

top priority. With these words, I conclude.

DR. KARAN SINGH (Jammu and Kashmir): Sir, I associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member.

SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, I also associate myself with the demand raised by the hon. Member.

Devastation in Darjeeling Hills following consistent rains on 6.7.98 and need for immediate Central Assistance

SHRI DAWA LAMA (West Bengal): Sir, I want to draw the attention of this House and the Government that following consistent heavy rains in hilly regions of Darjeeling, heavy landslides damaged several places, which need immediate action on a war-footing to save further losses of lives of thousands of people and properties worth crores of rupees. I personally visited some of the areas on 11th and 21st of this month. The condition is beyond anybody's imagination. I give my experience *in seriatim*. The Paglazhora, both upper and lower, are situated on a huge sinking one for years. Efforts were made earlier to keep it open to traffic by spending crores of rupees. Huge landslides followed by sinking of hills took away the entire road benches, culverts, railway tracks, etc. According to the reports of the State PWD, about 100 culverts are completely destroyed. The road can be restored for light vehicles provided assistance from the Border Roads Organisation and the geological Survey of India is taken. But, since the National Highway 55 is the artery of Darjeeling hills, action must be taken to divert the road from Siliguri to Kurseong via Rohini Tea Estate. A survey was conducted on this route by the State Public Works Department as early as in 1982. But, the idea was set aside for paucity of funds. Now, to have the main road, N.H. 55, open for trucks which bring all essential commodities to Darjeeling, the same must have to be taken up. The job should be entrusted to

the Border Road Organisation and the G.S.I. This is very important from military point of view, since, all army vehicles to Jalapahar and Lebong ply through N.H. 55.

The next point I would like to say is about Dudhia under Kurseong Block. This village is situated beside the Balason River. Sir, 15 houses have already been washed out along with cultivable land. The villagers are waiting for rehabilitation. The bigger part of the village, where about 5000 people reside, is on the verge of submersion by water of the Balason. To save the village, a protection dam is to be constructed along the banks of the Balason.

The next point I would like to mention is about Bijanbari Block. This possibly is the most affected block due to this year's natural calamity. Sir, years before, Darjeeling had witnessed the biggest landslide of Asia at Ambotia under Kurseong block. I am afraid, if immediate action is not taken, in, at least, the following places, there will be several Ambotias. The Dilbidhusa village under middle division of Chongtong Tea Estate and having about 1,500 families, is sinking down. Huge landslides and crack zones have already caused erosion in the off hill side. To save the village from total extinction, massive protection walls are to be constructed on off-hill side.

Gangatia village, having about 1,200 families is also in a grave danger. Several jhoras are surrounding the village. Due to heavy erosion of land, the entire village is sinking down to 1,200 metres below. Immediate action has to be taken to arrest the erosion by constructing protection wall along jhoras and vulnerable points. Otherwise, the entire village will be a history.

Sir, the Goke village had faced a serious landslide in 1997. Owing to further damage this year, the entire village, having more than 2,000 people, is going down to the Rangit River. Immediate action has to be taken to

arrest the ongoing slippage by constructing a protection wall.

In conclusion, I would like to put forth my suggestions, in brief, to save the hill and the people who are in distress. If we make a close study of the reasons for landslides, we will find some common reasons. They are: (a) Unauthorised collection of boulders, (b) Massive deforestation and (c) Construction of roads without consulting the G.S.I. The district authorities must enforce laws against unauthorised collection of boulders. At the same time, some sort of subsidised rates may be fixed for building material. Mass education for construction of alternative ways of houses should also be undertaken.

Sir, firewood is the only main fuel in hills. Steps should be taken to introduce LPG at a special subsidised rate and to use solar power to heat rooms during winter. Sir, construction of roads at random by the D.G.H.C. should be stopped. No road should be constructed without any opinion from the G.S.I. Use of boulders, available in different river belts, is to be ensured. However, to combat the prevailing situation, I suggest a Parliamentary team along with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Surface Transport, Railways and others may visit the areas without even a day's delay. The team should suggest ways, both temporary and perpetual, to save the villages from total destruction. I must add here that, in case of delay for any reasons, Darjeeling will be a history. Thank you.

Inclusion of Dogri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution

DR. KARAN SINGH (Jammu & Kashmir): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, the rich and varied linguistic heritage of India is represented in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. But, unfortunately there still remain serious lacunae. A glaring omission is that of Dogri, a language spoken by lakhs of Indian citizens, residing in the Jammu region, Himachal

Pradesh, and the Punjab. The brave and patriotic Dogras have played a major role in defending and consolidating northern boundaries of India. Today also the Dogra Regiment, the JAK Regiment, the JAK Rifles, and other service formations continue to bring credit to the nation. The Dogri has a rich literary tradition, which over the last half-a-century has produced a wide spectrum of literature, including poems, dramas, novels and short stories. The Sahitya Akademi had recognised the Dogri as an independent modern Indian language several decades ago. But, despite repeated requests, the Dogri has not yet been included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. This injustice needs to be rectified at the earliest possible opportunity. I would like to urge the Government that whenever they bring a constitutional amendment bill before the Parliament, inclusion of the Dogri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution should be a part of it. Alternatively, a separate Bill should be moved for this purpose by the end of this year.

Central Legislation for Agricultural Workers

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN (Kerala): Sir, through you, I would like to draw the attention of the House and the Government regarding the problems of agricultural workers, especially after an announcement by this Government that they will not pass a comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers. This is a matter of concern and also a matter of shame for this country that even after 50 years of independence, we could not pass a legislation for agricultural workers. Time and again, we have discussed this matter in this House, in the other House, and in our society, as a whole. We all know that agricultural workers constitute the largest working population in this country. Seventy per cent of the working force in this country are agricultural workers. Fifty per cent of male population, and seventy per cent of female population are agricultural