

village level, however, the Prime Minister agreed that Panchayats should be the proper authorities, but suggested that the Panchayats should seek the cooperation of other important elements so that the programmes could be implemented more effectively. In similar circumstances the advice of the Prime Minister would be the same to other States also.

Formulation of the National Policy on Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind

*332. SHRI B. SATYANARAYAN REDDY:

SHRI HARISHANKER BHADRA:

SHRI Ng. TOMPOK SINGH:

Will the Minister of EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to formulate and announce a national policy for the education and rehabilitation of the blind on the eve of the "International Year of the Blind" in 1981, as recommended by the South-East Asian Conference held in New Delhi in November, 1978;

(b) if so, by when the policy is likely to be finalised; and

(c) whether Government propose to seek the cooperation of non-governmental institutions in formulating and implementing the policy?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SOCIAL WELFARE AND CULTURE (DR. PRATAP CHANDRA CHUNDER): (a) to (c) Guidelines for a National Policy on Rehabilitation of the Handicapped, including the blind, have been drafted by the Department of Social Welfare and circulated to State Governments and some voluntary organisations for eliciting comments.

Flood relief assistance to West Bengal

*333. SHRI SANKAR GHOSE: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the amount of flood relief assistance which the West Bengal Government have asked from the Central Government so far; and

(b) what is the amount of assistance which the Central Government have so far given; and promised to give and on what terms the assistance is being given?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA): (a) and (b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) The Government of West Bengal had presented a Memorandum indicating their assessment of damage and requirements of assistance for relief of natural calamity. They sought an amount of Rs. 349.75 crores by way of budgetary support and Rs. 128.00 crores through institutional finance. In addition, the State Government also sought 2.34 lacs tonnes of foodgrains for distribution as gratuitous relief and 4.56 lacs tonnes of foodgrains for being utilised under the food for work scheme. The requirement projected by the State Government for the current year amounts to Rs. 276.23 crores through budgetary support and Rs. 103.50 crores through institutional finance. The balance of Rs. 73.43 crores through budgetary support and Rs. 24.50 crores through institutional finance is stated to be required for 1979-80.

According to the existing policy and arrangements based on the recommendations of the Sixth Finance Commission, the Central Teams which visited the State had made an on-the-spot assessment of the situation and requirement of funds for providing relief to those affected by floods. The