

Shri P. C. Borooah (Sibsagar): We did not get a chance.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry; I would have called many other hon. Members. But the time has been allotted; we have tried to extend the time also.

18 hrs.

DEVELOPMENT OF CALCUTTA

Mr. Speaker: We will now take up the half-an-hour discussion. Shri Aurobindo Ghosal.

Shri Aurobindo Ghosal (Uluberia): **Mr. Speaker,** Sir, the reply to Starred Question No. 397 of the 28th February, 1961 given by the hon. Minister of Planning is very vague and it raises a feeling in our minds that the Planning Commission has not been able to grasp the importance and the emergency of the need for the development of Calcutta.

Sir, I do not know if they have realised that the Doomsday of Calcutta, a city which is still the biggest city in India from the point of view of size, population and earning capacity is near at hand. This is not my prediction but the prediction of the expert committee of the World Health Organisation, that if no immediate step is taken to develop and renovate the city of Calcutta, then it shall have to face extinction in the next 12 years.

Though the population of proper Calcutta has been stated to be 35 lakhs in the last census, the census of 1961, still Greater Calcutta which has got a population of 20 lakhs more is so integrated and closely knit with it that it is very difficult to draw a delimitation between these two areas. It is an unplanned old city, no doubt, a city of palaces and slums. Beggars and kings are living side by side. It is a city of factories and dwelling houses which have been huddled together giving an excellent example of the peaceful co-existence of contradictory stratas.

Neither the supply of water, nor the drainage or the sewage system is scientific and modern and adequate enough for the highly congested population. Twenty-five per cent. of the people of Calcutta live in slums and less than 10 per cent. of the people live in good houses. Six lakhs of people live on the footpaths. There are about 5182 kutchra latrines and 60,000 to 70,000 families have no latrines at all. The total population of cows and buffaloes within the municipal limits is about 50,000.

According to the report of the Socio-Economic Survey, there is no arrangement for supply water to 23 per cent. of houses; and 50 per cent. of the houses, each containing 10 families on an average, have got only one water tap. Eighty per cent. of the tube-wells are out of order since the last 10 years. The air is stuffy and full of smoke. You can imagine that from the amount of coal that the city consumes per day. It consumes 100 wagons containing 2,000 tons of coal per day. And, according to the survey the smoke deposit is about 2 tons per sq. mile per day. The streets are littered with hawkers, bulls, dogs, dust-bins and what not. There is no sitting accommodation in the schools and the students take their lessons standing in colleges and schools. The hospitals are so full that beds are being laid in the verandahs, stair-case and the beds are now coming up to the entrance of the hospitals.

The supply of power has already been discussed and I have raised these points several times in the last few days. Even now the crisis of power is heightened due to the failure of the D.V.C. to supply power. Naturally, for 3 or 4 hours per day Calcutta is going to be drowned in darkness. This is the appalling condition of the city of Calcutta at the present moment. In connection with the recent visit of the Queen to Calcutta, the *Spectator* of England has given a very vivid description of Calcutta in the following words:

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"Here sixty lacs of people live, take half meal, make paltry income and sleep in the streets. The pillars of Bengal—jute and tea—have broken. The main jute-growing area has been included in the Eastern Pakistan and the tea areas have been separated by Pakistan territory. The river of Calcutta port is gradually dying. The Calcutta today is the biggest challenge to modern India."

Mr. Speaker: Where is the hon. Member reading from?

Shri Aurobindo Ghosal: It is a quotation from the *Spectator*. I do not know if the Planning Commission has realised it. The Planning Commission was approached by the Chief Minister of West Bengal for Rs. 200 crores for the development of greater Calcutta. But the Planning Commission has granted only Rs. 10 crores in the Third Plan and it is very paltry amount for the development of Calcutta.

The World Bank Mission sent a team to survey and report on the development of Calcutta. It has recommended that the Central Government should accept a direct and special financial responsibility for the improvement of the conditions in the city and a considerably larger allocation should be made in the Third Plan for slum clearance and for the improvement of the city; secondly, that the failure to solve the problems of the city of Calcutta is putting impediments in the way of economic growth of the city and is also impeding the expansion of the industrial programme in West Bengal and so on. Since at the time it reported, the Census results were not out, it said that the population of Greater Calcutta was believed to be six million as against 3.5 million in 1948. The team has also said that Calcutta is the hub of India's industrial activity and export industries but no aspect of community development is keeping pace with the rapid growth of its population and that the Corporation of Calcutta has neither the power

nor the financial resources to cope with the staggering problems; the Central Government thinks that it is the problem of the Government of West Bengal, which, in turn, is struggling with many other difficulties. It says that the very magnitude of the problem explains the inadequacy of the response; everybody says that something ought to be done about it, it says, but no body is ready to do anything for this development.

Another observation is about the construction of an expressway from Durgapur to Calcutta; the fourth recommendation is that the scheme for the satellite port which is now going to be located at Haldia should be expedited in the Third Plan. They have also said that the cost of the development scheme, as estimated at present at Rs. 2 billion, is not high and no more than the cost of a new steel plant. They also felt that the foreign exchange component would be comparatively small and the labour component high, that the technical and financial assistance from abroad would be of value in such matters as land reclamation and town planning.

These are, in a nutshell, the recommendations of the World Bank Mission which surveyed the position. The importance of the scheme of Greater Calcutta was emphasised by me also and I would like to quote one paper of Bombay—the *Economic Weekly*—to show it is of national importance:

"There are at least two good reasons why the primary responsibility of a programme for redeveloping Calcutta should be met at the national level. The influx of refugees and the resulting breakdown of urban facilities—not to say the social tension—are direct consequences of the decisions taken by national leaders to partition the country thirteen years ago. The other major factor adding to Calcutta's burden has been the further industrial concentration since the launching

of the five year plans from which whole country is going to benefit. Because of the rise of new industries, Calcutta's port facilities are under great strain. The approaches to the city by road and rail are equally jammed. The migration of increasing batches of industrial labour has worsened the housing mess. To add to all this is the pollution of the city air."

It is not only the feelings of Bengalis. It is the feeling of everyone in the land. The paper has also commented on the attitude of the Centre towards this problem. They have said:

"The authorities at the Centre had displayed a peculiar astigmatism wherever the question of Calcutta has cropped up in recent discussions... little enthusiasm has been seen in high places to take detailed measures for pulling Calcutta out of the present morass. Scarcity of houses, overcrowding in educational institutions, middle class unemployment, refugee concentration, shortage of adequate water supply, lack of sanitation and other essential health facilities, the inadequacy of transport, the overall lack of maintenance in public utilities have piled themselves in the last decade and a half one upon the other. True, there are other deeper psychological processes at work, but the alienation of Calcutta in particular, and West Bengal more generally, from the wider political current in the country is at least partly explained by the grimness of living and working conditions."

This is not the view of the Bengalis only. This is the opinion of all thinking people all over this country.

The West Bengal Government has estimated the total cost of this project at Rs. 220 crores, but the scheme being a self-financing one, the initial capital that would be required has been estimated at Rs. 75 crores.

Speaking on a resolution urging upon the State Government to proceed with the greater Calcutta scheme, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, in the West Bengal Legislative Assembly recently, is reported to have expressed grave concern about the deteriorating living conditions in the greater Calcutta area and had added that anyhow Rs. 200 crores should be obtained either from the Centre or by the State or from any other source to save Calcutta from ruin.

On the question of approaching the Centre for the project, Dr. Roy said in the Assembly that he had spoken about the project to the highest authorities in Delhi and they had agreed to do something but that none had indicated about the source of finance.

In the West Bengal budget, Rs. 1 crore has been initially allotted for the scheme. I would request the hon. Minister to consider about sanctioning more money for the development of Calcutta. After the World Health Organisation, the Ford Foundation also has undertaken a survey and it has made three preliminary recommendations. They have said that not only must the schemes relating to the supply of water, drainage and sewage be undertaken but that a town-planning for greater Calcutta should also be taken up; that an organisation should be set up for planning greater Calcutta. They have also recommended that the area should be extended from 200 sq. miles to 700 sq. miles in the master plan. They have also agreed to finance the survey, and said that the extra money that will be required to extend the area to 700 sq. miles should be procured from the World Bank at their initiative. Recently, the outgoing United States Ambassador in India stated in Hyderabad that the money given under PL 480 can be utilised for the development of Calcutta. So, that source is open to the Government for tackling the problem.

It is really unfortunate that our Prime Minister has called the city of

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Calcutta a dead city, a city of processions and a city of nightmare and so on. The Health Minister has also commented that it is the dirtiest city in India. I agree with this. But we must know who is responsible for this. For whose utter neglect is the city going the path of Mohenjo Daro? I would like to warn the Government that the death-knell for the city of Calcutta would affect not only the State of West Bengal and the people of West Bengal but that it is the prosperity of India that will be affected. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to be less close-fisted, to be less uncharitable and take greater interest towards the problems of West Bengal which is the birth-place of the freedom movement and of modern Indian culture.

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi)
rose—

Mr. Speaker: I will not call him; he has not given notice.

The Minister of Labour and Employment and Planning (Shri Nanda): Presumably the object of the hon. Member was to focus attention on the serious problems of Calcutta. But he seems to be oblivious of the fact that the Government is conversant with the facts of the situation. It has fully realised the gravity and urgency of the problem which confronts the city of Calcutta. In fact, the very vivid picture which the hon. Member has drawn of the conditions in Calcutta has been largely derived from a survey which was made at the instance of and under the auspices of the Planning Commission itself. The Planning Commission has a Research Programme Committee and it arranged for a survey of the city of Calcutta, which was conducted by Prof. Sen, Professor of Economics, Calcutta University.

There can be no difference of opinion as to the enormous and immense problems and the difficult conditions,

which are, as the hon. Member has pointed out, in certain respects deteriorating. But this Government does not require any goading from the hon. Member or anybody else to do its duty towards Calcutta. It was on the initiative of the Government of India that some of the steps to which the hon. Member has referred were taken. For example, the enquiry by the World Health Organisation, to which the hon. Member referred, was undertaken at the Government of India's request. A team of consultants was deputed to make a survey of the conditions regarding the water-supply, drainage, sewerage, etc. Later on, the Ford Foundation also was requested to take interest in the situation in Calcutta and a kind of preliminary survey was made by a team of the Ford Foundation.

Some preliminary enquiries have been made, from which some suggestions have emerged that some kind of a co-ordinating set up should be created for this area. It is intended that by July, a team of three or four experts will be sent out and it is expected in a few months' time more complete reports will come from that body.

The hon. Member has cited the World Bank Mission's report, which urges on the Government of India to take a direct and special financial responsibility for Calcutta. This has been done. In the provisions in the Plan, limited to Rs. 7,500 crores in the public sector, Rs. 10 crores have been provided and the Government of West Bengal has also made a provision of not Rs. 1 crore, but Rs. 10 crores. It is Rs. 10 crores on the side of the West Bengal Government also. Therefore, provision exists both on the side of the Government of India in the Plan and on the side of the West Bengal Government. All those concerned have realised and they do realise their responsibilities.

It has been sometimes questioned as to why the Government of India

should take a special interest in one city alone and not in other cities.

But those who take that stand lose sight of the fact that although the nation is interested in all the cities, their improvement and in solving their problems, Calcutta stands by itself and attracts in a special sense the responsibility of the Government of India because of the magnitude and character of the problem. So there is no difference of opinion regarding that.

Certain schemes are now afoot are under consideration. The hon. Member has mentioned some of the schemes. There is an idea to develop a certain area of 55,000 acres in four thanas. This is in order to have an integrated development of that area, in order to be able to disperse a part of the population. This, as the hon. Member pointed out, is a self-financing scheme. We have been informed that—apart from the credit that has to be obtained through some arrangement from the banks—as the areas develop the money is going to come back. Of course, the scheme of the W.H.O. is a limited scheme—questions of water-supply, sewerage, drainage etc.—and there is an immediate scheme and there is a long-term programme. The Government of Bengal is considering the suggestions already made. It is a preliminary report. The W.H.O. has also to make a final report giving its final ideas of the scheme.

Shri Raghunath Singh: May I know what the Government is doing to remove the salinity of the water that is used by 80 lakhs of people in Calcutta? There is not a single drop of sweet water available in Calcutta.

Shri Nanda: The hon. Member knows the decision that has been taken in this regard. It is not an easy thing. The scheme of Farakk Barrage is the answer to that problem. This has been properly included in the Third Five Year Plan—hon. Members know that already.

In all these various directions the work has to proceed. Then, there is the move that has been made by the Ford Foundation. Its aid has been sought in order to have a fuller programme, a kind of plan which will integrate not only the features covered by the W.H.O. scheme but other features like transport, other utilities etc. After all, we are not having all these enquiries and sending out teams of experts simply to glean facts. Certainly the intention is that a proper programme is made, a proper scheme is worked out and it should be implemented. They have also to consider the question as to how it is going to be implemented.

Mention was made of certain observations made by the United States Ambassador who has now gone back to the States. That is being very much misunderstood. There is some kind of a view as if the Ambassador can dole out certain funds which he has at his disposal and which the Government otherwise has not got. Therefore, when somebody goes to Bombay they talk of, say, roads, and when somebody goes to some other city they talk of some other problems. The World Bank Mission's report has drawn pointed attention to the problems of Calcutta. That is perfectly all right.

Shri D. C. Sharma (Gurdaspur): Do you get similar reports about other cities also?

Shri Nanda: Other cities have their problems. They have their plans and the various States are trying to do something. I have already said that. But we recognise in Calcutta as special problem for which we feel a special sense of responsibility. That cannot be denied. Therefore, what has to be done will be done by us. It is true that PL 480 funds are available with the Government of India. In the Draft Outline it has been mentioned as to how much it is.

These Rs. 400 crores form part of the budgetary resources corresponding to external assistance of Rs. 2,200

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crores. According to the procedure, suitable schemes for inclusion in the programme of assistance under PL 480 are framed by Government and, from time to time, are offered to the representatives of the United States and schemes which qualify for assistance under that head are taken up. Therefore, once the acceptance of the responsibility is there both by the Government of India and the Government of Bengal, and provision having been made as to the source from which the money is to come, it is not a matter of debate or discussion of this kind.

Therefore, I have answered the question in these terms. We are aware of the problem, of its dimensions and intensity, and we have been working on it, not now but for some time past. Surveys have been made at our instance and teams have been sent out to prepare schemes. And when the schemes are prepared at our instance, certainly we should be trusted to do the rest. I do not think that the hon. Member need have any apprehension on that score. I think I have stated my case.

Shrimati Renuka Ray (Malda): I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the resources required for the expansion and develop-

ment of Calcutta are now available. Has the Planning Commission agreed to this expenditure? Also, may I know whether external assistance is available for this?

Shri Nanda: I have practically covered that point. External assistance is in terms of any foreign exchange that is required for any programme. If we have adopted a programme, certainly we will provide the foreign exchange for that purpose. Otherwise, there is no question of direct linking with any foreign assistance. When foreign help comes to the Government of India, out of that, we make provision according to the urgency and priority of the project.

Shrimati Renuka Ray: Will the project have the amount needed by it?

Shri Nanda: We have made a certain provision at this stage. As the work proceeds, if anything more needs to be done, we shall certainly try to do that.

18.29 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned at Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday April 11, 1961 Chaitra 21, 188 (Saka).