government had thought of this land five or six years ago, many families could have been rehabilitated in West Bengal itself. He further added:

"If it is possible to get the refugees successfully resettled here in West Bengal, there is no need for them to leave this State for rehabilitation purposes elsewhere. We thought so long that there were no further openings in this State for lakhs of displaced persons who need rehabilitation. If it is now found that there are such openings, I think the Government of India will be too happy to help in their rehabilitation here".

I think this has created a very good atmosphere in West Bengal and among the refugees. The hon. Minister has himself visited the place and the West Bengal Government has felt that the lands are available and the resources of West Bengal could be utilised, if the Government of India come forward—and the Government of India are not lacking in this regard as evidenced from the encouraging observations of the hon. Minister when he visited the area.

I think after this discovery by the West Bengal Government—the discovery may be painful, but it is a fact—and after our hon. Minister visited the spot personally and is satisfied with the progress of the work there, it will be recognised that the

premises which were taken for granted are now lacking. Therefore, the important policy decisions which were taken at Calcutta need reconsideration in view of the latest developments. In July these things were not known; it was only in August that these things became known. Therefore, the decisions which were taken in Calcutta in July need revision in the light of the latest position. That is why I have moved this motion before the House.

There are 45,000 refugees in West Bengal camps. Out of them, according to the decisions taken in the Calcutta Conference, 10,000 refugee families will be rehabilitated within West Bengal and 35,000 will be taken outside. Now, besides these 10,000, another 10,000 refugee families can be successfully rehabilitated in West Bengal. So out of the 45,000, 20,000 can be rehabilitated in West Bengal. There remain 25,000 families, in the camps. This is according to the statistics provided by the Ministry of Rehabilitation. The problem now becomes very clear. If 20,000 could be accommodated in West Bengal—and it is better that efforts are made to see that these 20,000 families are accommodated in West Bengal—there remain 25,000 families.

15.20 hrs.

[SHRI C. R. PATTABHI RAMAN in the Chair]

What are we going to do with these 25,000 refugee families? Out of these 25,000 refugee families, there are 13,000 refugees whose applications are pending before the authorities. There was a scheme helped by the Government of India to assist refugees who are able to purchase their own lands. Since 1954, in West Bengal you have devised a scheme, known as the *Bainanama* scheme, for helping refugees to possess their own lands. According to that applications of 13,000 families are pending and if they are accepted, these 13,000 families who

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are now remaining in camps will be in a position to purchase their own lands. So, out of these 25,000 families, 13,000 families can purchase their own lands in West Bengal. Only 12,000 families need go out of West Bengal. The problem stands this way according to the statistics which have been provided by the Minister of Rehabilitation frequently to us.

The Minister of Rehabilitation and Minority Affairs (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): From where are you quoting these 13,000 *bainanama* cases?

Shri Panigrahi: From the figures given by the Ministry of Rehabilitation of West Bengal.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: From the Rehabilitation Department of West Bengal?

Shri Panigrahi: Yes; and they have mentioned that these applications are pending with the Government (*Interruption*). These people are in a position to purchase the lands and if they are financially helped and if their applications are expeditiously dealt with, then, there would be no difficulty in resettling these 13,000 refugees. Only 12,000 families from the camps in West Bengal will have to be rehabilitated either in West Bengal or outside West Bengal.

Let us look to the decisions of the Calcutta Conference which were taken to resettle 35,000 families outside West Bengal. After July, many changes have taken place and I suppose these new changes should be taken into consideration when we are going to solve the problem of refugee rehabilitation in the eastern part of India permanently.

I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to one more aspect of the problem. The average expenditure to rehabilitate one refugee family in the Dandakaranya area has been estimated to be Rs. 10,000/- per head.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: From where have you got this figure?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: From Government figures.

Shri Panigrahi: I will supply these figures to you. I am always at your service.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): These are supplied by the West Bengal Government.

Shri Panigrahi: It requires Rs. 10,000/- per family to be rehabilitated in Dandakaranya. I can clear any misapprehension, if there be any, that I do not support the Dandakaranya scheme. I support it; and I know that area should be developed. But, let us come to the practical aspect of the problem. We always say that we are in need of money. In Dandakaranya, it requires Rs. 10,000/- to rehabilitate a family whereas it requires only Rs. 3,000/- in West Bengal. And in other States with a dry climate, it requires only Rs. 5,000/-. We are paying Rs. 5,000/- to a family to rehabilitate itself in Rajasthan which is not suitable to them as the families themselves claim. Why not we give them Rs. 3,000/- per family so that they might rehabilitate themselves in West Bengal itself? In view of these things this problem of resettling the refugees should be considered very seriously.

I need not go to the refugee population which now remains in Tripura, in Assam, in Bihar and in Orissa and U.P. Out of the 41 lakhs of refugee population, I think, more than 9 lakhs remain in these eastern States and more than 31 lakhs are remaining in West Bengal.

The question now is whether the figure of 45,000 refugee families remaining in camps in West Bengal is correct. I have the figures supplied by the Government itself. But, I suppose the refugee families which are

in Sealdah today have not been included in this figure. I believe 5,000 to 7,000 families are still there. If not, I may be corrected. Therefore, I suppose—it may not be so much—there are 50,000 families there in West Bengal in camps which have to be permanently resettled in colonies.

Out of these 50,000 families, 35,000 are agriculturists and 15,000 are non-agriculturists. I feel the figure is quite correct. The problem remains of resettling 12,000 agriculturist families either inside West Bengal or outside and 15,000 non-agriculturist families either in West Bengal or outside. And, if possible, before July, 1959, they should be rehabilitated. I would like to know whether there is any possibility of rehabilitating these 15,000 refugee families who are non-agriculturists by providing them employment anywhere?

So far as Dandakaranya is concerned, the progress is really not satisfactory. The scheme they have for rehabilitating these families is like this. By November, 1958, they want to resettle 1,000 families there. I would like to know whether Dandakaranya has been really made suitable for this resettlement of these families by November, 1958. Because it is an area which has to be developed and only Rs. 2 crores have been allotted for 1958-59, it may take some time, and it may not be possible for Government really to remove these 1,000 families by November, 1958. It is September now and there are only two months left.

In view of the latest developments inside West Bengal, it needs serious consideration whether the decisions which were taken in Calcutta in July should be stuck to or they need modification. I suppose the decisions need modification, because the West Bengal Government have discovered sufficient scope within their own limits. Therefore, so far as rehabilitation of refugees is concerned, let there not be any fad. If land is really available

for 20,000 families in West Bengal—and the refugees have all along been claiming that there is—though the discovery has been made very late, let efforts be made to get as many as possible resettled in West Bengal itself because the atmosphere in West Bengal will be more congenial for the refugees and it may ease the difficulty of the Union Ministry of Rehabilitation in finding suitable places in other States.

I am quite sure that the eastern States in India are quite agreeable to taking refugees and they are taking in refugees. When this was discussed in the Eastern Zonal Council, the States like Orissa, Bihar, U.P., Assam and Tripura came forward with their suggestions and expressed their eagerness to offer lands for the rehabilitation of the refugees (*Interruption*). About Assam I am not quite sure.

An Hon. Member: Assam has already accommodated them.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): How many is your State prepared to take?

Shri Panigrahi: I may answer the question of my guru; he is the guru of all. In Orissa 12,000 refugee families were to be resettled. But I venture to say that in Orissa only 5,000 families are there. According to the figures of the Government of India, 12,000 families have been completely resettled in Orissa. This is not a fact. A departmental enquiry can be made whether 12,000 families are residing in Orissa. The figure is there but the refugees are not there. It can be enquired into and I do not want to say that they must accept what I say.

So, the problem of resettlement of the refugees in West Bengal is still there. I am not sure whether all the refugees now living in camps are bound to be resettled in West Bengal. If out of these 45,000 refugee families, 20,000 could be accommodated in West Bengal, why not ask our brother West Bengal Government, maybe a

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big brother, to make a little effort and find out if another 10,000 could be accommodated. They can accommodate 10,000 and they agree to accommodate 10,000 more. Why not ask them whether, with the resources in men, money and materials made available from the Government of India, they are not in a position to accept 10,000 more for resettlement in West Bengal itself.

I have gone through some memoranda prepared by the refugee organisations in West Bengal that there are some places in West Bengal where land could be available. I am not a citizen of that State and I do not know whether those lands could be available. It could be enquired into. If lands are available, the Union Ministry will be doing a service if sufficient money is advanced to the West Bengal Government so that they can accommodate more refugees.

From the figures of persons sent to rehabilitation sites from camps, I would like to show that the decisions are not practical. In West Bengal, upto July 31st, only 12,949 refugees have been removed to the colonies. In Orissa, up to 30th June, 1958 only 1438 refugees—not families—had been removed to colonies. This rate does not show that the Government will be in a position to release all the 45,000 refugees families within the time-limit of July, 1959. There are the practical difficulties with regard to the schemes undertaken in Orissa, Bihar, U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Mysore.

Mr. Chairman: He has taken about 35 minutes. I hope he will be brief now.

Shri Panigrahi: I will be brief and I will allow enough time to our hon. Minister to reply.

Shri A. C. Guha (Barsat): The other Members also want to speak.

Shri Panigrahi: I will finish in two minutes. In Orissa, 13 schemes were sanctioned after May 1956 to rehabilitate 713 families. The number of families actually rehabilitated was 210. Similarly, in Bihar out of 3828 families to be rehabilitated, only 2307 families were rehabilitated. The figures in regard to U.P. are 1319 and 100 respectively; for Rajasthan 660 and 114. So, it goes without saying that the target taken up by the Rehabilitation Minister cannot be achieved in the States. As they say, in Tripura alone the rehabilitation programme is something which is commendable. In other States according to the figures furnished, the rate of progress is not satisfactory. In view of this, I urge that the Government should give serious consideration to the decisions taken in Calcutta which need modification.

Mr. Chairman: Motion moved:

"That the important policy decisions taken at the high level conference held on the 4th July, 1958 at Calcutta regarding rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan, be taken into consideration."

There is a substitute motion by Shri Das Gupta. Is he moving it?

Shri B. Das Gupta (Purulia): Sir, I beg to move:

"That for the original motion, the following be substituted, namely:—

"This House, having considered the important policy decisions taken at the high level conference held on the 4th July, 1958 at Calcutta regarding rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan, is of opinion that an Advisory Committee be formed with the representatives of the displaced persons from East Pakistan which would advise the

Government regarding the policy measures and their implementation."

Shri N. R. Ghosh (Cooch-Bihar): Sir, I come from a border district; I come from Cooch-Bihar—Jalpaiguri. What I could gather from the speech of Shri Panigrahi is that Bengal has got enough land and all the refugees can be kept within the bounds of West Bengal. We know these things and we also know what is behind this proposal. Every Bengali knows that Bengal has reached the saturation point. In fact, the proposal of Dr. Roy that he would rehabilitate 10,000 refugee families is, I think, unrealistic. It is impossible for Bengal to accommodate even 5,000 refugees.

At the time when first the refugees began to come to Bengal, there was a proposal on the part of the Government that they should be rehabilitated in Andamans. The climate, the rainfall and the texture of the soil—all are similar to Bengal. The lands there grow paddy and jute excellently. The familiar fishes, trees and other things there actually remind one of Bengal. Some families went there. Then there was one political party which stood against it. They began to scream and say that the refugees should not go there. They told the refugees—"Are you actually murderers to undergo a life-sentence there? It is *kala pani* of the convicts—and you should not go there." That is what these people said. There was too much discussion on the part of their party. I have some direct knowledge about the Andamans—the refugees are quite happy there—rehabilitated in the true sense of the word. I mentioned this to Shri Khanna and I must say that he has a good deal of sympathy for them. He has sincerity and imagination. He is doing a lot for us and we are grateful to him. (*Interruptions*).

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: You tell me the same thing in private.

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Shri N. R. Ghosh: I made this proposal. Instead of sending these people to other provinces where the soil, climate etc. are different, why not send them in larger number to the Andamans. He agreed with me but said that he has got no right because it is under the administration of the Centre. I asked him to recommend at least that a larger number of refugees should be sent there.

As a matter of fact, the refugees who have come to Bengal are leading such a miserable life for a long time that they are now completely off their balance. Some people say that these doles should be continued, this camp life should be continued. I should say it has demoralised them. In 1942 famine, thousands and thousands of Bengalis died, thousands of lower middle class people died. They never begged like this. But these doles and this abnormal life have made us a nation of beggars. The sooner these camps are abolished, the sooner these doles are stopped, the better for us.

I would submit, if actually the Government has taken any good decision, it is the decision which they have taken recently. Previously the Central Government did not pay much attention to these refugees from East Pakistan. We were long neglected. Now for the first time they are actually going to take some steps for real rehabilitation. We welcome these schemes. But I should say that Dandakaranya is a place where cultivators cannot be rehabilitated immediately; it has to be developed. Most of the refugees in Bengal are cultivators. They only know that cultivation means cultivation of paddy and jute. Dandakaranya is not at present a very suitable place for that, and cultivation cannot be started there immediately. Some development has to take place, and some arrangements for irrigation will have to be made before cultivation can be started there. Only then can these people—the agriculturist refugees—be rehabilitated

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there. I have read the pamphlet published about this scheme, and I would, say that for immediate rehabilitation a very larger number of refugees should be sent to the Andamans.

I would like to mention one other point. In Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar there is a peculiar feature. Five thanas of Jalpaiguri have been made over to Pakistan, thanks to the Radcliffe Award. As a matter of fact, the majority of people of this tract were Hindus. In one thana—the biggest thana—80 per cent of the people were Hindus; still we lost that thana. The peculiar feature here is, there are some enclaves in Cooch-Bihar which are actually owned by Pakistan, and there are some enclaves, now in Pakistan, which are owned by India. Therefore, there ought to be an exchange of these enclaves. In that case there will be a surplus area, because the area covered by enclaves owned by India far exceeds the area covered by enclaves owned by Pakistan. Therefore, this matter should not be allowed to drift, as it has been hitherto allowed to drift. There ought to be a quick decision and settlement. In that case there will be some solution to the refugee problem in this locality as some refugees can be accommodated in that area.

But there is one difficulty. I got a telegram only last night saying that there is a rumour that there is a claim on the part of Pakistan for a portion of Jalpaiguri Thana. This portion is occupied by refugees from Pakistan, from the nearby areas which is now in Pakistan. About 10,000 refugees have been rehabilitated there, not by Government but by the refugees themselves. They are quite happy there. A claim is now being made by Pakistan that this portion is actually included in Pakistan. As a matter of fact, you know, Sir, that in the border area there is now apprehension of inroad by Pakistani soldiers. I have got a telegram here saying that those people are alarmed because the Pak-

istani soldiers would forcibly occupy this portion on the basis of the claim that I mentioned earlier.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Sir, because the Prime Minister of Pakistan is here we have even refrained from putting supplementary questions relating to such matters.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: These are matters of External Affairs.

Shri N. R. Ghosh: I do not know how it hurts my friends when it is a question of rehabilitation (*Interruption*). Sir, I would submit that this question of enclaves should be settled quickly. When we have got that surplus area, if any area actually goes to Pakistan on account of re-relay of maps—because relay of maps sometimes gives very queer results—then there should be some adjustment of that area with the enclaves—even if the decision goes against us. But these people should be assured that they are not going to be refugees again.

My friend made a suggestion that the representatives of the refugees should be consulted before these refugees are sent out, before any scheme of refugee rehabilitation actually materialises. Who are the representatives of the refugees? The refugees—most of them are now leading a very miserable life in Calcutta and some political parties are after these refugees; they claim they are the representatives of the refugees may be for their political ends. To consult the so-called representatives of refugees means to consult some particular political party people who are actually using these refugees as pawns. This will do no good to the refugees—will only hinder rehabilitation.

There is another strange statement which I now hear (*Interruption*). I am a Bengali myself. I know about Midnapore, and my hon. friend Shri Maiti sitting by me comes from

Midnapore. It was said that 100000 acres of arable land is available. A reference was made to the statement of Dr. Roy. I don't think that he has been correctly quoted. I think that Dr. Roy actually under pressure of the Sctualean gave a promise that a large number of refugees will be accommodated in Bengal. My impression and reading however, may be wrong. This however is definite. We have long passed the saturation point. Look at the population pressure on a square mile.

The idea behind all this is, I would submit, that the refugees must not go out of Bengal, the refugees must not go out of Calcutta, so that they can be utilised for certain political purposes (*Interruption*). Sir, I know this question of refugees much more than many hon. Members. I am myself a refugee. I know these people; I have mixed with them, and I know their problems. If anybody says that this Dandakaranya scheme should go, that these refugees should not go out of Bengal, I should say they are simply trying to delay the rehabilitation of these people, they are the enemies of these refugees.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Shri Panigrahi, according to his simple arithmetic, does not want a single refugee to go out from West Bengal to Orissa.

Shri N. R. Ghosh: They would not listen to real arithmetic because real arithmetic hurts them, and logic hurts them. They only want to keep these refugees in Bengal and preferably within Calcutta.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Send them all to Cooch-Behar.

Shri N. R. Ghosh: If you go to Sealdah Station you will realise that it is a disgrace to any Government. As a matter of fact, if anybody goes there his heart will bleed. Human beings are not used to this sort of living. We never begged. As I have

already said, these doles—this abnormal life—have demoralised us. Therefore, Sir, I wholeheartedly support the scheme which is inaugurated by the Government, and if there should be any modification of that scheme, the modification should be that the claim of West Bengal Government that they can accommodate 10,000 families is a very ambitious claim and that should be dropped.

Shri Bimal Ghosh (Barrackpore): Sir, I am grateful to my hon. friend, Shri Panigrahi, for giving us this opportunity of again reviewing the condition of these unfortunate victims of a circumstance which, let us not forget today, helped us to achieve our independence. Sir, the decisions arrived at the July Conference are, if I may say so, nothing new. The usual platitudes and promises are there. There is one novel feature, that is, that there is a target date, namely, July, 1959, by which the camp should be wound up.

There is no claim made, I believe, that the rehabilitation problem will be settled by July, 1959—let us be clear about that. The only point made out is that the camps should be abolished by July, 1959. Sir, as I shall not have time to refer to all aspects of this problem I will take up only two or three important aspects.

About the camp population, there has been a lot of controversy. Let us take this problem first. The present camp population, we are told, is 45,000 families. In the July Conference, it was stated that the West Bengal Government can take responsibility for only 10,000 families. There was a conference held sometime in October, 1957 in Darjeeling, and I find from the proceedings which the hon. Minister had circulated to us that the West Bengal Government had then stated that they could absorb half of the camp families then. That was about 50,000 families at that time. I have the annual report here and I

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may read from it:

"The State of West Bengal had indicated that about 50 per cent of the camp population in the State numbering about 50,000 families was surplus to the resources of the State".

50 per cent was surplus. That means 50 per cent could be absorbed. So, if, in October, 1957, it was the contention of the West Bengal Government that they could absorb 25,000 families then, how do we come to this position that in July, 1958, they cannot absorb more than 10,000 families? That has to be explained.

The second point is about the possibility of absorption of all the families that are in the camps at present in West Bengal. On that there has been a lot of controversy. We have discussed with the hon. Minister, both officially and unofficially, and we had made certain suggestions and I do not see why the hon. Minister does not accept them. There is one point to which Shri Panigrahi had referred, as to the availability of land for settlement of all the refugees. If it is true as has been stated in the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* of the 13th and 14th August, that more land is available,—about one lakh acres of land not merely in Midnapore which Shri Panigrahi referred to but also in Birbhum, Purulia and Bankura and in some parts of Burdwan,—one lakh acres of waste land in dry areas which could be brought under cultivation by the system of contour bunding, why have Government not taken account of this fact? I want to know as to whether it is true, as has been stated in the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, that the hon. Minister made certain statements.

It is quite correct that the hon. Minister can explain away his statement. He stated that "if there is sufficient land, I shall be very happy." He may say that "if there is land I should be very happy", but I beg to submit that there is a distinct change

in the tone, because, formerly, both in this House and outside, he used to say categorically that there was no land in Bengal. But it is only after having seen these areas that he has stated that "if there is more land, I shall be happy if all the people could be settled in West Bengal". He should realise that there is a change in the tone of his statement or his speeches.

There was yet another point made at the Darjeeling Conference. It was stated that an attempt should be made to settle all the refugees, and the camp population should be liquidated as early as possible either by converting them into townships or by providing land or employment to camp families. What has happened to this idea of converting those places into townships? Has any attempt been made? If no attempt has been made, what was the special point in making that suggestion at the Darjeeling Conference? That was the first item of the Darjeeling Conference decisions.

There is another point which I hope the hon. Minister is keeping in mind while thinking of liquidating the camps, and that is about the employees in these camps. I hope that this is one factor which has been standing in the way, to a certain extent, of an early liquidation of camps. The officers and the employees in these camps have been working there for the past 10 to 12 years. Have they been assured of alternative employment? If the camps are wound up, what will happen to them? Have the Rehabilitation Department any scheme for the absorption of the personnel in the camp population, because, otherwise, as he knows as much as I do, there will be some difficulty. I do not say there will be insuperable difficulties, but some difficulty, in dispersing the camp population. If an assurance could be given I think the problem would be easier.

We stated formerly that as there is a controversy as to the availability of land in West Bengal for the settlement of the camp population, this question should be gone into by the representatives of the Central and the West Bengal Government and of the refugee organisations. With due respect to the previous speaker, I must say that it is known that there are two refugee organisations in Bengal. Most of the refugees owe allegiance to one or the other of these two organisations. What stands in the way of the hon. Minister taking these people into confidence, because, if there is no land, certainly they cannot say that all the refugees must be settled in West Bengal. But the bone of contention has been as to whether there is sufficient land or not, and the recent statement made by the Chief Minister there and the Union Rehabilitation Minister also was that more land is probably available, and that makes the position even more confused. And certainly there is a feeling amongst the refugees that sufficient land would be available in Bengal for their settlement.

I have not more time to develop this point, and so I come to the question of the partially rehabilitated refugees. What is the position about the partially rehabilitated refugees? I believe the West Bengal Rehabilitation Minister stated that these people have not at all been rehabilitated and that a huge sum of money would be needed for them. The way to rehabilitate them is to establish small and medium industries. Now, how far have we taken any step towards this object? I remember a conference which the hon. Minister had called in Calcutta some two or three years ago when the idea of establishing these industries was mooted, and he said that "I am inviting private capitalists to start these industries and I am sure that the results would be very encouraging." But I find from the July Conference decisions that it is the intention of Government now to start these industries in the public sector. At that conference, some of

us—my hon. friend Shri Bhupesh Gupta and others—stated that it may not be possible for the private capitalists to establish industries under these conditions or in those places, and it would have been much better if the Government had taken them up. But at that time, the Rehabilitation Minister stated, "No, the experiments in Faridabad have been particularly bad" and therefore he was not in favour of starting any industries in the public sector. But we come round to that position today, and in the meantime we have wasted all these years, because the industries for which financial aid was promised,—at least many of them—I think, have yet to come into existence. So, we do not know as to what extent Government feel that they can give employment to those refugees who are not in camps by starting industries or otherwise, what schemes they have, and how many people, they feel, can be rehabilitated from amongst those partially rehabilitated refugees.

I have a third point and it is about the squatters' colonies. What has happened? They should be regularised,—so the hon. Minister stated from year to year. But the question of the regularisation has been hanging fire. He says he has been taking steps, but the anomalous situation is this. Because the squatters' colonies, or at least many of them, have not been regularised, they cannot undertake many desirable things. For example, in these colonies, which are there for the past 10 to 12 years, there are schools which have been established by the people who reside there. They are entitled to grants from the Government for the construction of school buildings. But those grants will not be given unless they have a right to the land; that means, unless the colonies are regularised, they cannot get any grants. Because the colonies are not regularised they are not getting any grants and they cannot really run these educational establishments. Why should there be so much delay in regularising the colonies? Which Government

[Shri Bimal Ghosh]

have already admitted are due for regularisation. The first excuse before the Constitution was amended was that the Constitution stood in the way. But the Constitution has been amended many months or years ago and even now we do not see the Government taking positive steps for the early regularisation of these colonies.

16 hrs.

Finally, I would like to say that we have discussed this problem; it is not a question of my pointing out certain defects. Defects are there and I believe my hon. friend, Shrimati Renu Chakravartty, knows more about them and she will describe them. Year after year, month after month, we come before this House with the same complaints and we see practically no change. The hon. Minister used to say two years ago that one difficulty had been that he did not know the dimensions of the problem and so it was extremely difficult. Since 1957, he has practically frozen migration from East Pakistan to India, and 20 months have gone by. In 1957, I believe the total migration into India was only about 10,000 and this year, it must be even less. In 20 months' time, what have we done? The point that Mr. Panigrahi has made is that judged by the progress that we have made in the past, it is impossible that we should be able to rehabilitate all the families in the camps before July, 1959.

I am appealing to the hon. Minister that he should not adhere to that date as such. The question is one of rehabilitation. If he is able to rehabilitate all of them before July, 1959, we shall not be sorry; we shall be only happy. But if he is unable to do it, then there is no point in adhering to a particular date blindly. So, a target date is good in so far as it indicates what one wants to do within a certain period of time, but I would appeal to him that he must not

adhere to it and ignore the main question of rehabilitation of the people in the camps.

Mr. Chairman: Shri Guha.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: I may also be given a chance. I have not sent in a chit, but I have been trying to catch your eye.

Mr. Chairman: I have been following a particular pattern. We have had some speeches by Opposition Members.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: That is all right; but I did not know we have to send a chit. I would like to participate in the debate.

Mr. Chairman: I am sure the House would like to hear the hon. Minister's reply also.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Surely.

Shri A. C. Guha: Whenever I have had to speak in this House on the rehabilitation problem, I think I have taken the role of a critic of the administration; but, on this occasion, I should support the decision taken by the administration in this matter. Mr. Panigrahi has tried to make out a point that no refugees should be taken out of West Bengal. Of course, he is not so emphatic as some other leaders of West Bengal, but he feels along with them that there are enough lands in West Bengal for the rehabilitation of these refugees.

I know how the rehabilitation work has been done in West Bengal; I know it has not made as much progress as it should have done. I know who are the Sealdah squatters; I have moved round them and talked to them and I know that more than 50 per cent of them are deserters from rehabilitation sites, because those sites were not suitable for rehabilitation. It is no use sending them to marginal

or sub-marginal lands, squander public money and also cause human suffering. Everyone will remember the most dramatic way in which the proposal about Midnapur land came. I am sorry my hon. friend, Mr. Khanna, also went there and allowed some photo to be taken and wide publicity was given to it. I think on closer examination, it will be found to be almost a moonshine. As far as I know, the most that can be done is within two or three years, they can produce 20,000 acres of sub-marginal land; not even marginal land. I would like to ask Mr. Panigrahi if he thinks any family can be really rehabilitated by cultivating *sawai* grass and Sisam or *munj* grass? I am afraid there is no reality about the one-lakh acre proposal.

It is not possible to rehabilitate a family on such meagre sustenance. I feel as a Bengali that rehabilitation work should be spread outside Bengal. I welcome the proposal of Dandakaranya. I welcome it not only now, but on previous occasions also, in my other public capacities also, I have welcomed this proposal. Bengal needs some colonial opportunities, some outlet to spread out and relieve the density of population there, which is 800 per square mile. The unemployment problem and other economic distresses are awfully bad. From that point of view also, besides the rehabilitation of these 45,000 families, even for relieving the economic distress of West Bengal and finding out some solution for the surplus population of West Bengal, there should be an outlet. From that point of view also, I welcome the Dandakaranya scheme.

I have mentioned it on previous occasions, but I would like to emphasise it again now that the refugees should not be spread out over the 80,000 square miles of Dandakaranya. There should be some concentrated colonisation schemes in compact areas, so that the refugees, who are sent there, may not be lost in the wilderness, so that

they might maintain their social and cultural integrity even in Dandakaranya. There might be occasion for other Bengalis and also for people from other congested areas, particularly Kerala, to send some pioneering colonists in Dandakaranya. This is just now a rehabilitation scheme, but in its wider aspect, it is a scheme with possibilities of development of vast areas of land. That scheme should be helped in every way. If the refugees from East Bengal can go and settle there and develop it, I think they will get the gratitude of the entire nation in their pioneering work of developing the vast tracts of land there to add to our foodgrains stock.

I can claim that I know about the refugees more than most of the Members. I know their conditions. I invite Mr. Panigrahi to come along with me. He was a student in Calcutta and his knowledge of Bengali is fairly good, so that he can understand it. He also took part in Calcutta politics in his student days. I invite him to come along with me. I will not take any Government officer. I will take him to the rehabilitation camps and let him see whether he would like the camps to be continued there. It is better that those camps are disbanded even today. If they remain for a day longer, this will add more demoralisation and more corruption. These camps have been the cess pool of corruption and demoralisation. About two years ago I wrote very indignant letters to my colleague, Mr. Khanna, about the conditions prevailing in camps. But I cannot hold him responsible for all that had happened there. He was not responsible for everything. He cannot do anything... (Laughter). He cannot do everything.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: He said, "he cannot do everything".

Shri A. C. Guha: Yes, I say. In those matters, he could not do anything. Yes, he had to depend on some other machinery. He has his limitations. He is not all powerful.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: He can stand on his own. The hon. Member need not support him.

Shri A. C. Guha: I do not support him. I am only supporting the proposal which will help the national development. It will help the Bengalis as a community and the Indian nation as a whole. I am supporting the proposal from that point of view, and not from the point of view of supporting Shri Khanna or any other Minister or Department.

What are the decisions taken in the Calcutta Conference? The main thing is that the camps should be closed by 1st July. Shri Panigrahi has raised some doubts about the practicability of sticking to that date of 1st July. Shri Bimal Ghose has also, in his own way, stated something like that. But in a complex and vast problem like this, when there is a proposal, there cannot be a very rigid decision and attitude. There must be some flexibility. They must have a target date to work with. But if they cannot move all these refugees within that date, I do not think Shri Khanna will throw them to the wolves. They must make some other arrangement when the refugees wholly depend on this Government.

Shri Ghose has supported Shri Panigrahi's proposal that some refugee representatives should have been consulted. He has stated that there are two refugee organisations to which 'most of the refugees owe allegiance', that is his language. I do not know who set up these two organisations. What is their constitution? How are the office-bearers elected? For what time, are they elected? After what period the elections are held? These are mushroom parties organised in the drawing rooms of some political parties or political leaders.

Shri Bimal Ghose: I object to that.

Shri A. C. Guha: I will not yield. He had his say.

Shri Bimal Ghose: He says that these parties are organised in the drawing rooms of political leaders. If he wants, let him come, I will show him what they are.

Mr. Chairman: There is no reference to political parties.

Shri Bimal Ghose: There is. He said that. There are two political parties in Bengal. He knows it as much as we know it.

Shri A. C. Guha: He has claimed the allegiance of all refugees to these two organisations. So, I am quite entitled to question the bona fides of the two organisations, the origin of the two organisations, how they function, what are their constitutions, how the office-bearers are elected, what is the sanction behind them and so on.

Shri Bimal Ghose: The Congress organisation was formed in the drawing room of certain people.

Pandit K. C. Sharma: Why should he worry about that?

Shri A. C. Guha: There has been too much protest from that side which will expose the hollowness of their claim. So, I need not elaborate that point.

These refugees have been made pawns' in the political game, particularly the camp refugees. A meagre dole is given to them. Every week or every fortnight some subscription is being collected from them and in most cases the subscription is paid under duress, under compulsion of certain people.

Shri Prabhat Kar: Was it taken from the hon. Member also?

Shri A. C. Guha: May be from me also.

Shri Bimal Ghose: And he paid it under duress?

Shri A. C. Guha: Yes, can't help!

Mr. Chairman: I would request the hon. Member to proceed with his speech.

Shri A. C. Guha: I am sticking to my point. If they interrupt, what can I do?

Shri Bimal Ghose has admitted that there are some vested interests which have been blocking the rehabilitation of these refugees. He has referred to the officials. But there are certain other vested interests also which have been blocking the rehabilitation of these refugees, and the peculiar situation in the camps is the result of the efforts of the vested interests. Officials, there may be, but there are politicians also who are interested in maintaining these camps, who are interested in the continuance of the refugee problem in West Bengal. So, from the point of view of humanity, from the point of view of the economy of West Bengal, and from the point of view of the better rehabilitation of these refugees, I support the proposal that they should be sent out as soon as possible, and the camps should be closed down soon. I would plead with Shri Khanna that, if possible, he should close down the camps even before 1st July. But if he cannot make proper arrangements by 1st July, I am sure, he will not throw the refugees to the wolves; he will make certain other arrangements.

Then I come to certain other aspects. Shri Ghose referred to the question of the partially rehabilitated people. I have on several occasions referred to this matter. I have raised it in my private correspondence also. This Conference of 3rd and 4th July has taken certain decisions about the partially rehabilitated people also. Even after 8 or 10 years we find that these people have not been fully rehabilitated, because the lands given for them in Bengal are not suitable for the rehabilitation of the refugees there. It is sub-marginal

land in most of the colonies. The per capita income is Rs. 8, Rs. 10 or Rs. 12, and I think the maximum in three or four colonies is only Rs. 18 whereas the per capita income in West Bengal as a whole is about Rs. 25 per month. So, you can imagine the pitiable condition of these refugees.

I am glad that this Conference has also taken some decision about the question of these partially rehabilitated people. I only wish the implementation of the decisions taken may be expedited. I have, on several occasions, brought to the notice of the Government the miserable conditions of some of these refugees. I have received letters very recently also from some of the partially rehabilitated refugees, offering to go anywhere, whether it be Andamans, Nani Tal, Bihar or Dandakaranya. So bad is the condition there. I hope the rehabilitation work of these partially rehabilitated refugees will be taken up soon. They must have some scope for earning their livelihood. Now in those areas there is no means of earning their livelihood. You may offer 5 kathas of land for homestead. That does not mean rehabilitation. A man has to earn his livelihood. In most of these colonies, nothing of that sort has been done. Merely providing some Ambar Charkhas will not do. There must be something for small scale industries, on co-operative basis or on Government initiative.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member must conclude now.

Shri A. C. Guha: I am finishing. There must be some small-scale and medium-scale industries.

Lastly, I come to Sealdah station. I am glad that Sealdah is going to be cleared. Last year I was given an assurance by the highest authorities connected with this matter that Sealdah would be cleared by the 15th September, 1957. That could not be done. I quite realise their difficulties.

[Shri A. C. Guha]

So, I do not like to blame them. I know they have been trying to clear the Sealdah platform. It is a question of human suffering. It is a pain to see the condition of the refugees in Sealdah. If anybody suggests that the situation in Sealdah should be continued in preference to any other scheme, I would say that he has no consideration for human suffering. I am glad that they are now being sent to Andamans. Most of the Sealdah squatters, strictly speaking, may not be entitled to rehabilitation loans and grants. But if they go to Andamans, it will be under another scheme of the Home Ministry. If they are going to the Andamans, they will not be required to satisfy the formalities of rehabilitation benefits, loans or grants. If they are rehabilitated there, it will be under the scheme of the Home Ministry. So, I am glad that they are now being taken to the Andamans. I hope refugees in large numbers would be taken from the Sealdah to the Andamans.

These are the points decided. Lastly, I would again like to impress upon Shri Khanna that he may start some medium-sized industries and small-scale industries in the colonies already situated there in West Bengal, so that there may be proper rehabilitation of the 21 lakh refugees who have been technically called to be rehabilitated.

Mr. Chairman: Shri Das Gupta has moved a substitute motion. I hope he will conclude his remarks soon because all sides of the House will like to have the benefit of the hon. Minister's reply.

Shri B. Das Gupta: I will finish in ten minutes.

Shrimati Benu Chakravarty: I hope you will give me an opportunity.

Shri B. Das Gupta: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I shall try to deal with the major point—the abolition of all refugee

camps by the 31st July, 1959. To me it seems to be something absurd. It has also been stated or decided that out of the 45,000 families residing in camps ten thousand families would be rehabilitated in Bengal and the rest, i.e., 35,00 families, would be rehabilitated by the Government of India outside Bengal in various States. That is to be done within a year. This time-factor should be specially taken note of. I wish its success but I think it is completely unworkable and that is why this decision has created confusion and to some extent panic amongst the refugees of West Bengal.

Such decisions and discussions have often been made. There have been various conferences, meetings, sittings, etc. and a similar decision had also been taken in 1950. In 1950 an order was passed that all the refugee camps in Bengal should be abolished before the 30th April, 1951. It was virtually carried out except for one refugee camp in Nadia, but it could not continue. After some time the refugee camps which were abolished were reopened and fresh refugee camps had to be started. The result was that some of the refugees had more suffering and those who were settled in the camps were stranded. Practically speaking, the more suffering was on the part of refugees.

This decision, I am afraid, will also lead to some such catastrophies on the refugees. I cannot find any plausible ground on which I can depend for the success of this decision. The Union Ministry has taken the responsibility of rehabilitating 35,000 families outside Bengal, i.e., nearly 1,75,000 refugees and that too within a year. Let us do a bit of calculation. Within the last ten years, i.e., since 1948, 40,000 refugees, say about ten thousand families, have been taken outside Bengal. They have been sent to Rajasthan, U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar, but still they (the States) have not been able to re-

habilitate them. A vast number of them is still waiting in the camps for rehabilitation and in this way I do not know how far it will be possible for the Government of India to rehabilitate these 35,000 refugee families outside Bengal.

There is a question of Dandakaranya. Dandakaranya has been announced to be the heaven and heaven of refugees. Though I hold a different view about Dandakaranya, still taking for granted that everything is just going according to the plan and according to schedule, what do we find? The targets of displaced persons to be settled in Dandakaranya that have been fixed by the Government are—in 1958-59, 2,760 families are to be settled in Dandakaranya, in 1959-60, 5,640 families are to be settled and in 1960-61, 9,600 families are to be settled. So, we find that within this year, or by the year 1959, only 2,760 families are to be rehabilitated in Dandakaranya.

Now, out of 35,000 families, if we say that we will be able to rehabilitate 3,000 families, then there are 32,000 families which are to be rehabilitated outside Bengal in different States. That is to be done by the 31st July, 1959. As regards other States outside Bengal, what is the position? It is not very encouraging. Recently there was a meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Shillong on the 2nd August, after these policy decisions were announced. Our hon. Home Minister was the Chairman at that meeting and all the Chief Ministers of all the member-States, i.e. of Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Bengal, assembled there. They discussed things. There was an item on the agenda. The item was just to form a small committee with the representatives of the States concerned regarding this rehabilitation problem. But I do not think any such committee had been formed there. So far as the Press Report goes, we understand that there was a rift on this issue of rehabilitation. Uptill now we have

heard of no decision taken in that Zonal Council meeting regarding the rehabilitation of these refugees. So, you can safely say that if the camps are abolished by 1959 and if the doles are stopped by that time, the refugees will be pushed to a precipice from which it will be very difficult for them to come out.

Will the hon. Minister enlighten us about his future programme, where and how he is going to rehabilitate these 32,000 families outside Bengal? I do not think there is any suitable answer to that, because, I know that there has not been any plan and it is simple an impossibility to rehabilitate them outside Bengal in the different States. I am finishing. I do not want to take much of the time of the House. I shall only say that the whole refugee problem is being dealt with in a manner which is really hopeless. Absolutely there is no plan regarding this refugee problem,—there is no plan for this problem. I may just cite a few words of Mr. Horace Alexander from his book, *New Citizens of India*. He has written about this refugee problem of India. He says:

"The solution of the Indian refugee problem depends finally on the marriage of two human qualities—vision and practical competence: idealism and commonsense."

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Which are generally lacking.

Shri B. Das Gupta: I do not think I have to explain much. Unless the Rehabilitation department has these qualifications, I do not think it will be able ever to solve this refugee problem. It will complicate, it will create more difficulties regarding this refugee problem. It is not much time, it is not a long time—in 1959, on the 31st of July, we will find where we are and where the refugees stand.

Shrimati Benu Chakravarty: Mr. Chairman, I have only a few minutes.

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartiy]

I would like to say that just as in the case of the food problem, this very very urgent and complicated problem cannot be solved except with the co-operation of all. In the same manner, it is no use politically brickbating each other regarding this very complicated question. Therefore, I was not able to appreciate the maiden speech made by the hon. Member there.

Actually I am very happy today that on this issue of lands being distributed to the refugees within West Bengal, a new turn has been made by the West Bengal Government. After very great initial resistance supported ably by the Union Minister for Rehabilitation that there was not an inch of land in West Bengal, I am deeply grateful today that a scheme has been brought out in the Midnapore district from where, I find from the press reports, they will have 60,000 acres. They say they will be able to get 60,000 acres of land, and that it can go up to 1 lakh acres of land. This is only a beginning. I do not want to quarrel on the amount that is available. The cost will be there. It is a question which we have to see. The first official results have been good.

I should also like to state that for the last two or three years, we have been saying this again and again to the Union Minister of Rehabilitation. But, because it has come from this side of the House, it has been treated with complete contempt and various political insinuations have been made against us. However that be, if anything, we are glad that we have been able to change the opinion of the West Bengal Government. Not only that. It is not only a question of what has been found successful in Midnapore. I would like also to reiterate to this House that there are lands in areas like the Sunderbans, for instance in Hervobanga which is in my constituency itself, about 11,000 acres of land can be reclaimed and a scheme has been undertaken. Two thousand families can be rehabilitated there.

Actually this scheme has been taken up by the West Bengal Government. But, I believe that the scheme has not yet received the approval and financial sanction of the Government of India. The House may remember that a little while ago, I had put a question to the Union Minister on the 2nd of December, 1957 as to whether it had been sanctioned or not. The answer was that the proposal for reclaiming a part of Sunderbans is being examined. Uptodate, I believe—I shall be glad to be contradicted—that that sanction has not come.

There is the Salanpore scheme. This is another scheme which has been dropped half way on the ground that the cost was too high. Apart from cash to the refugees, an additional cost of Rs. 200 per acre is being incurred for the development of this land. That has been given up. I just want to make this point before the House. I am not against the refugees going anywhere willingly right throughout India. As a matter of fact, everybody knows, there are Bengalis working right throughout India from Cape Comorin to Assam, from Assam to Orissa, right up to Raja than and Kashmir. We are all very proud that we are citizens of India and we should have equal opportunities of living in any part of India. Certainly from a commonsense point of view—exactly the point that has been raised by Shri B. Das Gupta—by what we have seen happening before us, we find that our schemes outside West Bengal have been unsuccessful. I do not say that the West Bengal schemes have been successful. But from a practical point of view, if there is land within West Bengal it is better to settle the refugees there. There may be certain people who work to get more land to make bigger plantations and make profit, as my hon. friend there. He feels that there is no land to be given to the refugees. We feel that there is land if we all get together and try our best to reclaim that land.

I would also like to say that I would not like the giving of land to be made an issue between refugees and those who are not. A word which hurts me in the maiden speech of my friend Shri Ghosh was "those" refugees—as if they are not part of our people. They are part of our State—our State meaning India. As such I would like that we should accept them. If any land is reclaimed, it should be divided 50 : 50 between the local people and the refugees. We should live in harmony.

Regarding various other schemes which should be examined, I again reiterate that the Central Council for Refugee organisations has submitted on the 11th August a comprehensive constructive scheme of all the various places which can be reclaimed. It is a constructive approach with a capital 'C'. We would like to see how far our Minister is going to reply to that.

I would like to answer one or two points regarding these doles. I was very pained to hear certain people making scurrilous remarks regarding the Bengali people, that we have become a nation of beggars, that we do nothing but ask for doles. We do not want doles.

Shri Ranga: Nobody said that.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: It has been stated. Look into the transcript. It is unfortunate that it has come from a Bengali himself.

We definitely want this to be recorded that we do not want doles. We do not want camps. We are not beggars. We want all camps to be eliminated. But, we do not want to make a fetish of a date. We want that it should be earlier than 30th of July if rehabilitation is there. We do not want what happened in 1954, when a target date was fixed and the refugee were told that by that date, we must disperse. These Dispersals took place. What do we find now in the statement of the West Bengal

Government itself? They said that there can be little doubt that "in a majority of cases, if the economic conditions had been satisfactory, they would not have deserted." They have seen it themselves. This is what we do not want. We do not want a target date to be made a fetish of. We should rather say we want that the rehabilitation scheme should go ahead, practical, proper, efficient rehabilitation schemes both for the agricultural sector as well as the non-agricultural sector.

It is very unfortunate I never have enough time to make my points, but on this point of doles, I want to give one example. There is a colony—the hon. Minister will know it, the others may not—called the New Barrackpore colony. In a certain portion of that, there are about 454 families still on dole. They could have been given homestead lands, plots, in 1954. Why was it not given? Because our Rehabilitation Ministry said they were not going to incur any additional expenditure beyond the ceiling. An extra expenditure of Rs. 1.5 lakhs would have prevented us from spending Rs. 18.5 lakhs in doles, and yet today they have been kept on doles. Is it not the policy of Government which is responsible for this?

Regarding the non-agriculturist refugees, the point has been made by my hon. friend Shri Bimal Ghose that we from the very beginning stated: let us set up industries in the public sector; the private sector is not interested in setting up industries; where there are concentrations of refugees near the border and there are many other difficulties. But that was not listened to. Today again the policy is being changed. We welcome it. I do not say: we said it first, you did not agree to it. I only want to point out that unless we approach the problem in a co-operative manner, it cannot be solved. They may be sitting in the Treasury Benches, they may be members of the Congress, but

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If they really have the welfare of the refugees at heart, it is no use taking to political brickbats. Let us find out together what is the best way of solving the problem. We have also put forward good, correct proposals which are proved to be correct today.

Lastly, regarding the small industries, I would say no doubt we have spent money on training these people, especially the women, but we ask that not only the big industry should be taken in the public sector, but certain grants should be given directly for the production centres. There are rules which are holding this up. These rules are not being changed.

Again, in the agricultural sector there is the ceiling on land. If you go outside Bengal you can get Rs. 5,000; if it is within Bengal the maximum you can get is Rs. 2,500. You cannot get good land for that. But the "bainaname" scheme may be allowed to go through. He wanted a reference, I can quote chapter and verse from the press statement made by the Chief Minister of West Bengal as to the number of *bona nama* which were executed, the number of *bona nama* which were rejected. On the basis of that a very large number of these people can get their lands. ...

Not only that. There is the ceiling of price for land. If the ceiling on agricultural land prices is raised a little bit, then you will find that a very large number of refugees will rehabilitate themselves.

From all these points of view I would like to say that the new change in policy is a very welcome one. We should like that there should be quick sanctioning of the scheme: from the Centre, that the Centre should support this and should not try to hold it back, but expedite the schemes, and that there should be no artificial closing down of camps by the 31st July. They should expedite these schemes and make them efficient.

With these words, I would like an answer from the hon. Minister.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I am glad the House had an opportunity of discussing the important decisions that were taken by us in consultation with the Government of West Bengal in early July. These decisions have been laid on the Table of the House and I do not want to discuss them at length, but I feel that there is a certain amount of misunderstanding in certain quarters regarding the interpretation of these decisions.

These decisions which can be broadly categorised into three heads relate to the clearing of Sealdah station; the regularisation of the squatters' colonies in and around Calcutta; and the closure of the camps in West Bengal and giving rehabilitation assistance to the partially rehabilitated families. I shall not dilate much on the squatters' colonies nor the Sealdah station, because I am at one with everybody in this House that the regularisation of the squatters' colonies should be expedited, as quickly as possible. We have taken certain decisions in that connection, and I am going ahead with them, and a number of schemes have already been sanctioned during the month or two regarding the development of these colonies.

As regards Sealdah, it is no credit to any Government or to any country or to any nation to have a large body of unfortunate people lying in the open at the Sealdah station in Calcutta. But, as I have said before, it is not a question with which we have been faced for the first time. Sealdah has been cleared not once but twice, but it has again been filled up. I do not want to go into the causes, but the fact remains that there is suffering humanity at the Sealdah station. We have taken a decision, and we are implementing that decision. Already, a small section of the population at the Sealdah station has been moved.

So, there is no difference of opinion on these two counts between me and the hon. Mover of the motion or those who have taken part in the debate. Nor is there any difference of opinion between us on the matter of the closure of the camps. Everybody is agreed that these camps have a very demoralising effect on the displaced persons. They have been in existence now for a number of years. They could have been closed a long time ago, but we had a very heavy influx from East Pakistan in the years 1955 and 1956, and suddenly the camp population went up by about two lakhs of persons. Now, if these camps have to be closed, what measures are we taking to see that the least amount of human suffering is caused? We all agree that the camps should be closed. Apart from the fact that Government are spending about Rs. 10 crores on relief alone, that is, on the maintenance of these camps, each camp family of five persons, including an infant and a child costs the Government of India, Rs. 125 p.m. While the national income is only Rs. 21 per head, the expenditure on camps is at the rate of Rs. 25 per head. I am not taking that aspect of the matter into consideration. As Shri Bimal Ghose very rightly remarked, these are unfortunate people who have become refugees for no fault of theirs; a decision was taken regarding the partition of the country, and these 42 lakhs of persons had to come out of East Pakistan. I have every sympathy with them. So I am not taking into consideration the aspect of the Government expenditure being incurred on the maintenance of these camps, but it is actually the demoralising effect that it is having that is exercising me.

Now, it has been urged repeatedly in this House that these camps should be closed, and the sooner the better. What have we done now? I will read the exact words from the decisions which were taken, which have been circulated to all Members of the House

and which have also appeared in the Press.

"The present camp population is estimated to be 1,97,000 refugees, namely, about 45,000 families. The State Government anticipated that they will be able to absorb not more than about 10,000 families within the State".

It is important. This decision has to be viewed in the context of the number of displaced persons who are within West Bengal today. You cannot take it out of that context and deal with only 45,000 families. There are in the State of West Bengal today about 32 lakhs displaced persons out of a total of about 42 lakhs displaced persons who have come out of East Pakistan. The State Government have not asked for the removal of a single family or a single person out of the 32 lakhs excepting the camp families who are in the State. The State Government have accepted very cheerfully the burden and the responsibility of rehabilitating these 30 lakh persons within the State. They are there. There is no question of taking a single person out from within the State of West Bengal.

Now these 45,000 families come to roughly about 2 lakh persons. Even if you take round about 3 to 4 acres as an economic unit in West Bengal, you want about 2 lakh acres of land. I still hold and maintain that West Bengal has reached saturation point.

Shri A. C. Guha: More than saturation point.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I still hold and maintain that hardly any land which is cultivable or culturable is available there. If there was, why should I as Minister in charge of Rehabilitation at the Centre take my friends out of West Bengal to other States.

Shri Bimal Ghose: That is what we want to know.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: It is no pleasure to me. The Bengalis want

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to remain within Bengal, within their historical surroundings, within their cultural background. My task is easy because then it becomes the responsibility of the State Government; it becomes the responsibility of Dr. Roy and the two Opposition parties or those two great organisations who claim to represent the refugees. I do not come into the picture. I only come into the picture when I have to take these families out of West Bengal either to Bihar or to Orissa or to any other State.

Again I repeat that if it costs me Rs. 5,000 for the rehabilitation of a family outside West Bengal and if with a similar amount a family can be rehabilitated within the State, why should I grudge that? And if the Press reports are read carefully, not between the lines....

Shri Bimal Ghose: We will be tempted to answer.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: it has been stated, and stated very clearly, that only waste lands are available in Midnapore.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Even outside only waste lands are available.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Let me go on. Only waste lands are available in Midnapore; only lands of a marginal and sub-marginal quality are available within the State of West Bengal.

Shri Bimal Ghose: Are they given the best of lands in other States?

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Here he has said that the land available outside Bengal is also of a marginal type.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: The hon. lady Member from West Bengal opposite me quotes me. I still hold and maintain that no cultivable lands are available in West Bengal (*Interruptions*). Let me go on. I have got only five minutes more.

Where have I undertaken that these 35,000 families who are in the camps today, when I take them out to Dandakaranya or to other States, will be rehabilitated by 31st July, 1959? I have not undertaken that. The Government of India has not undertaken that. What we have undertaken to do is this: I am quoting the exact words of the decision, "as regards the remaining families the Government of India will make arrangements for their rehabilitation in States outside West Bengal including the Dandakaranya project. When the families are moved, they will be provided with shelter and work during the initial period until they are rehabilitated." I undertook to provide each family that I take out of the camps from West Bengal with continuous work till that family is rehabilitated (*Interruptions*). I was very happy when Shri Panigrahi moved this motion but I was most unhappy when he started saying what I had not stated at all, that the Government of India had undertaken to rehabilitate these 35,000 families within a year. You can quote all the facts and figures, and talk of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; there is no harm about that. I can understand the anxiety of the hon. Mover; while he wants to show to be a friend of the Bengali refugees at heart he does not want a single Bengali to be settled in Dandakaranya. (*Interruptions*).

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: This is twisting.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: It is simple arithmetic. I come to simple arithmetic (*Interruptions*). If rehabilitation could be solved by a simple arithmetic, I can assure you I could have done it ages ago; there would have been no difficulty. The idea is to show that all these families can be rehabilitated within West Bengal and so we should not take a single family out of West Bengal. It is put into my mouth that the cost of

rehabilitation of a family in Dandakaranya will be Rs. 10,000. I am the Minister in charge. I have never made a statement of that nature anywhere up till now.

Shri A. C. Guha: They say that West Bengal Government said that.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Now, let us come to simple arithmetic. I have been to Midnapore; I have been to Kaligh and I have seen these lands. I stand by the statement I have made. The House would be interested to know that the total area that can become available in the district of Midnapore including Barbets and Kaligh and some of these places is not going to be more than 25,000 acres in all—all waste land. Each family will be given 6 acres, 10 khatas for a homestead plot, contour bunding has also to be taken into consideration. The maximum number of families that can ever be rehabilitated under that scheme can never be beyond 4,000. The maximum area that can be reclaimed with the help of the tractors that we have at our disposal today in West Bengal is not more than 8,000 acres a year. That means, not more than 1,000 to 1,200 families can be rehabilitated and the period of rehabilitation of each family is going to be three years.

Shri Bimal Ghose: How long will it take in Dandakaranya?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Don't get excited; please wait. I am coming to it. (Interruptions).

That is the position about Midnapore.

Much has been made of the *bona fide* transactions, I mean the *bona fide* schemes. I have heard somebody putting the figure at 13,000. During the last 4 or 5 months.....

Shrimati Eena Chakravarty: 32,000 was the number of applications referred to in the statement of the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

17 hrs.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Let me clarify the position. I am not in any way contradicting the statement that has been made by the hon. Member. I was referring to the *bona fide* Scheme. These schemes are of two kinds: urban scheme and rural scheme. Under the urban scheme, you want a homestead plot loan for the construction of the house and a small trade loan. Under the rural scheme, you need land, implements for cultivation and maintenance loan till the harvest period. What I am trying to do is this I take one integrated scheme. I do not take the homestead plot today and the land tomorrow and the loan sometime later. I take all these three applications relating to a particular individual as one scheme and we sanction that. If you multiply it by three, the figure will naturally come to 9,000 or 10,000. If you take the family, the unit becomes one. We have during the last six months sanctioned about 3,300 *bona fide* schemes covering an expenditure of over a crore of rupees. All these things were taken into consideration. 21 lakhs of displaced persons in West Bengal have received rehabilitation benefits. Shri Bimal Ghose made out a point and I agree with him that a certain section of the population though they have received rehabilitation aid, have not been fully rehabilitated. We call them partially rehabilitated. According to the version of the State Government, the percentage is as high as 40 or 50. Now, if we take 20 lakhs and divide it by five, it means four lakh families. If a lakh or a lakh and a half of partially rehabilitated families have to be rehabilitated, they cannot be rehabilitated in mere vacuum, in the air. Lands have to be found for them. Similarly, if the West Bengal Government keeps 10,000 camp families, lands have also to be found for them. I agree with some hon. Members here and this was the doubt that I expressed myself: whether in the final analysis, the Government of West Bengal, taking into consider-

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ation the partially rehabilitated families, whom, I think, it will not be advisable to take outside the State, can provide means for the rehabilitation of even 10,000 families within the State. You cannot have Midnapore on one side.....

Shri Bimal Ghose: What is the reaction of the Chief Minister to that suggestion?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I can assure my hon. friend, Shri Bimal Ghose, that no decision has been taken during the period that I have held office, without the concurrence and the approval of the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

Shri Bimal Ghose: I did not ask that question.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: What I am trying to tell the House is that it is after very great deliberation that we have taken this decision and the decision is this. We propose to close these camps by the 31st July, 1959. I undertake to provide work to each family that comes out with me from West Bengal, whether I take them to Dandakaranya or Bihar or Orissa. I also undertake that each family, which comes out with me will be rehabilitated and till the family is rehabilitated the family will be provided with work. What have we done? We have given our friends in the camps and their well-wishers here and their well-wishers in Bengal a period of one year. If they have any schemes to formulate, let them formulate and send them.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Many, many schemes were formulated.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I fully understand and appreciate. A scheme comes on paper.

Shri Bimal Ghose: Then, how will it come?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: A proper scheme, well planned out? Let me come to that. If you give me two or three minutes, I will finish.

Hero Bhanga is a part of the constituency of the hon. lady Member from West Bengal and possibly she feels that we are looking at it with a squint eye. It is not the point. Hero Bhanga is an area where the embankment, according to the very papers which they hurled at me, gives way to the vagaries of the sea every year. Secondly, the scheme was prepared not long ago and sent to me. When the scheme came experts told us that, perhaps, instead of one embankment we will have to have another embankment too. I was further told that by the construction of a second embankment, on account of a good part of the area going to sea, the number of heads of families will be reduced and the cost of the scheme will go up from about Rs. 26 lakhs or Rs. 28 lakhs to about Rs. 50 lakhs. Again, I am told that even for these families, when they are taken to Hero Bhanga, it may take another three years for them to be rehabilitated there. I am not against the rehabilitation of the existing refugee population in the State of West Bengal, but it must be clearly understood that if I have any responsibility to the displaced persons, if I have any responsibility to this House, if I have any responsibility to the Central Exchequer, I have to see that the schemes are properly planned and implemented. And if I find that there is no vacuum in the State of West Bengal—whatever vacuum there is I am prepared to utilise it to the maximum—I will have to go elsewhere.

I cannot remain in the vain hope of getting schemes. What has been happening for the last three or four years? What schemes have been sent to me by hon. Members there? All that I am told is "Hold a meeting". I hold meetings twice, thrice and even

four times a year. Every time the Parliament is in session there is a meeting of the Consultative Committee. Shri Bimal Ghose and also Shrimati Renu Chakravartty are there.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Sir, schemes are not submitted in the Consultative Committee; they are submitted elsewhere.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: When the hon. Member can bring to my notice individual cases of A, B, C, D and E—in fact, I got a letter from her only yesterday bringing to my notice an individual case—why can't she send up a scheme? I do not understand. By merely saying here that lands are there in West Bengal.....

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: Sir, the hon. Minister should not mislead the House. He has been given many schemes, and it is wrong to say that he has not received any schemes.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Sir, I am very grateful to you for the time that you have given to me. I only want to repeat that the decision of the Government should not be misunderstood, and I want the co-operation of, more so, the hon. Members opposite in having these decisions implemented;

these decisions, in my view, are the best, they are in the best interests of the displaced persons and their speedy rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman: What about Shri Das Gupta's amendment.

Shri B. Das Gupta: I beg to withdraw it.

The amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

17.09 hrs.

PARLIAMENT (PREVENTION OF DISQUALIFICATION) BILL

REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE

Shri Jaganatha Rao (Koraput): Sir, I beg to present the Report of the Joint Committee on the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Bill, 1957.

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TWENTY-NINTH-REPORT

Shri Rane (Buldana): Sir, I beg to present the Twenty-ninth Report of the Business Advisory Committee.

17.09 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, the 11th September, 1958.