

We should ensure that the games survive, the games are saved and only one country which is violating the Gleneagles agreement, where players are permitted to violate the IOC charter is excluded. I will use this occasion to urge the Government of the United Kingdom, that, time is still there for them to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions and if they are sincere about the Gleneagles agreement, then, they should refuse passports to these players of England who have challenged the authority of the International Cricket Conference. Thank you.

**SHRI BEUBANESWAR KALITA** (Assam): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I associate with the special mention made by my colleague, Shri Anand Sharma and request the Government to consider it seriously.

**Need to find a permanent solution to the flood problem in Assam**

**THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MIRZA IRSHADBAIG)**: Shri David Ledger.

**SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY** (Assam): Sir, it is his maiden speech.

**THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MIRZA IRSHADBAIG)**: This is hon. Member's maiden speech.

**SHRI DAVID LEDGER** (Assam): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I thank you for granting me this opportunity to make my maiden speech in this august House. The subject which I wish to dwell upon relates to a problem which has continued to plague the State of Assam over the last four decades, namely, the problem of flood.

Sir, Assam is a perpetually flood-prone State. The State, as a whole and the Brahmaputra valley, in particular has been seriously affected year after year by flood, bank erosion and drainage congestion. Millions of people are rendered homeless, hundreds and

thousands of heads of cattle are washed away, lakhs of hectares of crop land are inundated and damaged, for days together the entire State remains cut off from the rest of the country as a result of damage of all links of communications, crores of rupees are spent by the State Government in rushing in relief materials and rehabilitating the marooned people and all developmental works in the State come to a stand-still during flood season every year.

The chief cause of flood in the State of Assam is the fury of the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The Brahmaputra is one of the mightiest rivers of the world and the biggest in India. It carries approximately one-third of the country's total river water. The Brahmaputra valley is about 880 KMs, long in Indian territory out of which 720 kms is in Assam and 120 kms in Arunachal Pradesh. The valley is 80 to 90 kms wide of which the river itself occupies 6 to 17 kms at places. The river has a maximum discharge of 72,794 cusecs. It has 50 tributaries big and small, criss-crossing all over the State. The Brahmaputra has a hydropower potential of 50,000 MW.

The Brahmaputra basin has experienced some major earthquakes in recent times due to its location in a highly seismic belt. The earthquakes of 1897 and 1950 are regarded among the severest. As a result of the 1950 earthquake which rocked and ravaged a large part of the North-East region the drainage system of Upper Assam was greatly affected. Due to heavy landslide in the hill areas, slit charge in the river increased to such an extent that the river bed at many places became incapable of carrying the discharge of water. In Dibrugarh alone, the river bed registered a rise of 3 meters in one season. There was major change in the course of the Brahmaputra and many of its tributaries. These factors have resulted in frequent waves of flood every year in the valley.

[Shri David Ledger]

Assam is flood-prone also because of the intensity of rain. The rainfall in the Brahmaputra basin is very high. The rainfall varies from 174 cm in the Western part to 640 cm in the North-Eastern part bordering Arunachal Pradesh. The pre-monsoon period is generally characterised by storm, hailstorm and cyclone. Unlike the rest of the country, the first wave of flood visits the Valley in May-June and once the Brahmaputra is full it continues to remain so till September and sometimes even up to October. The magnitude of the problem can be better understood from the severe damages that the floods during the three consecutive years namely, 1987, 1988 and 1989 have caused. The year 1987 witnessed 3 waves of flood of which the third wave was the most severe. During this wave, 44,00,000 people were affected. The year-1988 witnessed the worst ever flood in the recent past. For the first time 17 districts out of 18 except one hill district were affected. In this sense, the flood was unprecedented. The surging and swirling flood waters inundated 15 lakh hectares of standing crop land. The total population affected, according to conservative estimates, was 105 lakhs which is approximately half the population of the State. There were as many as four waves of flood in that year and the fourth wave alone took a toll of more than 100 human lives and 6,000 heads of cattle, destroyed a crop area of 11 lakh hectares. The Prime Minister during his belated visit to the State demanded an on-the-spot assessment of the damages even while the State reeled under flood water and wore the look of a virtual 'ocean'. The State Government was needlessly taken to task on one pretext or the other and after much unpleasant exchanges, a meagre Rs. 85 crores was sanctioned as against the total requirement of over Rs. 800 crores, that too, in instalments. The State Government further gave requisition for 25,000 MT of rice as

against which a meagre 5,000 MT was sent from Delhi as chicken feed. On the other hand, Punjab, was given Rs. 100 crores and no demand was made for advance statement relating to flood damage. Flood was politicised even while millions of human beings suffered. On 5-9-88, a team from Assam including two Ministers, a number of MLAs and MPs and functionaries of the Asom Ganga Parishad Party staged a hunger strike at Boat Club, Delhi as a token of protest against the Centre's delay in releasing the required fund and also demanding a permanent solution to the flood problem in the State. Teams of MPs belonging to different Opposition parties visited the State, took stock of the situation and expressed sympathy and solidarity with the suffering people. But surprisingly, the Government at the Centre chose to ignore and remain totally oblivious to everything.

The year 1989 has already experienced three major waves of flood which have wrecked havoc in as many as nine districts of the State. A conservative estimate based on the latest data available indicates that an area of 2 lakh hectares in the whole State has been affected out of which 60,000 hectares of standing crop land has been inundated. The current flood has affected 7 lakh people and has taken a toll of 15 lives. Rail communication between lower and upper Assam and Barak valley was cut-off due to heavy landslide. Road communication between upper and lower Assam got disrupted due to landslide and National Highway at Burapahar in Nowgong district. Regular road communication from Guwahati to Shillong, Agartala and Aizawl was cut off by heavy landslides at Burnihat. The total extent of flood damages this year is yet to be assessed by the State Government.

The hon. Chief Minister of Assam, Shri P. K. Mohanta, has written a D.O. letter to the hon. Prime Minister

of India on 25th July 1989 requesting him to issue necessary instructions to the Central team being deputed to Arunachal Pradesh to also visit the flood affected areas of Assam for assessment of damages caused by flood in the State. I would request the hon. Prime Minister to issue the necessary instructions in this regard without further delay.

Sir, floods in Assam will continue to occur and ravage millions of people year after year, render them homeless and starve them to death. Crores of rupees will have to be pumped into relief and rehabilitation work. Meanwhile, economy of the State will be shattered as it is today. Developmental work undertaken by the State Government will never be able to make any headway and Assam will continue to remain backward. This grim picture will continue to haunt the people of the State and the rest of the country unless the Central Government comes out in real earnest to find a lasting solution to this gigantic problem. The State Government with its meagre resources cannot solve the problem without the aid and assistance of the Centre. The money given by the Centre is so far more in the nature of loans as 70 per cent thereof has to be repaid along with interest. The margin money of Rs. 13 crores is not at all sufficient and needs to be raised.

**Solution:**—Serious thoughts have been given to finding a permanent solution to the flood problem in Brahmaputra and the Barak valley in Assam. Experiments have revealed that the short term measures taken so far for control of flood such as construction of embankments are counter-productive. Though embankments provide an easy and cheap solution, these often result in a number of adverse effects like raising of the river bed due to silting, damages due to breaches in embankments, water-logging on the countryside of the embankment and also loss of fertility of soil brought by low stage floods.

Experts are of the opinion that a permanent solution to the flood problem in the Brahmaputra valley lies in the construction of reservoirs in some of the big tributaries like the Dihang (Siong), the Dibang, the Lohit and the Subansiri. Such a measure would enable stabilisation of the river channel as approximately 60 per cent of the silt will be trapped in the reservoirs. As a result, flood moderation at the capital city of Guwahati itself will be about 1.5 metre and higher still in upper Assam. In addition to flood control benefits, the Dihang and the Subansiri projects will provide for installation of 25,000 MW of hydro-power at a low generation cost. Similarly, construction of the Barak Multi-Purpose Dam at Tipaimukh with a view to finding a permanent solution to the flood problem in the Barak Sub-basin have also been thought of. The Tipaimukh Dam it is understood, would moderate flood in the Barak Valley and would enable installation of 1,500 MW of hydro-power. The project would provide irrigation to Cachar district and also parts of Tripura. The Master Plan prepared by the Brahmaputra Board includes these projects. The Board, incidentally, was established by a legislation, namely The Brahmaputra Board Act, 1980, which specifically provides for the integrated planning and implementation of measures for the control of floods and bank erosion in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Board after carrying out survey and investigation, prepared the Master Plan having regard to the development and utilisation of water resources of the Brahmaputra Valley for irrigation, hydro-power, navigation and other beneficial purposes. The Plan was prepared and submitted to the Central Government for approval in the year 1986 but is yet to see the light of the day. A number of representation memoranda etc. have been moved before the Central Government by the Asom Gana Parishad Party and the State Government, dharnas and hunger strikes have been held in Assam as well as in Delhi in the last three years.

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urging expeditious action in the matter but to no avail. On the other hand, the inordinate delay in clearing the Master Plan has cost the economy of the State enormously.

Sir, flood is no longer merely a State problem. It has assumed the dimension of a national problem and demands urgent attention of the Central Government. It is felt that for any Master Plan for flood control in the Brahmaputra Valley to be meaningful, it is imperative to consider construction of reservoir projects on the Dihang and Subansiri. Long term as well as short term measures are to be taken to protect the Valley from the perennial menace of flood and bank erosion. The proposals of the Brahmaputra Board, if implemented, would not only solve the flood and erosion problem but also produce huge quantity of hydro-power, provide permanent irrigation facilities, convert the Brahmaputra into an all-weather navigable river from the Bay of Bengal to Sadiya.

I, therefore, call upon the Central Government to realise the enormity of the problem and accord the highest priority for approval of the Brahmaputra Board Master Plan in consultation with the Assam Government and for sanction and release of fund required for the projects and save the people of Assam from the repeated onslaught and devastations of flood.

Thank you, Sir.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA (Andhra Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, the repeated floods in Assam are shattering the economy of the State and this Master Plan for controlling the floods in the Brahmaputra was submitted not for the first time in 1976. Earlier also the proposal was given. But the new Government in Assam has renewed the appeal after 1976. But so far it has not seen the

light of day. I do not know where it is languishing, in the Planning Commission or in the Water Resources Ministry, and every year the floods are recurring in Assam. Therefore, I think the Union Government should take an immediate decision on this Master Plan so that these floods can be controlled.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY (Assam): I also associate.

DR. NAGEN SAIKIA (Assam): I associate with him.

Mishra Commission report on D.A. Pattern for Public Sector Undertakings

PROF. CHANDRESH P. THAKUR (Bihar): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, through this special mention, I wish to draw the attention of the Government towards the problem of considerable delay at the Government level in reaching a final decision with regard to the payment of D.A. to 69 public sector company employees covered within the framework of the recommendations of the Mishra Committee.

Erosion in the real value of pay packets needs to be compensated and the amount of compensation, Mr. Vice-Chairman, must be adequate. More than that, the payment must be timely. The Finance Minister has talked about the possibility of a fresh look on the D.A. policy of the Government of India. It is a welcome thought. Similarly, trade unions, particularly the Indian National Trade Union Congress, have been raising concerns with regard to the adequacy of D.A. payment and the basis of such payment from time to time. Industrial D.A. versus Government D.A. has been a duality that we have maintained for quite some time. The rates of compensation according to these two patterns vary over time, and employees, in their own interest and justifiably so, have raised the question of being compensated on the basis of the rate