

Question that the dues will be paid to workers as far as possible. I want to know whether this will include provident fund dues or other dues also because there is a large amount by way of arrears of dearness allowance to which they were entitled but which were withheld from them, and whether that will also be paid to them and, if not, why not ?

**SHRI MOINUL HAQUE CHOUDHURY :** We will pay provident fund dues. Other items are not under consideration.

**SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA :** They are also dues to which they are entitled. Why should you not pay ?

**SHRI MOINUL HAQUE CHOUDHURY :** Only after the liquidation proceedings are completed, this matter will be examined.

**SHRI SHANKARRAO SAVANT :** What is the total Government investment in this concern and what are the causes of closing it down ?

**MR. SPEAKER :** That is too big a question.

**SHRI MOINUL HAQUE CHOUDHURY :** Bad management, heavy debts and all that. These are the causes.

**SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA :** It is your bad management, nobody else's.

**SHRI MOINUL HAQUE CHOUDHURY :** We took up the bad legacy. That is the position.

**Report of the North Bengal Flood Control Board**

\*647. **SHRI DINESH JOARDER :** Will the Minister of IRRIGATION AND POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the North Bengal Flood Control Board appointed by the Government of India has submitted its report ;

(b) if so, what are its main recommendations ;

(c) the action taken by Government to prevent devastations caused by the rivers Teesta,

Torsa, Jaldhaka and Raidak in North Bengal ; and

(d) whether Government propose to take representatives of Sikkim and Bhutan in the North Bengal Flood Control Board ?

**THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (SHRI B. N. KUREEL) :** (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

*Statement*

(a) and (b). The North Bengal Flood Control Board, constituted by the Government of India, in consultation with the State Government of West Bengal, is for laying down policies and priorities in the implementation of the comprehensive plan of flood control in the North Bengal region. The investigations and preparation of a report on flood control in the area are to be done by the North Bengal Flood Control Commission, which is yet to be set up by the Government of West Bengal.

(c) The North Bengal Flood Control Commission has been proposed for implementing a comprehensive plan of flood control, with the object of reducing the annual damage caused by the floods in North Bengal rivers. Pending preparation and implementation of the comprehensive plan by the proposed commission, immediate works, as considered necessary, in vulnerable reaches, which will ultimately fit in to the overall plan of flood control, are being executed by the State Government. These measures include construction of new embankments, river training and town protection works and raising and strengthening of existing embankments. The more important schemes under execution are (1) Scheme for protection of right bank of river Teesta from Mondalghat to Bibiganj (2) Scheme for preventing diversion of the river Siltorsa into Chel and (3) Scheme for protection of Bijanbari town.

(d) There is no such proposal at present.

**SHRI DINESH JOARDER :** Sir, it is a very serious matter and much has been said in this august House on the subject. As per Government's official assessment, the losses caused by the North Bengal flood in that area annually to the crops amounted to Rs 4.5 crores and damage to houses and public utilities was

about Rs 3.6 crores. Besides that, it caused considerable loss to human life. It was stated by the Minister, Dr. K. L. Rao on 29th April at Calcutta at the inaugural meeting of the North Bengal Flood Control Board that much progress had not been made in the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee set up in 1968. What were those recommendations? What were the reasons that held up the progress of implementation of such recommendations?

**THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (DR. K. L. RAO):** Before 1968 there was no Committee appointed as such. It was the Chief Engineer's report. There was disaster and great damage in North Bengal and we appointed a Committee which submitted a report in general terms. The main recommendations are these: Construction of embankments and protection work for Jalpaiguri town, widening of the railway bridge etc. and undertaking soil conservation measures. Some action has been taken on some of these definite items. We have constituted North Bengal Flood Control Board separately on the lines of the Brahmaputra Flood Control Board. We had one meeting in Calcutta with the Chief Minister and others present. This has to be followed by the North Bengal Flood Control Commission. The Bengal State has not set up the Commission and we had drawn their attention to set up the Commission. The Board is only a policy-making body. But the actual investigation, preparation etc. are done by the Control Commission. I am expecting some action in that respect.

**SHRI DINESH JOARDER:** We are afraid the same thing will occur when the Flood Control Commission is set up by the Government. May I know how the North Bengal Flood Control Board is composed? In the proposed North Bengal Flood Control Commission, who will be the Members? Will there be any local representatives of North Bengal districts who will be taken in, in that Commission?

**DR. K. L. RAO:** The Board consists of the Ministers in charge of irrigation and flood control and forests. The Union Minister for Irrigation is the Chairman. It is a policy body and it sanctioned projects. In the first meeting we have sanctioned projects worth Rs 1½ crores, for implementation. Some more projects

are to be taken up. The Commission is the executive body. It consists of engineers, chief engineer of the project, part-time Director-General, Meteorology, persons from Geology department and so on, who are connected with floods. It is a purely official organisation. Neither of them have non-official members in their formation.

**SHRI DINESH JOARDER:** River Mahananda of North Bengal is already in spate and has submerged many villages and crop fields in the district of Malda. What action is going to be taken against such devastation?

**DR. K. L. RAO:** This river causes damage both in Bihar and Bengal. Embankments are in both the States. Bihar embankment has been sanctioned, but not taken up. Regarding embankment in Bengal portion, some replies are awaited from the Bengal Government. The estimated cost comes to about 3½ crores. It will be duly sanctioned and work of both Bihar and Bengal will have to be taken up at the same time.

**SHRI S. C. SAMANTA:** The Man Singh Committee reported about flood control in the whole of West Bengal. May I know how the recommendations made by that committee will be taken up by Government, because as at present, the recommendations are not being carried out because of paucity of funds at the disposal of the State Government? May I know whether after the constitution of this commission, the Centre will also give some financial help?

**DR. K. L. RAO:** The Man Singh Committee has not made any recommendations about North Bengal, but the committee confined its recommendations only to south Bengal. So far as North Bengal is concerned, there were actually no committees. The only committee that was appointed was in 1968, and I have already indicated in my answers to the questions put earlier the general or broad outlines of the recommendations. We have got to attend to flood control in North Bengal. We have got some of the short and very troublesome rivers there which require special treatment and special attention. That is why we have appointed the North Bengal Flood Control Board and we have suggested the appointment of the North Bengal Flood Control Commission, strong organisations to deal with the problem.

As the hon. Member has said, no doubt, there is the difficulty of finances also. Bengal has got flood control funds to the extent of about Rs. 10 crores, in this plan of which Rs. 2½ crores have been allotted to North Bengal. But when the important schemes have been sanctioned, some of the important works have got to be taken up, and I think that due attention will be paid by the Government of India to the problem of implementing flood control-works.

**SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY :** In view of the hon. Minister's statement, pending detailed working out of the control of the North Bengal rivers, may I know what immediate steps are being taken up to control floods in North Bengal? Secondly, may I also know whether the embankment running from Mondalghat to Bibiganj will be extended from Beltallia to Jharshingeshwar because that area is very much susceptible to floods each and every year?

**DR. K. L. RAO :** The Mondalghat embankment was sanctioned and it was to be taken up. But the people objected to the alignment, and wanted a re-alignment of the embankment. The latest report is that the alignment has now been approved and the work is being started.

**SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY :** What are the other rivers which are being controlled?

**DR. K. L. RAO :** There are quite a large number of small schemes which have been sanctioned and they will be taken up, but the bigger schemes have got to await investigation by the commission.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE :** When does the hon. Minister expect the board to start its comprehensive work?

**DR. K. L. RAO :** There are two bodies, as I have submitted already, namely the board and the commission. The board is a policy-making body of the Ministers and it has met once. The commission has not yet started, and it is got to be appointed; the chief engineer and some members have to be appointed. We have located the headquarters at Jalpaiguri. There was a lot of controversy about it, and we have finally selected Jalpaiguri. I have requested

the West Bengal Government and reminded that they should take action immediately in this respect.

**श्री हुकूम खन् व कछबाय :** पिछले वर्ष जब वहाँ बाढ़ आई थी तब उस बाढ़ को देखने का अवसर मुझे मिला था। प्रतिवर्ष बाढ़े आने का प्रमुख कारण यह भी है कि उस इलाके में बहुत बड़ी तादाद में जंगल साफ किये जा रहे हैं। वह पहाड़ी इलाका है जब वर्षा होती है तो पहाड़ों की मिट्टी नदी में आ कर भर जाती है। उस कारण भी पानी का फैलाव होता है। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि जंगल जो बड़ी तादाद में कट रहे हैं उसे रोकने के लिए सरकार क्या कर रही है? साथ ही मिट्टी जो भर गई है, उसे हटाने के लिए आप कौन से प्रयत्न करने वाले हैं?

**DR. K. L. RAO :** It is not possible to desilt these rivers completely. The only thing possible is to prevent further siltation by soil conservation measures. But even that is very difficult in North Bengal, because the Himalayas are concerned in this; and soil conservation measures in North Bengal would, therefore, be very difficult because of the Himalayas, but still we are trying to find out the important or critical points where if action is taken it will be possible to reduce the silting, and we are at it.

#### **Memorandum by the Eastern Railway Coal and Ash Handling Mazdoor Union**

\*648. **SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE :** Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a memorandum has been submitted by the Eastern Railway Coal and Ash Handling Mazdoor Union to the Chairman, Railway Board, recently;

(b) if so, the main demands of the workers listed therein; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to meet their demands?

**THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA) :** (a) Yes, Sir.