

[श्री सिद्धान्त सिंह]

बाले पीने दो घाने की यूनिट की दर से बिजली देने को तैयार थे जबकि वही बिजली सरकार अपने यहां साढ़े तीन घाने की यूनिट 40 हिसाब से पैदा करती हैं लेकिन उनसे बिजली सरकार ने नहीं ली और आज वह 3000 किलोवाट बिजली बेकार पडी है। उसका उपयोग होना चाहिये। जहा कही से हमे बिजली मिल सके या जो हम पैदा कर सकते हो उसका सदुपयोग करे। हमारे गोरखपुर और देवरिया मे ऐसी मिले हैं जो कि बिजली पैदा करती हैं और उम बिजली का आप सदुपयोग करे। अच्छी फमल पैदा कर सकते हैं लेकिन आप उसका फायदा नहीं उठाते। मुझे मालूम है कि एक मिल ने यह आफर दिया था कि वह डेढ घाने और पीने दो घाने की यूनिट की दर से बिजली सप्लाय करने का तैयार है लेकिन हमने यह देखा कि उसका फायदा नहीं उठाया गया और नतीजा यह हुआ कि न तो उसकी बिजली ली गई और न ही गवर्नमेंट की बिजली उस क्षेत्र मे गई जहा कि उसकी जरूरत थी और वह क्षेत्र अभी भी अनडिवलप्ड पडा हुआ है।

मेरा मन्त्री महोदय मे अनुरोध है कि वे इस पर विचार करे और जहा पर बिजली पर्याप्त मात्रा में और सही कीमत पर उपलब्ध हो उसका सदुपयोग करे और उम बिजली को बेकार पडा न रहने दे।

15.02 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE: GANGA BARRAGE PROJECT

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri (Barrampore): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the statement laid on the Table of the House by the Minister of Irrigation and Power on the 2nd September, 1958, regarding Ganga Barrage Project, be taken into consideration."

Sir, this statement, as you know, was made during the last session of

the House and it has been before us for the last 2½ months. Even when the statement was made, some of us, not only on this side of the House, but many friends on the other side as well, who have some knowledge of the relevant facts of the matter and also some knowledge of the history and fate of the Ganga Barrage proposal since it was mooted in a concrete project form in 1951-52, felt that we should seek the earliest opportunity to discuss this subject on the floor of this House. It would not have been necessary if we were not already acquainted in the course of the past six years with the surprising procrastination, evasiveness, and indecisiveness, and I might even go to the length of saying, the attitude of hostility, with which the proposal was greeted since it came before the presiding deities of the Ministry of Irrigation and Power in the form of a complete project report.

During the course of the last six years, we have seen three successive Cabinet Ministers and two Chairmen of the Central Water and Power Commission dealing with this matter. A project report based on investigations extending over a period of three years from 1948 to 1951 was before them on which they could take a decision much earlier. But unfortunately, the statement of Janab Ibrahim before us makes no reference to these facts. Indeed if this statement was not presented to this House by so eminent and respectable a gentleman as Janab Ibrahim, I would have no hesitation to call it outright as a dishonest and insincere document. I have yet to come across any official documents which excels this one in the art of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. I will presently prove with such facts and papers that I have in my possession what I mean by this observation. But before that, I must deal with a question that often comes up.

I have often found hon. Members in this House fail to understand and

appreciate why we, the members of this House from West Bengal, are so keen and so persistent in raising this matter again and again on the floor of this House during the Question Hour, during Budget discussions and on every other conceivable occasion. The other day, an hon. Lady Member, whom I hold in high respect, wanted to twit me by saying that we always want to raise a discussion on Ganga Barrage Project, because it is the most important political question in West Bengal today. Perhaps she made that observation in joke, but she meant to imply that this is an issue on which different political parties in Bengal, whether belonging to the Congress or to the Opposition, view with each other in demonstrating before the people of West Bengal that they are fighting for the cause of Ganga Barrage. I have no hesitation in admitting, "Yes, we the people of West Bengal are united solidly behind this demand." I can also assert that I am echoing the sentiments of our friends from West Bengal sitting on the other side of the House, when I say that both the Government and the Opposition in West Bengal are united behind this demand.

The West Bengal State Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council passed unanimous resolutions very recently demanding the immediate implementation of the plan. But whatever happens in Bengal nothing seems to move the present Government here. The Ganga Barrage issue is almost an issue of life and death for West Bengal and that is why we are so sentimentally keen about it. That is why we are so persistent in raising that demand repeatedly on the floor of this House.

As the hon. Minister has also mentioned, the idea of erecting a barrage across the Ganga is not a new thing. It has been there for the past 105 years. But it has been only after independence, in 1948 to be precise, after partition, in consultation with the

Union Government the West Bengal Government undertook the investigations in this matter. Since then, for three years investigations were carried on, elaborate investigations. In 1949 the responsibility of making these investigations was transferred to the Central Water and Power Commission and after three years, that is, in 1951, a complete project report with blue-prints were prepared. It could not be placed before the Government, I do not know why, before the Draft Report for the First Five Year Plan was formulated. Some time was unnecessarily taken up in unusually long correspondences to and from between the C.W.P.C. and the Irrigation Department of the Government of West Bengal and when it came up for consideration it was too late and we could not have it in the First Five Year Plan. We were told at that time that there are several difficulties, further investigations needed be carried out, there might also be some objection from the side of Pakistan, because the waters of Ganga eventually flow into Pakistan and there was the Barcelona Convention to which we were parties. So we were informally asked not to press this question very hard openly till the Government were ready with their investigations. That was in 1952-53. But somehow it seemed that the Government were unwilling to take up the matter or to arrive at a decision even at that stage. The Bengal Government repeatedly approached the Central Government to do something about the matter and I understand the C.W.P.C. also submitted the whole scheme again to the Government for its consideration.

A technical committee was appointed with Mr. Gokhale as the Chairman, but that Committee was never allowed, I do not know why, to finish its deliberations. The Committee co-opted a Dutch expert who, in a separate report, highly recommended the project and said that this was the only way by which the Bhagirathi and Hooghly could be resuscitated and the

[Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri]

navigability of sea approaches to the Calcutta port maintained. But even then nothing was done. I do not know what was the inhibition that was operating in the mind of the Government.

But here I have in my hand a paper, a note prepared by three agencies of the Central Government some years back. It is a note on "Irrigation and Power Projects" compiled jointly by the Ministry of Irrigation and Power, the Central Water and Power Commission and the Natural Resources Division of the Planning Commission and circulated on 28th October 1954. At that time the then Minister of Planning of the Union Government was contemplating holding a conference with the members of Parliament from West Bengal regarding the various multi-purpose power projects in the State of West Bengal. Some of us wanted to know at what stage the Ganga Barrage project was at that time. Here I want to read a portion from that note. I also want the House to take special note of these remarks, although it is in a summary form here, because the statement placed on the Table by the hon. Minister, Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim seeks to create the notion that although the Ganga Barrage Project is not a new one, although the idea has been in the air for the last 105 years, it is only very recently that the project has concretely come up before the Government in order to take a decision upon it. That is why I have to stress this point very much. This last statement is not based on fact. That is why I have said that this document defeats every other official document that I have come across in the art of *supressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*. What does the note say? It observes:

"Ganga Barrage—construction of a barrage across the Ganges near Farraka, Bihar-West Bengal border. Longest barrage in the

world—7,812 ft. long, an irrigation cum-navigation and flood control project costing about Rs. 40 crores. The barrage will be constructed across the river Bhagirathi. Also for irrigating the areas in Jhalangi and Bhagirathi."

Then reporting on the state of investigation it says that investigations were completed. This is a note prepared by the three agencies of the Central Government in the year 1954. It says:

"investigations completed and the project report prepared and sent to the State Government."

It was not only sent to the State Government of West Bengal, but I find that—

"it was also proposed to the Ministry (i.e., the Ministry of Irrigation and Power) to have the project examined by the Technical Advisory Committee."

But, then there is that inevitable "but"—

"but due to water dispute with Pakistan the proposal appears to have been kept in abeyance by the Government of India."

That was in 1954. A number of years went by without anything being done and eventually the time came for the preparation of the draft framework of the Second Five Year Plan. Even at that time the State Government of West Bengal approached this Government with the request to do something about the matter and take a decision thereon. As a matter of fact, it seems the State Government of West Bengal, in their outlay of the draft Second Plan submitted to the Planning Commission, allocated Rs. 30 crores for Ganga Barrage. The draft was discussed with the Planning Commission in September, 1957, but for inexplicable reasons the scheme was struck from the State Plan and

necessarily from the Central Plan also. We are yet to know the reasons why it was dropped unceremoniously. Of course, we know that Pakistan might be raising objections. Pakistan has been raising objections about anything and everything under the sun, if it is something related to Indian interests. Are we to go by Pakistan's objections even in these vital matters? In the mean time, we have withdrawn from the Barcelona Convention as well, I took some care to go into the provisions of the Barcelona Convention. I do not think that even the Barcelona Convention would have prevented us from undertaking the work of this barrage. Now, we are no longer in the Barcelona Convention. We fail to understand why all these six or seven years, the Government could not come to any decision even then. The statement informs us that recently comprehensive investigations were carried on by a famous German River and Harbour expert, Dr. Hensen.

15.22 hrs.

[PANDIT THAKUR DAS BHARGAVA in the Chair]

I find from the discussions on this subject that took place in the other House that the hon. Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Power as well as the hon. Minister said on that occasion that Dr. Hensen had recommended that further investigations must be held in regard to this scheme. Of course, Dr. Hensen is a very competent and an internationally known expert could not but suggest that because, in a project like the Ganga Barrage scheme which will take at least 10 years to complete continuous investigations have to be carried on every year, hydraulic measurements have to be taken, periodic reports have to be prepared and in the course of the execution of the Plan, many changes may have to be introduced. I do not have the time in my hands to go into all the details of the recommendations that Dr. Hensen has

made. But, this much I can say. He has made a nine point recommendation and all the nine points of that recommendation are in favour of this scheme.

Not only that. Here I am quoting Dr. Hensen. He says:

"There is no other way of stepping the long term deterioration of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly except by regulation of the upland supplies. Such a regulation is only possible with the construction of a barrage across the Ganga. I am of the opinion that the proposal for the construction of a barrage across the Ganga is the best technical solution of the problem. It is the most purposeful measure with which the long term deterioration in the Bhagirathi-Hooghly can be stopped and possibly converted into a gradual improvement."

That is what the latest investigation undertaken by a leading foreign expert says. I fail to understand what prevents the Government, in the light of these investigations, in the light of the substantive project report, and Dr. Hensen's recommendations in taking a decision in the matter. Unfortunately, the statement before us gives no indication about that. The statement only says that the Government has been seized of the problem. As a matter of fact, as one well known paper, the *Statesman*, remarked editorially, the most remarkable thing about the Ganga barrage proposal has been the lack of expeditiousness in its implementation. It has been talked about for the last 105 years; for the last 11 years, I might say since the transfer of power, also we have done nothing else. The Government took the initial steps—both the West Bengal Government, the Government of India and the Central Water and Power Commission. But no further progress has been made.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member's time is up.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: I will require some more time, Sir

Mr. Chairman. As a matter of fact, I propose to give the hon Member half an hour. He has now taken 25 minutes. I wanted to caution him in advance so that when he is at a crucial argument, the ringing of the bell may not embarrass him. There are five minutes, he can deal with the important points.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: As I was saying, the Hon'ble Minister's statement gives no indication,—neither the discussion that was held in the other House nor the replies that were given to that debate by the hon Deputy Minister and the hon Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim—threw any light on the question, when this proposal is going to be taken up for implementation. They only said that the project has got to be changed because in 1954 certain floods took place. Certain floods did take place in 1954. In 1956, more floods and more devastating floods took place. But, is that any reason why a decision on this crucial matter in this vital matter for the life of West Bengal, for the future of such an important port as Calcutta cannot be taken up at all?

I would also tell the Government they know it themselves, they have repeatedly admitted as much in various places that the problem of Bhagirathi-Hooghly or the problem of the port of Calcutta is not a regional or a provincial problem. I might tell them that the entire future of the industrial economy of India, the entire future of the core projects of the Five Year Plan, the entire future of the steel mills that are coming up from Bhilai to Durgapur and the heavy industry schemes that are coming up in the steel and coal belt of India are at stake if we do not take an immediate decision on this matter. I, therefore, want to know from the Government and I will certainly demand a categorical answer, what they are

going to do about it and what prevents them from taking a substantive decision. This is a scheme which will take at least ten years to complete, even if we take it up now and decide that we have to go in for it immediately. It will take at least two years to set up the construction organisation on the barrage spot, on both sides of the river, to gather the men and materials on that spot so that we can undertake the work on hand. That is to say, at least twelve years would be required to complete the project if it is carried through with the utmost expeditiousness and despatch. In spite of their knowing all these things, why are they waiting? Is not the Calcutta port deteriorating every day? Are not the sea approaches to Calcutta being silted up, choked up, and is not the prediction of the great scientist who is no longer with us—Dr Meghnad Saha, that in Calcutta we would be drowned in the saline water of the sea and choked with our own sewage coming true before our own eyes? In spite of these facts, why are the Government waiting? Why can they not tell the people that they are going to take a decision that they will take a decision and whether it is started during the Second or Third Five Year Plan they are going to implement it definitely so that Calcutta may be saved, and incidentally Bengal also may be saved, because, apart from the port of Calcutta the Bhagirathi-Hooghly is today the life-line of West Bengal? If you want to revive, resuscitate and revitalise the rural hinterland of Calcutta, the rural hinterland of West Bengal, for that also this is the only way. There is no other

Mr Chairman: Motion moved

"That the statement laid on the Table of the House by the Minister of Irrigation and Power on the 2nd September, 1958, regarding Ganga Barrage Project, be taken into consideration"

Shri H. N. Mukerjee (Calcutta—Central): Mr Chairman, we are dis-

curring a matter of crucial importance, as my hon. friend has just pointed out, to the life and economy of the whole of India, and not merely of a part of it.

My hon. friend has already told us about the story of the Ganga Barrage Scheme which was mooted as early as 1853 and we know that in 1935 the Director of the Geological Survey of India, Dr. Beni Prasad, had made the statement that if steps were not taken properly and quickly, the Bhagirathi would become a sort of elongated lagoon, a dead river which would be no good at all as far as the economy of the region was concerned.

Many major points are involved which I wish the country takes greater note of, inside this House as well as outside. The principal points involved in this question of the construction of the Ganga Barrage refer to the navigable sea route from Calcutta port; the water supply of Calcutta and the entire region around it which has a population of nearly 10 million people; the drainage conditions of five of the most prosperous West Bengal districts.—prosperous if a year is normal and administration does not fail egregiously—the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Nadia, Murshidabad and 24 Parganas, and their exposure to increasing flood hazards. All these questions are involved in the construction of the Ganga Barrage, and the latest statement placed before the House agrees that there is a general consensus of opinion by experts that the solution to the problem is represented by the Ganga Barrage. The experts also appear to agree that the project will not require withdrawal of water from the Ganga during the driest part of the year and therefore the objections which might conceivably be forthcoming from our neighbour country might very well be met.

We have heard in this House and we have read in the papers about the increasing salinity of drinking water in Calcutta, and even the railways were affected because the boilers used the saline water and the engines would

not work properly. This is not an unprecedented phenomenon as our experts know very well. Something like it took place round about Philadelphia on the Delaware river, and about San Francisco on the estuary of the Sacramento river, and there the water supply had to be ensured by construction of reservoirs near the river's head reaches. In this country, so far as Calcutta is concerned, hardly anything has been done on those lines

My hon. friend the Minister of Transport and Communications is here, and the loss to the shipping traffic in Calcutta is something which surely must worry him greatly. There is increase in the frequency and intensity of the bores, and especially since 1919 heavy siltation has taken place in the river Hooghly, and the Commissioners of the Calcutta Port spend fortunes in intensive dredging and costly draining works without appreciable results. The only permanent and long-term solution of which we have heard from experts so far is the Ganga Barrage and, as my hon. friend has pointed out, there have been many years of investigation ever since 1853 or something like that, and the latest is Dr Hensen's report, about which, I do not know why, a lot of hush is maintained by my hon. friends over there.

If the Ganga Barrage is constructed at Farakka, and it is the demand of whoever knows a thing about the subject, and there is a feeder canal which will connect Bihar and U.P. with the port of Calcutta and the world outside by a channel navigable throughout the year, then it will reduce the flood hazards; it will improve the drainage of the fertile districts of Central Bengal; it will remove the salinity of water in the Bhagirathi; it will supply sweet water to greater Calcutta; it will remove navigational difficulties of the sea route from Calcutta; it will improve the depths over the bars and reduce the frequency and intensity of the "bores". But there has been this delay, this unconscionable delay, over the Ganga Barrage which is, to put it very mildly, extremely difficult to understand.

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

The West Bengal Legislative Council lately passed a unanimous resolution drafted by the Chief Minister himself and there have been questions in the House—I have sheaves of them here—which refer to Government's attitude in regard to this matter. And my non-friend Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri has already mentioned something about it.

I feel also that my hon. friend Shri S. K. Patil should take some more objective interest in this decision because he has lately been making some statements about a deep sea port further down the Hooghly below Diamond Harbour. I wish to submit to him and to his advisers that this does not solve the problem of Calcutta port. We know that the World Bank experts, impressed by the necessity of expanding port facilities for the rapidly expanding industrial area round Calcutta, have suggested this. It is a very good thing, but the solution they have in mind is to supplement Calcutta port and not to supplant it. You cannot send Calcutta port to the blazes and talk about a subsidiary port somewhere near Diamond Harbour. Even if it was the intention of Government just not to bother about Calcutta port, it would be physically impossible to bypass the Calcutta port and jeopardise the future if you are at all interested in the economy of our country. A port of big ocean-going steamers will increasingly become necessary with the further development of the industrial belt, and if the refinery and Assam oil production come up to expectations, the berthing of heavy tankers will have also to be provided for among other things. Today, Shri Patil knows very well, and my hon. friend the Minister of Shipping knows very well, even 7,000 ton ships can hardly navigate with a full load, and they have to be diverted to Vizag, but that sort of thing does not do the trick. Shri Patil himself has said from time to time that the Calcutta port was unable to utilise even 10 per

cent of what was expected of it, but what is he going to do about it here and now?

Even if the World Bank proposal for building another port below Diamond Harbour comes true, the problem of saving Calcutta port and developing it will remain, and the only way of doing it, as far as we can understand, is the construction of the Ganga Barrage by strengthening the flow of water in the river. Therefore, if for some reason or other, if for the reason perhaps which might weigh with the World Bank that the Ganga Barrage might cause some kind of controversy, perhaps absolutely imaginary controversy, between the riparian States of India and Pakistan, if on that ground they say, "You go ahead with the other port, we are not going to help in the matter of Calcutta port's maintenance and development", that would be a terrible disaster.

Therefore, I would tell my hon. friend Shri S. K. Patil that his implied approval of the World Bank's scheme for the new port is all right, but it must not mean a final decision to abandon the proposal to revive the Hooghly and the Bhagirathi rivers. That is a proposal which you just are not going to be permitted to deviate from.

Therefore, I feel that this is a matter on which it is extremely important that we make up our minds. There are difficulties. There is the question of money. There is the Government note placed on the Table of the House by the Minister of Irrigation and Power, which says that Rs. 56 crores have to be spent, and it is a hell of a lot of money, and so, we have to make a lot of other investigations. That is all Mumbo-jumbo. It is no good. Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri has already shown it. This question of further investigation is merely a smoke-screen put up by Government in order to hide—I do not quite know what skeletons in the cupboard of the Ministries concerned.

Then, there is the question of Pakistan. I have been informed that when the Partition took place, there was a body called the Partition Council, on which some of the members of Government have taken part. There, it was perfectly understood that the district of Murshidabad would go to India and the district of Khulna would go to Pakistan in spite of the communal position in the two districts being not very clear, only because India did have to have the district of Murshidabad for the construction of the barrage at Farakka. That was the understanding which was given at the Partition Council. That was the understanding which the Radcliffe Commission knew very well. And today, it is not for Pakistan to come forward and say that they would not approve it. On the contrary, Pakistan does not stand to lose at all. Pakistan really would be saved a lot of bother as far as floods in that area is concerned, if there is a barrage at Farakka. Therefore, I say, let us go ahead with the scheme, and let us not bypass the idea by talk of a subsidiary port. Meanwhile, we have to have interim measures. What is going to happen?

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri has said very rightly and Shri S. K. Patil's advisers perhaps would say the same thing, that it would take nearly ten years to complete the Farakka barrage if it is decided upon finally. In the meantime, what happens? In 1958, the Calcutta port almost became incapable of proper utilisation. So, what is going to happen in regard to that? A number of suggestions have been made from time to time by people who know something about engineering, and there has been a suggestion that the course of the river might be shortened as between Murshidabad and Calcutta by several short-cuts of hair-pin bends at little expense, and the construction of the necessary canal from the headworks as well as the necessary earth-work to suit the available gradient, if the barrage would be taken up at the same time; and much fertile land could be reclaimed as a

result of this attempt at training the river. You have to tame the river, according to the scientific knowledge which you have got. Therefore, here and now, between the headworks which are proposed to be somewhere in Murshidabad and Calcutta, there are areas where river training operations can be pursued, as a result of which a lot of very good fertile land could be reclaimed; and for the time being, some interim measure of improvement could take place.

We could, for the time being, also set up a Ganga River Board. There are several projects in the upper reaches, like the Chambal, or the Gandak, the Son, and the Kosi Projects.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member should try to conclude now.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: I may be given five minutes more, because I was one of the co-sponsors of this motion.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: These other projects on the river are also there. We do not say that those projects should be stopped, but there should be some attempt at co-ordinating the effort which is being made in order to utilise the Ganga's waters as much as possible, and, therefore, we should have a Ganga River Board.

Then again, there is the question of the Rupnarain river slightly lower down from Calcutta. In regard to this river also, control and taming is extremely necessary. My hon. friend Shri S. K. Patil stated the other day that the navigability and drainage capacity of the Hooghly is deteriorating partly on account of the deterioration of the Rupnarain; and there is a committee called the Lower Damodar Investigation Committee which is of the same view. My hon. friend Shri Hathi also made a statement where he said very clearly—and this was on the 28th of August, 1958,—in this House:

[Shri H. N. Mukerjee]

"According to the findings of the Lower Damodar Investigation Committee, concentrated flushing doses should be occasionally released down the rivers Damodar and Rupnarain from the reservoir behind the DVC dams in the interests of the conservancy of the river channels."

Therefore, if there is training and taming of the Rupnarain, then we shall get a lot of water coming from that side.

Then again, something perhaps has got to be done perhaps about the DVC project. Maybe, on account of the DVC project, there is a disproportionate emphasis on questions of hydro-electricity and flood control, and the result is that the life of the river Bhagirathi in particular, which sustains our country, is itself in danger. Now, it may be that certain modifications are necessary in the working of the DVC, so that much of the Damodar water which is now held up might be released, so that it can go into the Bhagirathi and flush out the silt which comes from the Bay of Bengal

Then, again, there might be very serious studies, very serious expert studies, made of the continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal, to control the silt which is carried by the flood dykes into the estuary. As a matter of fact, much of the silt which comes into West Bengal should, according to normal geographical rules, have gone into Pakistan, but that does not, because the situation, I am told, of what is called the continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal near the estuary is such that the silt comes from the east, and it coagulates, so to speak, near the mouth of the Bhagirathi, and pushes itself up towards Calcutta, with the result that drainage operations have to be continued, and all kinds of other difficulties take place. Therefore, I want that there should be a serious study of the continental shelf of the Bay of Bengal, so that the estuary is not in danger.

I shall conclude by merely saying that this is not merely a problem of Calcutta. This is a problem which affects the whole of our country. I know very well that perhaps for political reasons, Calcutta is a pet aversion of the Government of India. I can testify myself that in my own hearing, knowing very well that I was listening, Dr. Roy said that his State was not in the good books of Delhi. We know it very well. But I appeal to Government: do not take this shortsighted view, do not cut your nose to spite your face, do not behave in this absolutely irrational manner. From Calcutta port goes more than half of our export trade. If you are going to earn foreign exchange, whether you like it or not, you have to keep up Calcutta port. Calcutta handles 10 million tons of cargo every year. As far as communication and other facilities are concerned, for historical and objective reasons which might be regretted in certain quarters, Calcutta has come to be the centre of the country's principal industrial belt. You cannot wish off Calcutta from the map of your country.

Therefore, since all the experts appear to agree, including the foreign experts and our own experts, that the Ganga Barrage is absolutely essential, Government should go ahead with it, and if it is not going to go ahead with it, it should tell us what it is going to do in the meantime: and even if the Ganga Barrage is actually decided upon, Government should come forward very clearly with an interim scheme, a ten year scheme, for the development of Calcutta port, and for the maintenance of the Bhagirathi river. After all, the Bhagirathi river is a repository of all the traditions of which we are so proud in this country, and if the Bhagirathi river dies, who lives in this country? That is what is involved in this matter.

Therefore, I wish Shri S. K. Patil and my hon. friend over there to take the most serious view of the situation, and in spite of the lack of attendance

in this House and obvious lack of interest on the part of so many Members of this House, I wish Government does take up a really serious attitude in regard to this point and produces results which are absolutely important in the context of today.

Shri S. C. Samanta (Tamluk): From the statement of the hon. Minister, I find that he has gone as far back as 1853, and he has said that it is not a new project. If the project had been taken up by Government then, the time would have come now when we could have celebrated the centenary of this scheme. But, I find that the hon. Minister has jumped from 1853 and 1930. I would like to add something which has happened in the meantime. In 1863 and 1895, eminent Indian engineers surveyed the Hooghly and expressed anxiety about its deterioration. Then in 1913-14, the then Chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust made definite proposals which also called for a scientific examination of data. The Director of Survey, Bengal, arrived at conclusions so alarming as to shock everybody into a demand for a fresh technical examination. The new inquiry led to the conclusion that the bed levels in the Hooghly's headwaters had receded during the past century and that any further deterioration would be a matter of extreme gravity. It was imperative that steps should be taken to ensure the flow of water to the upper reaches sufficient to keep open the channel.

These are the documents which Government have with them. The hon. Minister has said that 'the Government of India are most concerned over the progressive deterioration of the navigable sea route of the port of Calcutta owing to the heavy siltation occurring in the river Hooghly, especially since 1919'. If Government are alarmed, what has been done since 1919? I would respectfully ask Government to let us know what has been done.

In 1946, Mr. A. Webster, Chief Engineer (Special), in his report on the future development of the port of Calcutta, re-emphasised the need to take all possible steps to improve the headwater supply of the Hooghly on which depended the very existence of the port of Calcutta. I demand of my national Government: after this Report, what has been done? How far have they proceeded in the matter?

I may mention for the information of the House that at present Calcutta Port has an income of Rs. 9.97 crores; Bombay Port has Rs. 9.62 crores and Madras Port Rs. 1.69 crores. The Calcutta Port exports more than it imports while Bombay imports more than it exports. So it is not for Bengal that the Calcutta Port should be looked after; it is for the benefit of the whole of India that Calcutta Port should be looked after and the Bhagirathi river should be resuscitated. Bhagirathi brought Ganga. The Bhagirathi is now being silted. Where are we? Should we not be awake to resuscitate the Bhagirathi river? (An Hon. Member: They do not know about Bhagirathi)

We are glad that Government are keen in the matter, but I am afraid of so many experts dealing with this and that. Let Government be certain. If they are certain of the scheme to be executed, let them depend upon one or two experts and come to a final decision. Generally, dealing with the Calcutta Port since 1952 in this House, I am of opinion that the Ministries of Irrigation and Power, and Transport and Communications will do good if they depend upon some competent experts, and see that experts' reports are not referred back and changed.

This question of the Ganga Barrage was pursued in this House and outside since 1952. We formed the opinion from statements and from talks that there will be no want of money for proceeding with the Ganga Barrage if 'international question' is solved. What is that international question?

[Shri S. C. Samanta]

Is it not a fact that when these surveys were made in India before 1947, Pakistan was a party to it? Was not the sum spent for the survey and the report of the experts shared by the East Pakistan and West Pakistan people? Surely so. So how does that international question come in? They are committed to it.

Government will pass on. In the meantime, what is the latest position? I think in 1957 Dr. Hensen came here and submitted a report to the Government. I find nothing in the 9 points which he has submitted to be re-examined. He is very anxious about it. He has said that it should be done. It may be that there might be some preliminary things which should again be examined. I would request Government not to go away from the report submitted by Dr. Hensen. Let them have that examined and start the scheme as soon as possible; as Government are very eager to take it up. It will take at least 10—15 years to be completed. Can the export and import business wait? It cannot. So some interim measures should be adopted. A suggestion has been made by a friend in the Hindustan Times of 6th November, 1958. Let Government have a canal from Damodar river cut up to a point beyond Palta Water Station, i.e., on the upper reaches of the river Hooghly, so that for the time being the flow of water from Damodar may do some good to the Port. As regards navigability and removing the salinity of water at least in that area, some interim measures should be thought of. I would request Government to ponder over the matter and take an interim measure.

My hon. friend, Shri S. K. Patil, knows that I was trying for the Geonkhali scheme for so many years. Now, I am satisfied that that cannot be taken up. But the other scheme which is going to be examined should be examined very soon and a decision taken, even if a subsidiary port is established at Haldi or other places.

Here, I would request the hon. Minister to correct one error. In papers it is mentioned as 'Haldia'. It is not 'Haldia'; it is the river Haldi. But in the Port Trust map and other papers, they have made it 'Haldia'. So people are asking: where is Haldia?

16 hrs.

However, my hon friend, Shri S. K. Patil, has taken it up earnestly and I am sure he will do it. In the meantime, he should also think about Rupnarain river and the Damodar river and see whether any steps can be taken so that water from the Damodar and the Rupnarain river will to some extent help the navigability of the River Hooghly, at least beyond Diamond Harbour so that the port that is being established at Haldi may be established at Geonkhali which will be nearer to Calcutta and which has the depth that is required

The World Bank experts who have come from outside in 1956 all of a sudden found that the Calcutta Port was going to dogs and the import and export business that was being carried on would come to an end within fifteen years. So, instead of referring to Ganga Barrage, they thought of establishing some port down the river Hooghly, down Calcutta on the western bank of that river. I feel it very acutely. There are so many experts in the Transport Ministry and so many experts in the Irrigation Ministry. Why did not they think about it before? Are they less in intelligence than any other experts. I think them to be fit persons. There are Indian engineers and Indian experts who are more than even the World Bank experts; we are proud of them. Why did they not take up this Ganga Barrage scheme and the deterioration of the Hooghly?

I would refer to one thing. I went through the report of the Irrigation and Power Ministry for 1957-58. Though the Minister is very keen to have this scheme examined it does not

find a place in the 1957-58 report of the Ministry. You go page by page and there is no reference to it. All of a sudden in 1958 they talk of this. How could it be? What is the difficulty? The Barcelona pact is gone? Why not this scheme which has so much of utility as mentioned by the Minister in his statement find a place in the report? I would request the Government to be cautious and move forward in such a way that no time is wasted in the execution of this project. With this request, I support the proposition put forward by Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri.

The Minister of Transport and Communications (Shri S. K. Patil): Mr. Chairman, I rise to intervene in this debate, although technically it is the business of my hon. colleague, Shri Hathi, to reply to this on behalf of the Government, because this Ganga Barrage project is not merely an irrigation or power project; it is a multi-purpose project in which various departments of the Government,—and of course the whole country, the Government of India and also West Bengal—are all vitally interested. I could tell my hon. friends opposite that so far as the question of Ganga Barrage is concerned, there is no difference of opinion between the Government and the Opposition.

If I may say so, I am even more anxious and so are my colleagues. If anything could be done to expedite the construction of Ganga Barrage, for the various purposes which I shall now explain, it is our duty to do so. If it will satisfy them, I could tell them from my personal experience that so far as the utility of any multi-purpose project is concerned, so far as the urgency of any multi-purpose project is concerned, there is no project in the whole of India as the Ganga Barrage, and that has got to be taken as early as possible. Therefore, while considering this project or talking about it, let us not talk about Government and the Opposition. There is no Government and Opposition in this; we are all interested and very vitally interested

that it should be done. Many imputations were made that all this is being done. They went even to the point of calling it almost dishonest—the word used in a different sense—but I do not want to take the time of the House by going into them all. My hon. friend Shri Mukerjee said that Government has got a bad aversion for Calcutta. I can assure him that no Government can last for even one minute if they have got any aversion for a place like Calcutta. We have no aversion; if there is anything else, we have favouritism for Calcutta because it serves a national purpose as any other city and perhaps more. Therefore, all these epithets that are really used are beside the point so far as this particular matter is concerned.

Now, I called it a multi-purpose project, and I would, in the very brief time I have got, try to explain it. I am so full of Ganga Barrage that I can give them real information for hours. I can give them all the various schemes that are in my mind, that are in the mind of Government. But there is no time for that, because this is a time-limited debate and therefore I must finish in a few minutes. I call it a multi-purpose project and, in the priority of importance, I would like to say how many things that Ganga Barrage really covers. By far the most important aspect of it is navigation. The second object, which may not be under the Communications Ministry or the Irrigation and Power Ministry, is the water-supply of Calcutta. What are the six million people of Calcutta to do if the salinity is continuously increasing? It is increasing and the low tides are making it more and more saline. Therefore, all the evil effects to which references were made are there. They are facing us in a very very threatening manner, and I do not know what is going to happen in the next five or ten years if proper remedies are not applied from now. Therefore, removal of salinity and improving the water-supply of Calcutta is next in importance.

Reference was also made to flood control. According to me it comes

[Shri S. K. Patil]

next in importance. It is a subject matter of irrigation and power. Under this flood control, we will improve the irrigation not only of India but we will positively increase the irrigation of Pakistan also. Therefore, there is no real conflict of interest between India and Pakistan. There should not be. How Pakistan looks at it is a different matter, but so far as experts are concerned there is no difference of opinion that this aspect is equally helpful to Pakistan, perhaps more helpful to them than to us. The irrigation aspect is there. That, according to me, takes the fourth place, because it is not for irrigation alone that this project has got to be done. It incidentally benefits some portions of Bihar. Like any other project of this type, we incidentally get some power also.

Now, if this is so very important, the question will be asked as to why we do not immediately take it in hand. Not only that. I will go a step further. Apart from these things that I have told you, later on, according to me, there is another possibility. The south of Bengal and the North of West Bengal are so separate that there has got to be a permanent link between the two so that West Bengal becomes a compact State.

I shall live to see the day when this is done and this is immediately to be done, because this is not only the project of West Bengal but it is really a problem, as Shri H. N. Mukerjee said and everybody for that matter said, for the whole of India. Therefore, if this Ganga Barrage is taken on hand and if this Farakka Project is really done, there is the possibility of taking that water by cutting a channel and after that joining the Tiesta and ultimately going into the Brahmaputra so that instead of going by that circuitous way by which you go today, 450 miles of that circuit will be lessened. Apart from the distance that will be lessened, we shall have a direct approach between South and North of West Bengal.

I am telling these things because perhaps you might think that I am exaggerating by calling it a multi-purpose project. It is the best project and a project which is really a must for the whole country. It is not merely for West Bengal. Therefore, having come to that decision, surely the Members from the Opposition side will bear with me when I say that there are perhaps some reasons why delay is there. The delay is not because of money: not because of the experts here. My friend Shri Samanta who is very sincere in everything that he advocates said, "Where are those western experts? Have you not got them?" I can assure him that even the western experts are unanimous with us. They also do not differ in the fact that all these things including the navigation of Pakistan will be improved by the Farakka Barrage and that by flood control their irrigation will be improved and that everything will be improved. There are not differences of opinion. Therefore, so far as the foreign experts are concerned or the World Bank experts are concerned, they do not really have a different tone on that subject.

Dr. Hensen has been mentioned. We are very doubtful indeed when Dr. Hensen came and we had him and we did not know what ultimate conclusions he may come to. But I am very glad that the Opposition members have studied the report—that even he came to the same conclusion that both irrigation and navigation not only of India but even of Pakistan would be improved by the Farakka Barrage or the Ganga Barrage.

Mention has been made by my hon. friend Shri H. N. Mukerjee of its being a navigation problem and for the time being I am more concerned with navigation although I was concerned with irrigation, but in fact I am concerned with all the rivers. My hon. friend Shri Samanta referred to Bhagirath and Bhagirathi, and he warned me that such a mythological river had to be harnessed and Bhagirath had to exert greatly in order to bring it on to this

planet of ours and that the river should not run dry. I am one with him and say that it should not only be dry and it should not be saline also. Bhagirath would not have liked to bring saline water, and if he knew that this Bhagirathi which he created after such a 'mountainous' endeavour would ultimately end by becoming saline, then surely all the effort would have been of no avail. About all these considerations, there is no difference whatsoever between that side and this side.

My hon. friend Shri H. N. Mukerjee to whom I was referring, was right when he made reference to some of my speeches and said that we are thinking of some of the subsidiary or alternate ports, and he thinks that perhaps it is in opposition to the Ganga Barrage or is something different, and that if Ganga Barrage is there, possibly there would be no need for such ports. There he is making a mistake. I can assure him, and that is my view which I firmly hold, that Ganga Barrage is all the more necessary, no matter how many ports come in. If we are thinking of a port, it is because we cannot wait until something else is done, although it is plus and it is not minus and the coming of a port does obviate the necessity of having the Farakka Barrage or the Ganga Barrage. It is a measure which in itself is good, and can be taken only for the purpose of navigation; other purposes are not served by any port. He knows it very well, and Shri Samanta also referred to it. At one time he was a supporter of Geonkhali and now he has gone in. I cannot go into that subject because it will take time, but I could tell the House whether it is Geonkhali or Haldi—I must not call it Haldia, but that is how it is written in all the documents, and unfortunately I do not know how this beautiful river Haldi was forgotten in my list of rivers—or the estuary, the difference is that we do it in order to find out that there must be one additional port, not in order to reduce the importance of Calcutta Port but to heighten the importance of it, and we did it both,

and therefore, we are doing it. That is not our opinion but that is everybody's opinion. We have got to do it in the near future, but we have not taken a decision, because we were really fidgeting with this Geonkhali and ultimately we found that it does not improve the situation, because in Calcutta Port today, in all weather, the draft is 22 feet and sometimes 26 feet, which is very small. Prof. Mukerjee was right. Even ships of 7,000 tons cannot really manoeuvre through this river all the time. 22 feet or 26 feet is no draft for a good port like Calcutta. In regard to Haldi, there also the draft is something between 25 and 30 feet, which is not ideal, because we must have 30 feet for tankers and big ships and sometimes even 35 feet for ships coming from outside. All these projects—estuary and others—are under consideration. Geonkhali having been ruled out, what remains is Haldi or estuary. Estuary will cost perhaps thrice as much, although it is the complete answer, because it will have a draft of 40 feet and more and even the biggest ships can come.

I want to assure my hon. friend, Shri Mukerjee and all those who feel that because we are thinking of an alternative, Calcutta is going to be cancelled that they are very much wrong indeed, for obvious reasons. It is not due to any aversion for Calcutta. The fact remains that Calcutta is such a wonderful port with 42 berths, worth Rs. 200 crores. Do you mean to say that the Government of India is foolish enough to throw away Rs. 200 crores for some kind of fancy or aversion? That would be folly of the highest magnitude if any Government does that. Therefore, there is nothing in Government's mind whatsoever that the importance of Calcutta port might be reduced. It is a very useful port handling a cargo of as much as 10 million tons and it is not at all the idea that it should be really written off. Therefore, wherever there is the creation of a port it has nothing to do with the reduction in importance of the Calcutta port.

[Shri S. K. Patil]

Why do we want the Ganga Barrage? In my individual capacity as well as in my capacity as Minister of the Government of India, wherever I have gone, I have had no hesitation in saying that Ganga Barrage is the first and last answer so far as all these problems are concerned, that it will change the face of West Bengal or for that matter, of India. Ultimately that is the answer and it has got to be done. But what comes in the way? Reference was made to the Barcelona Pact. I can assure my hon. friend, Shri T. K. Chaudhuri, much. Did we wait for the Barcelona Pact? He is very much wrong if he thinks that because the Barcelona Pact was there, we were waiting for it. That is gone now. notwithstanding the Barcelona Pact, we could have done that. Now that pact is not there.

Reference was also made to the lower and upper riparian rights. It is a very strange combination that it has so happened and I need not enlarge on that. This is coming in our way not only in this, but in hundred other ways also. Somehow, while there were 600 rivers—some of them are concerned in this business—and when the rivers and territories were distributed, it so happened that everywhere we became the upper riparian and Pakistan became the lower riparian. In the Indus basin also, it was the same story. About canal waters, we became the upper riparian and Pakistan became the lower riparian. Whether the rivers did it or we did it, that fact remains. So also, in the Gangetic belt, we became the upper riparian and Pakistan became the lower riparian. Why the rivers chose to go to Pakistan or whether we threw them off into Pakistan, we do not know. But that fact remains. It is not that we are afraid or that some wind of bravado or force must be shown to demonstrate that we are not afraid. We are doing something which is very right according to us. Although we are the upper riparian and Pakistan happens to be the lower riparian, as far as I can see,

although I am not a technical man, I am practical enough to understand that there would be no harm, so far as Pakistan is concerned. If there is any harm, although I had all the power and strength I would do so. What is fair and just to me, is equally just and fair to Pakistan. I am convinced and my conviction has been reinforced by the expert opinion, both of the Indian experts and the foreign experts, that navigation and irrigation even of Pakistan will be improved by this Ganga Barrage. Now that being the utility of the Ganga Barrage, please banish from your mind the idea once for all that there are two sides to this question. There is only one side and that is the Ganga Barrage must come into existence as quickly as possible in order to solve all these questions.

What has happened? These are things that are happening for centuries. It is a question of three or four centuries, not one or two years. In the river Bhagirathi there was no siltage or anything. It was a fine river with all its feeder channels coming from Ganges; they were going with abundant supply of water, flushing of water—no question of any siltage or any such thing. But a period of 300 or 400 years is not a small period and our Himalayan rivers have got a tendency to siltage which is almost unknown in some other countries. Our mountain is an infant mountain and so it has large siltage. Because of the terrific siltage it has become an acute problem, and it has been more so during the last several hundred years; still it is becoming more.

My hon. friend, Shri Samanta, asked: what happened in 1927 and 1933? How could this Government do anything in the years 1927 and 1933? What could we really do then? Whatever power we have got was only after independence? Therefore, we are responsible from 1947 as to what we have done. I can assure him that it is not because a reference was not made and

so it has not been there. I can assure him without even the permission of my hon. colleague who will ultimately reply on behalf of the Government that if it were possible and that we can go on with the project then surely, notwithstanding what the Planning Commission might have done or may do, we shall take that project in hand.

But the difficulty that we are experiencing is, and everyone of it I need not narrate in this House, that sometimes perhaps too much of expression is no good on this subject. I can only assure them very sincerely, and that I am not merely doing in order to score any debating point over the opposition that our mind is occupied on the object that as soon as possible we must undertake this project in hand. But the House will agree with me that when we undertake that project in hand, we must do it with a view to finishing it or completing it as quickly as possible. Therefore, all the difficulties which we are likely to encounter both on our side and their side have to be taken into consideration.

There is no question of foreign exchange or money. I could say that the project is so important and so very necessary that even if one pie does not come from outside, even then we have to strave ourselves and take this project in hand, because the project is so important that it will ultimately mean giving life to this country. Therefore, I can assure this House that it is not because the Government is of different mind, it is not because the experts have said anything different, it is not because another port is coming there that we are negligent towards this project. We are very anxious that this project must be put through as quickly as we can, but there are some difficulties.

I can tell the House another thing. If this project was built some 5 or 10 years back, the cost would perhaps have been Rs. 10 crores or 20 crores less. As time goes on, the cost increases. If in spite of all these things a delay has occurred, they must bear

with us that the reasons are something different. Even then, we have not been just sitting supine and not doing anything, because not to do anything is not only cutting the life line of Bengal but also cutting the life line of India. So, we want to take it up as quickly as we can.

There are so many suggestions coming from various quarters, to which I cannot refer now. Somebody, a foreign expert, came and told me: we have got a remedy. I asked: what is the remedy? Because, I have listened to all the remedies and all the proposals, so far as this project is concerned. He says, why not have a canal like the Suez Canal, a specially built canal. Some new idea. The idea was so very interesting that I sat with the expert for hours together and studied it whether there was any possibility by which we can have the depth that we required in order that the Calcutta port would be navigable: an all weather one with a depth of 30 feet or more. If a canal could do that by side-tracking the Bhagirathi or by the side of Bhagirathi, it means the same thing. We can do it with all apologies to Bhagirath whether he likes it or not. There can be a modern Bhagirath and my colleague can do it or anybody can do it. That is a project.

Another project came: why not have a bridge at Farakka? If you have to go from one end to another, you have got a circuitous route, a very difficult thing. These are un-examined projects. One does not know what exactly is the best. Surely, the Government's mind, if it is occupied on any particular subject, it is on this more than anything else. A very competent officer has been appointed by C.W.P.C. in charge of the Ganga Barrage so that constantly the matter should be kept under review. As soon as we find an opportunity of going into it, we can do it. Beyond this, hon. Members must not expect me that I should go into more details. Because, time is running, my colleague has to reply and the Mover has got to reply. But, I can tell him, whether for the matter of

[Shri S K Patil]

navigation or removing salinity of Calcutta, or the flood nuisance that is there, and also making Bengal compact, all these are problems which are not merely Irrigation and Power problems; they are problems of the whole Government, where all departments, even the Government and the Opposition are united in doing that. Therefore, whatever hurdles there may be in our way, to which if I have not made a complete reference, surely hon. Members will understand that there is some weighty reason why into every reason I cannot go at this juncture, I can assure them on behalf of the Government that no time will be wasted, even a day. When the time comes, the Ganga barrage would be there and you and I can see it in the near future not only removing one difficulty, but even 100 difficulties from which Calcutta and the whole of India suffers. This is the assurance on behalf of the Government and I hope with that assurance, surely my friends will not call the Government that we made any dishonest attempt in making the statement that we made. We stand by that statement and there is not a grain of dishonesty about it.

Shri B. Das Gupta (Purulia) On a point of information when can we expect you to take up this project, 1, 2, 3 or 4 years?

Shri S K. Patil: I wish I were a prophet

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat) Mr Chairman, after hearing the hon Minister for Transport and Communications, I always get the feeling that we are all carried away by his eloquence. We listen to him with rapt attention. After having heard him, one stops and wonders what actually has emanated from his great flush of words and beautiful simile, which he is such a master of. One of the main things that has emanated from his speech is that there is some great secret whereby this Ganga barrage

project cannot be put into practice. Everything has been accepted; the importance of it, not only from the point of view of West Bengal, but from the point of view of India. He has narrated six very important points and at the end he says, it is not a question of Pakistan, it is not a question of the Barcelona agreement, it is not a question of finance, but there is one big, very big secret which this House cannot know and therefore we should not press him to give us what that reason is. Even if we were not to press him as to what exactly is the secret, can we very humbly ask him, as my colleague who has just now interrupted asked, when can we expect this? Can we expect it by the beginning of the third plan? Will it be included in the Third Plan? I will tell you very frankly that at least the people of Bengal feel that there is absolutely no justifiable cause which has been shown, no logic given to us as to why this project, after having been accepted as being very necessary, as being a priority project as far as the welfare of India is concerned, as far as the welfare of the major part of India is concerned, as far as the welfare of the entire people of West Bengal is concerned, cannot be put through. One of the reasons which has been given by the Deputy Minister for Irrigation and Power has been that the technical data has not been finalised. Really, the point has been made, I suppose out of great frustration, by Shri Samanta that we should be now celebrating the centenary of this project since it was mooted in 1853 and now it is 1958. The hon Minister of Communications said: "What could we do in 1936 in 1928?" But may I point out that some of the best technical data have been handed down to us from the British times? Even the whole question of the DVC and many other projects actually started in the times of the British and we have had prominent British engineers who have handed down technical data to us. That much we have to recognise. Therefore, if technical

data have been collected over the course of so many years, and after independence when our own engineers have gained so much experience in the course of building up so many dams and river valley projects and multi-purpose projects, I see absolutely no reason why this excuse is being given to us that technical data are not full and not available.

As Shri Chaudhuri pointed out, I was also in that consultative committee for irrigation and power when Shri Nanda told us that investigations had been completed in 1951-52. This consultative committee meeting took place in 1954, but in 1952 the Central Water and Power Commission had already submitted a project report. And then we are told by Shri Hathi that there was an unprecedented flood, shifting of the river took place, and therefore re-evaluation of data began to take place. But I should like to point out that the river Ganga has been known to shift. It is not something new. In Kosi also, does not the river shift? This is not a phenomenon which is unknown to our irrigation experts, and even if we are to accept that re-evaluation was necessary, re-checking of the data was necessary, that was in 1954 and today we are in 1958. We have got foreign experts also, and yet we are told that technical data are not available. It is an amazing statement which is being made. The statement made by the hon. Minister of Irrigation and the speech now made by the hon. Minister of Communications leaves us completely flummoxed. The *bona fides* of the Government have been challenged by Shri Chaudhuri, but I do not know, I fail to understand, how the Government can now tell us that they do not know when this is going to be taken up, when it is going to be implemented. That is the question we are putting to you. We want to know very categorically when this project is going to be taken up. Time is the essence of the whole thing, because, as Mr. Hensen has pointed out, the deterioration of the sea route from Calcutta is progress-

ing, and will ultimately lead to complete loss of traffic in the course of a few decades—a few decades, not a few centuries.

Since 1947 we have already spent eleven years, and now in 1958 what has happened? Actually in August the Calcutta port authorities decided to close the Esplanade moorings. The reach of the Hooghly between Outram Ghat and Takta Ghat was closed to ships. No ships were allowed to berth in the moorings because it was found that heavy silting had raised the river bed in the reach and vessels in the Esplanade moorings had very little clearance between their bottoms and the river bed. This is what happened as late as August this year. The silting of the river between Ahiritallah Ghat and Fort Point, which is one of the most busy portions of the river, has been so heavy during the last few years that we believe that if something is not done very soon, the river will be silted up and the biggest exporting port of Calcutta will lose for us the very greatly needed foreign exchange which we know is one of the most important things we have to earn.

Not only that. The question of saline water has rightly been pointed out by the hon. Minister of Communications. Hon. Members who come from other parts of India would be surprised to know that even about 20 years ago the salinity of the Hooghly river was not more than about 70 to a million, but now during the last year it was 630 to a million. We could not drink that water, it was so bad. The engines went out of order, all that has been stated before. So, we feel that the entire water supply of Calcutta will go out of gear unless we immediately take on hand measures whereby this silting of the river is dealt with and flushing is done by bringing fresh water from the upper region.

Everybody agrees that the Farakka barrage is the most important answer

[Shrimati Renu Chakravartty]

to all these problems. Not only that, I want to urge that not only the communications between North and South Bengal are very important. Any body who has gone through the nightmareish journey from Calcutta to North Bengal changing at Sakrigali Ghat and Manihari Ghat and all those areas, will know how important it is. What is even more important is this. If today we can accept this Ganga barrage and also have its second phase, namely the joining with the Brahmaputra and the Teesta rivers, we shall eliminate the passing through of our freight and our traffic through Pakistan. This is very important even from the point of view of several other factors.

We all seem to be agreed that the Ganga barrage or the Farakka barrage is the most important project which we have to implement. But then the big question mark comes. What is the reason for the delay? We are not accepting the position that technical data have not been made available in the course of so many years. Even taking 1947 as the year from which we can start, that being the year when our actual responsibility starts, we find that from 1947 up to 1956 is a long period of eleven years. Many other turbulent rivers are being tamed, and in respect of many other difficult rivers, data are being obtained. So, we cannot understand why when it comes to the question of the Ganga barrage, this question of technical data is brought forward as an excuse for delay.

As I have urged, time is the essence of the entire thing. What is the use of our having something when it is too late? Already, during the last year, we had felt so many difficulties in respect of the port, in respect of our drinking water, and in respect of our communications also. Therefore, I want to have a categorical answer from the hon. Minister who replies, by what time we may expect this project which is a priority of priorities to be taken up, and whether it will

be included in the Third Five Year Plan or not.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): We also do not want to be delayed.

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi): We also want to speak. We may be given five minutes or at least two or three minutes to speak.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: The House is sitting till 5.30 P.M. today.

16.38

Shri A. C. Guha (Barasat): I think practically all the points about the urgency and the importance of the Ganga barrage scheme have been urged already by different Members, and more particularly admitted by Shri S. K. Patil himself. Government have admitted the importance of it even in the statement laid on the Table of this House on 2nd September of this year. They have stated in the statement:

"There is a general consensus of opinion that the channels of the Hooghly and the Bhagirathi will progressively deteriorate, if they are left to themselves....".

and there is no other way of protecting the port of Calcutta except by having this Ganga barrage. I would not like to repeat the points which have already been mentioned and which have received sufficient attention from the House, but I would like to state two other matters.

The rivers of Matabhanga, Jalangi, Ichhamati, Yamuna, Sootia, Biddhahari and Churni are all being practically silted up, and so, any irrigation works within the districts of Murshidabad, the 24-Parganas, Nadia and also Burdwan and Hooghly have become almost impossible. I know of some community project areas in these districts where even small irri-

gation works could not be taken up because the level of the river is very high, and the river is practically dried up. All the rivers flowing by that side have silted up, and there is no water available with which irrigation could be done.

Moreover, there is also the difficulty of the drainage. While on the agricultural side there cannot be any irrigation water, we find that occasionally, these districts are having floods, whenever there is a heavy shower of rain. There is no proper drainage for the out flow of the rain water, and the inevitable result is that there are floods devastating the standing crops. This aspect also should attract the attention of Government.

The drainage in the city of Calcutta itself is in difficulty. Even if there is a small shower for half an hour, the streets of Calcutta are flooded knee-deep. A few years ago, that was not the position; certain parts of the city used to get flooded only after heavy showers for at least two hours, but now, even if there is rain for half an hour, even a small rain, not a very heavy shower, we find all the streets of Calcutta covered over with water.

So apart from the question of drinking water and salinity mentioned earlier, the question of the drainage of Calcutta should also receive proper attention. I know that for more than two decades now since the Congress got authority over the Calcutta Corporation, they have been trying to have the drainage system examined and improved. But all their efforts have proved futile. A special engineer was appointed simply for the drainage system and I think several lakhs of rupees have been wasted without any appreciable result in improving the drainage system of Calcutta. That is also because the Bidhadhari, through which flows all the washings of Calcutta, has practically been silted up. So the problem of the drainage of Calcutta, which has a population of

about 60 lakhs, should also receive the attention of Government.

My hon. friend, Shri S. K. Patil, has made an eloquent speech and

Shri Nath Pal (Rajapur): I thought he said 'arrogant' speech.

Shri A. C. Guha: He did not hear me using that word; he might have thought of it in his own mind.

I do not question the sincerity of purpose, real intentions and *bona fides* of the hon Minister in this matter. But still he should give some assurance to the people of West Bengal. He should at least give an assurance that this matter will be seriously taken up. I can understand that a scheme costing about Rs. 50—Rs. 60 crores must have a proper project estimate, must have some model project. All these things have to be done. But why have so many years been wasted and these things not done? Anyhow, that is a thing of the past. But even now, if the scheme is to be taken up, these things have to be done. Government should take immediate steps to have the project estimate, the model project and all the necessary preliminary things so that the construction may be taken up at the earliest without any further delay.

Shri S. K. Patil has said that in spite of all these things, for some reason or other Government have to wait for sometime or something to that effect. But what is that reason? I do not think there should be any mystery in this matter. There should be frank discussion in this House, and if there is any difficulty, it should be disclosed to the House and the House should be taken into confidence.

I do not like to take more time, especially as there is not much time and all other matters have been men-

[Shri A. C. Guha]

tioned I hope when my hon friend, Shri Hathi, will reply, he will give a definite assurance that this scheme will be taken by a particular date so that the people of West Bengal may feel that the Government are really earnest. This is not only a question of convincing me or some other Members of this House, it is a question of convincing the people of West Bengal. I can say that in West Bengal there is a general feeling, rightly or wrongly, that Government are not serious over this matter. In a democratic set-up, we have to take into consideration popular sentiments and popular feelings, even if they are not rationally based. So I hope some declaration will be made on the floor of this House that this scheme will be taken up immediately without any further delay and the project estimates and other things will also be undertaken immediately so that we can know that by a particular date the scheme will be completed.

It has been stated that ten years will be required to finish this project. But what is to happen in the meantime to the Port of Calcutta the City of Calcutta, the communications and railway transport of Calcutta? These things cannot be allowed to remain as they are for these ten years. Something has to be done in this period almost immediately. Last year during the dry season, the entire railway communications of Calcutta were practically upset, next year it will be worse still. So something has to be done. What is to be done and has the Government any mind to do it should also be disclosed in this House.

Another point and I finish. Shri Patil has said that through this project, they would like to put West Bengal as compact region. Really there is now great difficulty in communication between North Bengal and lower Bengal. I hope he would see that there will be railway communication as also road communication for motor and pedestrian traffic. Railway communication over that barrage

would be a great necessity. If this barrage scheme is put into operation, there should be easier communication between North Bengal and lower Bengal. I hope all these things would be considered and some definite decision of the Government would be made so that the people of West Bengal may feel that the Government is really serious about this matter.

Mr Chairman: Now it is 4-45 P.M. We started at 3 P.M. The time appointed for discussion is 2½ hours. There are still 45 minutes left. But the matter has been very thoroughly discussed even to the satisfaction of many hon Members. Now I would like to know from the hon Mover of the Resolution if he would like me to stop the discussion at this stage or one or two speakers may further be allowed. Otherwise, I will call upon the hon Minister to reply to the debate. If he agrees, we may finish at 5 or 5-15 P.M. If he does not agree I will give the full time for the discussion.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: We want full time but I would not take more than five minutes.

श्री रघुनाथ सिंह सभापति महोदय, गंगा बरज उ मम्बन्ध म बहुत मी बाने कहीं गयी है। में सिपिंग व प्वाइंट आफ व्यू मे इस पर कुछ प्रकाश डालना चाहता हूँ।

पुराने जमाने मे भारतवर्ष मे सबसे भारी पाट ताँत्रलिपि और नार्मिपत्तनम क थे। आज से २३०० वर्ष पहले ताँत्रलिपि समुद्र त गंगा या लोकन आज ३५ मील का फ सरा समुद्र और ताँत्रलिपि मे हो गया है। इसी प्रकार बंगाल की खाड़ी मे जा समुद्र है वह मी वर्ष मे दा मील के हिसाब से दक्षिण की तरफ जा रहा है। अर्थात् गंगा मे इतना इतना ज्यादा बानू आना है कि गंगा के कारण बंगाल की खाड़ी का समुद्र दक्षिण की तरफ हटता जाता है। इसी प्रकार आज जो कलकत्ता का पोर्ट है उसको भी कुछ समय बाद

वही बसा होगी जो कि ताम्रनिर्लिप्त की हो गयी। यह एक प्राकृतिक चीज है जिसको कि हम और आप रोक नहीं सकते।

यह सही है कि गंगा बराज के द्वारा थोड़ा ज्यादा पानी आयेगा। इसका यह अर्थ होगा कि उससे नदी का स्तर कुछ ऊंचा हो जायेगा। लेकिन अगर आप गंगा बराज द्वारा पानी को १५ फीट ऊंचा करके लावेंगे तो आपका दूसरी ओर भी ध्यान देना होगा। इस प्रकार पानी ऊंचा करने का और परिणाम यह होगा कि गंगा के किनारे जो शहर हैं या जो खेती गंगा के किनारे होती है वह डूब जायेगी। इस बात को भी हम मद्देनजर रखना चाहिए।

दूसरी बात हमें यह कहनी है कि आजकल कलकत्ता के पोर्ट पर दस हजार टन के जहाज बड़ी मुश्किल में आ पाते हैं। करीब तीन चार दिन का वाकया है कि एक साठे आठ हजार टन का जहाज बालू में फस गया था। अगर इस गंगा बराज द्वारा आप दस पन्द्रह फुट पानी ऊंचा कर दोगे तो हमें दस से पन्द्रह हजार टन तक के जहाज कलकत्ता पोर्ट में आ सकेंगे। परन्तु आजकल ज्यादा बड़े जहाज बनाने की टेन्डेंसी है क्योंकि उनका वास्तु आफ आपरेशन बहुत कम होता है। आजकल जो जहाज बन रहे हैं वे ६० और ८० हजार टन के हैं जिनको पोर्ट में आने — लिए ६० फीट गहरा पानी चाहिए। अगर हम गंगा बराज को बना भी ले तो हम उन बड़े जहाजों का कलकत्ता पोर्ट में नहीं ला सकेंगे। हमको प्रकृति से युद्ध करना है और प्रकृति हम पक्ष में है कि आज नहीं तो सौ बरस बाद वाक्या के पोर्ट की वही अवस्था होगी जो कि ताम्रनिर्लिप्त की हुई थी। २३०० वर्ष में ताम्रनिर्लिप्त से समुद्र ३५ मील दूर हट गया है। बंगाल की भूमि से भी समुद्र ३० वर्ष में ६ मील के हिसाब से दूर हो रही है। इस हिसाब से २३०० वर्ष में कलकत्ता से समुद्र कम से कम ६० मील दूर हो जायेगा। लेकिन यह एक

प्राकृतिक चीज है। इस बालू को आप रोक नहीं सकते। इसलिये मेरा सुझाव है कि इस स्कीम की चालू करने में पहले इस बात पर गौर कर लिया जाये कि अगर गंगा बराज द्वारा नदी का स्तर दस पन्द्रह फुट ऊंचा कर दिया गया तो किनारे — बसे हुए कितने गहरो की और खेती को नुकसान होगा। इस कारण आन्दोलन भी हो सकता है। हमका हम बात पर भी विचार कर लेना चाहिए। मेरा तो सुझाव यह है कि कलकत्ता में तीन चालीस मील दक्षिण में पोर्ट बनाया जाये। इसके लिये सामान्य जमीन बहुत दिनों में सरकार का ध्यान देना पड़ेगा। वह कहते हैं कि गेओलॉजिकली ये यह पार्ट बनाया जाये। अगर गेओलॉजिकली को ठीक न समझा जाये तो उसमें और दक्षिण में हट कर पोर्ट बनाया जा सकता है। लेकिन अगर हम यह सोचें कि कलकत्ता के पोर्ट की रक्षा कर लेंगे तो मैं कहता हूँ कि यह नहीं हो सकता। चाहे आज हो या सौ बरस बाद हो यह पार्ट समाप्त होगा। गंगा बराज बना कर भी आप ज्यादा से ज्यादा दस हजार टन वाले जहाजों को ला सकते हैं। पर आप ६० और ८० हजार टन के जहाजों को फिर भी पोर्ट में नहीं ला सकेंगे। गंगा बराज में ता दस पन्द्रह फुट पानी ही ऊपर हो सकता है। पर ये बड़े जहाज इनके पानी में नहीं आ सकेंगे। आप गंगा बराज बना कर ज्यादा से ज्यादा २० हजार टन तक के जहाज पोर्ट में ला सकते हैं। इसमें ज्यादा नहीं।

Shri Sadhan Gupta (Calcutta-East)
 Mr Chairman Sir the hon Minister of Transport and Communications has done well by emphasizing that this question of the Ganga Barrage is not a question between Government and the Opposition and indeed there should be no two sides to this question. This would have been very gratifying if we had found an awareness all along about this question. Unfortunately, we were compelled to raise this question today and to criticise Government because, although, as the hon Minister has pointed out,

[Shri Sadhan Gupta]

there is very little to be said against the Ganga Barrage Project and, as a matter of fact, it is the only project in whose favour everything is to be said and against which nothing can be said, we did not find that awareness which we expected in the case of a project of this sort.

Even in the case of a project like the D.V.C., although we have many benefits from it—we get hydro-electric power, we have flood control and so many other things—there is still something in the debit. Through the damming of the river Damodar in its upper reaches we have deprived the lower reaches and some of the rivers into which it runs the flushing momentum which clear a large part of the silt. But in the case of Ganga Barrage we not only confer multiple benefits, numerous benefits on different parts of West Bengal, and also incidentally to our country as a whole, we even extend our benefits to our neighbour Pakistan. So, there is nothing to be said against it. Even then, we found that there did not seem to be an awareness on the part of the Government in regard to the scheme. Now, we would have been re-assured by the Transport Minister's speech if we could conclude from it that this particular project was definitely going to be taken up. But even then, he has referred to certain mysterious reasons which could not be disclosed, and which had so far withheld the undertaking of the construction of the barrage. I shall not ask him to disclose the mysterious reasons because I know I shall not succeed in compelling or impelling him to do so. But then, still, if he cannot disclose the reasons, we can conjecture that the reasons must be extra-territorial in some of its aspects and what we want to tell him and what we want to tell the Government from this House—and I think in this all sections will agree with me—that no other force outside our country has a right to hold up a project which is so vital for our interests. The longer we delay the Ganga Barrage we jeopardize the

future of Calcutta, and through the jeopardy to the future of Calcutta, we jeopardize the future of our country.

I am not worried about Shri Raghunath Singh's worries about how many thousand tons of ship we could get to Calcutta and how many feet of water we could raise because, after all, we need not plan for 2,300 years from now at the moment, and we need not also bother about ships of 60,000 to 70,000 tons. In 2,300 years we will have many scientific experiences to fall back upon and we need not cite the experience of Tamralipti to determine the future of Calcutta 2,300 years afterwards. 2,300 years before now, we had no scientific knowledge and if we had it we might perhaps have saved Tamralipti, but we can safely assume that in 2,300 years from now, we will have plenty of scientific knowledge to counteract any evil that Nature might work in relation to the coast of Bengal or in relation to the port of Calcutta.

As regards tonnage, as far as I know,—of course Shri Raghunath Singh is a shipping expert—the cargo ships up to this day do not have usually a tonnage of 60,000 to 70,000 tons. It is really luxury liners which have tonnages of 60,000 to 70,000 tons. Cargo ships have a much smaller tonnage and, as a matter of fact, even amongst the luxury liners, very few of the ships of 60,000 to 70,000 tons ply in our waters. So, I am not unduly worried, but what I am worried about is whether these weighty reasons which the Transport Minister again and again referred to still persist. If the Government is not going to disclose those reasons, I would at least request the Government to give us a categorical assurance that those weighty reasons no longer exist today, or, if they do exist, the Government will have no compunction in brushing those reasons aside and proceed with the construction of the Ganga Barrage,

weighty reasons or no weighty reasons I hope the reasons have by now lost their weight and will not impede the undertaking of the barrage.

17 hrs.

The Deputy Minister of Irrigation and Power (Shri Hathi): I think after the very lucid and clear statement of my esteemed colleague, the Minister for Transport and Communications, it is hardly necessary for me to say anything to show that the Government is all serious about the question of Ganga Barrage and that there need not be any misgivings or apprehensions. The port of Calcutta, which is sought to be improved by this project, is a port of national importance. It is not that the Government is unaware of the deteriorating position of Hooghly and its constant effect on the port.

More than 50 per cent of the country's trade is being handled at the port of Calcutta. Tea, jute and other commodities are exported from Calcutta and with the coming up of the steel plants, from 10 million tons, the cargo handled might go up to 12 to 15 million tons. So, the importance of the port is known and need not be emphasised. With the statement of my esteemed colleague, I am sure the apprehensions or misgivings which might have been in the minds of the Members must have been allayed. There cannot be a greater expression of sincerity on behalf of the Government than what has been stated on the floor of the House by my esteemed colleague.

Although in the beginning when the mover of the motion had used certain expressions I had a mind to refer to those expressions and to submit to the House that they were not used perhaps as I thought in their ordinary meaning, now I do not think I need go into those questions after the statement of my esteemed colleague. I am aware that hon. Members are keen to know as to why there has been such a long delay and why a

project, which was thought of in 1853, has not yet materialised. I can also appreciate their anxiety. All that I can say is that it is not their anxiety alone; it is not a question of Calcutta alone; it is not a question of West Bengal alone, but it is a question of the country as a whole. The Government is, if I may say so, more anxious and more keen about this project. But I know that these words may yet not be sufficient to allay the misgivings and hon. Members would like to know what we have done all these years. I have got in chronological order all that has been done from 1915 to 1957 and if I have sufficient time at my disposal I could have narrated individual years and the individual actions that were taken, the various investigations that were done and what is the latest position.

An Hon. Member: Why don't you circulate it?

Shri Hathi: If hon. Members want, I am prepared to circulate it.

Some Hon. Members: We want it.

Shri Hathi: I shall even go further and say that not only what has been done but I would even be ready to take the members into confidence and say every two months or so what is the further progress made in the investigation. I am prepared to do that.

Now, naturally the question would arise that if in 1853 this project was thought of why nothing had been done up till now. One of the hon. Members said that we have sufficient data which the British engineers had collected and that could have been availed of. We have availed of that data. I may, for the information of the House, submit that in 1946 one of the eminent engineers, although data was then available, said (I am referring to Mr. A. Webster):

"An enormous amount of survey work, data collection and, perhaps, model experimentation must be undertaken before the project can be approved."

[Shri Hathi]

Then he further says:

"It may not be unreasonable to assume that at least 20 years may lapse before the barrage can become an accomplished fact."

That was said in 1946

An Hon. Member: 12 years have passed.

Shri Hathi: That was said at a time when the data was not available to the extent to which he thought them necessary

It was in 1950 that the Central Water and Power Commission undertook the investigations. In 1951, 1952, 1953 and 1954 investigations were carried on and on the basis of those investigations and model experiments certain results were achieved. Then in 1954 when the Ministry of Irrigation and Power circulated a note on the irrigation projects of West Bengal to the Members of Parliament from West Bengal, a reference was made to this in that note also. In the year 1954 the investigations were, according to the CPWC complete to prepare the project report. But as it happened, in the mean time in the years 1951 to 1954, at least in 1954, heavy floods came and about 12 miles of river on both the sides of Farraka were eroded. That means all the model experiments that had been taken up and done on the basis of the data that were collected, when they were actually checked up and the results tried to be verified.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: May I make an interruption? The erosion did not take place in 1954. I come from that area. I have lived in that area from my childhood and I can tell him that between 1948 and 1950 the whole municipal town of Dhulian Ganga below Farraka with a population of 10,000 was wiped out but the barrage point at Farraka has not changed as a result of this erosion.

Shri Hathi: The hon. Member naturally knows more of the area. But it

is not a question of the particular site. The data that we have to collect does not relate to that particular site.

We have to collect data for the river as a whole, the silt that comes, the salinity that comes, the hydrology of the river and all that.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: What is the period that is required for hydrological data, 2 years, 5 years, 10 years?

Shri Hathi: It may be 2, 5 or 10 years.

An. Hon. Member: Calcutta would have gone.

Shri Hathi: What I submit is that the statement that was made was not a statement which is sought to be said as dishonest. That is what I wanted to say.

After 1954, further data in the light of the change of the river were collected. They were examined by the German expert. There also, there is no difference of opinion about the need of the barrage. There is no question of difference of opinion between the Indian engineers and foreign experts. They all say the same thing. The only thing that was suggested by Dr Hensen was—I shall mention what actually he suggested—

"In spite of the exhaustive information which is available about hydraulic and historical characteristics, it is not sufficient to determine with certainty all the details of the various developments in the Hooghly, for, this period of intensive measurements which have to be taken in nature is too small. Only by way of further carrying out these observations in a systematic way, one can obtain definite information which is wanting about the Hooghly and the Bhagirathi."

On the basis of this, investigations have already started. They are now in an advanced stage and I can say that we will be completing it as soon as possible without any further delay. Actually, as soon as investigations are ready, the project report can be made. There will be no delay. That is the only cause. I want to assure the Members here, because the Government itself is keen that the project report should be prepared as early as possible and that all the implications—technical, I mean—should be examined as soon as it is possible without any further delay.

So far as the question of funds is concerned, I do not think that comes in the way at all. After all, what is the cost going to be? When we have taken up projects costing Rs. 170 crores, Rs. 100 crores, and Rs. 122 crores, I do not think this project would suffer only for want of funds or this would not be included or taken up for want of funds. There is no question of want of funds. On the one hand when we say it is important from the viewpoint of preserving the port, I do not think an amount of Rs. 60 or even 100 crores would be a factor which would deter us from taking up the project. There is no question of want of funds. It is only a question that when we have to train a river and start work on a mighty river like the Ganga, we should be fully prepared and should have full data so that in future we do not have to change the designs or alter the things. That is the only point. I may further repeat that it is not any sort of hostility as the Mover of the motion said or any perverse attitude, or whatever it was called, on the part of the Central Government. After all, it is an important project. Had there been any hostility, why should the Government undertake the investigations at all and spend money? In fact, we want to do it, we want to take it up. The only point is that investigation to the satisfaction of the technical experts has to be done. I may say, or the hon. Members may say, let us start something tomorrow, but unless the

technical experts advise us and say that we can start and go ahead, I do not think any of the Members would insist that it should be started.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): The auspicious moment

Shri Hathi: I am sure that the hon. Members will agree with me that as soon as the technical data are available, the investigations and surveys are over, then and then only the project could start. Nobody would wish that we should start on insufficient data, especially in view of the advice which has been offered by all the experts. It is not one or two. Everybody thinks that the data are not sufficient in view of the particular terrain, the particular discharge, the particular behaviour of the river.

I am therefore not going to take much of the time of the House nor is it necessary for me to further elucidate any of the points. All that I can say is that there is no lack of sincerity on the part of the Government. The investigations are being taken up. As my esteemed colleague mentioned, we have placed a special officer for this purpose. We have opened a special circle. The work is being carried on, and we will see that the required data are obtained and the investigations completed as soon as possible without any further delay. Further than that I do not think any assurance is needed.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: But it is not forthcoming, that is the point.

Shri Hathi: If anybody were to ask me as to when we can begin, it is not possible for me to give the exact date. I can only say we shall do it as soon as possible and complete the investigations. That is the only assurance that can be given.

Dr. E. Banerji (Bankura): The hon. Minister of Communications has very well appreciated the importance of the project, but he says that there is a

[Dr. R. Banerjee]

certain amount of secrecy which he cannot divulge. Now Shri Hathi says that only technical difficulties are standing in the way. So, is the House to assume that the reason for which it cannot be taken up which was in the mind of Shri Patil is the same as has been narrated by Shri Hathi?

Mr. Chairman: It is not necessary to make another speech for this purpose. The House can draw its own conclusions. The hon. Member can come to his own conclusions.

Shri S. K. Patil: I do not want to say anything except that I never used the word "secrecy". I may only say that this debate has highlighted certain points and really cast a responsibility on the Government of which we are conscious.

Shri A. C. Guha: May I ask one question? Will it be possible for the Government to do at least the preliminary work within the Second Plan period?

Shri S. K. Patil: Does not my reply indicate it? Should I be more precise than what I have said? I have said the debate has highlighted many points, which were before us also. Now we are further reinforced by your comments and we are conscious of our responsibility.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhury: I would have been very happy if the incomparable eloquence of Shri Patil, or the smiling self-assurance of our amiable friend, Shri Hathi

An Hon. Member: . . . could have produced something!

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhury: . . could have really assured us. I do not feel reassured, because the real question involved in this discussion is not one of technical excellence of the scheme. As a matter of fact, Hafiz

Mohammad Ibrahim's statement itself refers to that and says:

"There is a general consensus of opinion that the channels of the Hooghly and the Bhagirathi will progressively deteriorate, if they are left to themselves, and that the most effective method of stopping the long-term deterioration is by regulation of upland supplies to the Hooghly through Bhagirathi, by the construction of a barrage on the Ganga."

So, it seems Government are satisfied, and Shri S. K. Patil has also said so repeatedly that this is the best scheme, the best of the multi-purpose projects that are under consideration of Government. But the real question here is not one of technical excellence, as I said, but one of implementation, one of taking a decision that this scheme will be taken up, and from now on or from any particular date—it may take two years or three years to begin it but from the particular date—Government will allocate money and start work on the project. Somehow or other, that has not been done, and that decision could not be taken. We have not been given any shred of explanation about it. If I may quote Lewis Carroll, the explanation of Government is becoming day by day "curiouser and curiouser"

Mr Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim and also Shri Hathi have told us that certain technical investigations are still awaited, and they have in all seriousness appointed a very important officer of the Central Water and Power Commission to look after the matter and carry on those investigations. Unfortunately, we do not know, or at least I do not know from the facts that are in my possession, what that officer of the C.W.P.C. has been doing in the matter. Shri H. N. Mukerjee has referred to the sheaves of questions and answers on the

subject in his hands. I have also some questions and answers in my hands. Only during the last Session, I put a question to the hon. Minister about erosion, and I wanted to know whether the channel of Ganga was not fast eroding on its right bank and approaching the channel of Bhagirathi, and whether the possibilities or potentialities of the natural link up of the two had been investigated. He replied at that time—in spite of the fact that a very important officer of the Central Water and Power Commission was investigating into this matter—that the necessary data were being collected. It is always said that the necessary data are being collected. Shri S. K. Patil however felt that sort of explanation would not do. He therefore said that it was not a question of technical investigations. Of course, in projects like this, many more investigations will have to be undertaken and will constantly go on. So, he referred to some other reason; he did not really call it a secret reason; but he said that there is some reason,—but he was not prepared to confide it in the House or divulge what it is at the present moment—which is holding up any decision on this matter.

I would only humbly point out that the explanations for the delay, as given in Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim's statement or as has just now been stated by my hon. friend, Shri Hathi, or my hon. friend, Shri S. K. Patil, do not fit in with each other.

Before I conclude, I would only ask the Government one thing. Shri S. K. Patil referred to the necessity of making the northern part of West Bengal and the western part—the major part of Bengal—into one compact whole by improving communications and by trying to form one line or channel of communication between these two parts. I can definitely say that the West Bengal Government sent a proposal some years back about a rope-way, as an interim measure pending the construction of the Bar-

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rage, for North Bengal produces like mango, tea, tobacco, etc. If I remember aright—I am sure my esteemed friend, Shri Atulya Ghosh, who is sitting opposite me will bear me out—in the Malda conference of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was then in the office now occupied by Shri S. K. Patil today, gave a definitive and categorical assurance that he would examine this proposal. May I know what has become of that proposal? Whatever may be the real fact that they cannot find money or that there is some mysterious reason which is holding up a decision in the matter of the Farraka Barrage, he should at least tell us where this later scheme stands and whether there is any hope of the rope-way being constructed.

Mr. Chairman: No reply is called for from the hon. Minister. This is a question which is not relevant to the issue we are discussing. It is entirely a different question.

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri: It is an interim measure pending completion of the Barrage. That is how it is relevant.

Mr. Chairman: That is not material to the subject under discussion, but if the hon. Minister wants to reply, I have no objection.

Shri S. K. Patil: This question of rope-way and so on had nothing to do directly with the Ganga Barrage. That was why all these were not touched by us in detail. But I can quite understand it, and I hinted at it, although I did not press that point. I feel that any day a bridge is better than a rope-way.

17.28 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Thursday, the 20th November, 1956.