

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) :

(a) Yes, Sir. Government's decision in this regard is related to the intention of the US Embassy to convert the American International School into an Embassy school. The precise modalities of the conversion have, however, still to be worked out

(b) Government's policy is not to permit Indian children to study in Foreign Embassy Schools.

12 NOON

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

SERIOUS DROUGHT CONDITIONS PREVAILING
IN ALL THE FIFTEEN DISTRICTS OF WEST
BENGAL

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE
(West Bengal) : Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Agriculture to the serious drought conditions prevailing in all the fifteen Districts of West Bengal and the assistance given by the Government of India to mitigate the hardships of drought affected people.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE
(SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED) :
Sir, the Government of West Bengal has recently reported that acute drought conditions are existing in parts of the State. The areas particularly affected are reported to be the districts of Purulia and Bankura, and parts of the districts of Midnapur, Burdwan, Birbhum, West Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad. This development is reported to be due to lack of rains in the State from the latter part of March this year. As a result, jute, aus and boro crops have been reported to be badly affected. There has also been acute scarcity of water and less employment opportunities for agricultural labourers, especially in the above areas,

The State Government has accordingly undertaken necessary relief measures which include test relief works, Food for Work Projects, distribution of gratuitous relief, agricultural loans and installation of tubewells. The State Government has also recently requested the Government of India to depute a Central Team of Officers for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation and for providing Central assistance. As I have told the House before, Central assistance is provided according to the prescribed procedure. We have, therefore, proposed to depute a Central Team to visit the State shortly.

There are adequate food stocks in the State, and all reasonable additional requirements of the State Government for its public distribution system, will be made available. Adequate fair price and ration shops are already functioning all over the State and, if necessary, they would be increased.

With the on-set of the South-West monsoon, after a couple of weeks, the situation should ease rapidly. Meanwhile, Members may kindly rest assured that all steps to provide relief, as demanded by the situation, will be taken with the cooperation of the State Government.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE : Sir, the Minister has expressed the hope that with the outbreak of the monsoon, the situation will ease. Perhaps another situation will be created then and instead of drought, it will be situation created by flood. I am not going into it: As the Minister himself has admitted in his statement, two districts completely and six districts partially are affected by drought. All the State Ministers living in headquarters are visiting these drought affected areas and taking decisions on the spot. As reported by the Agricultural Minister of the State, 17,000 tubewells are out of order and there is no drinking water in village after village and Government is supplying water by trucks. Some missionary organisations are doing this. Almost all the standing crops of paddy and jute-including high-yielding varieties are damaged. There is no work for the agricultural labourers. May I know from the Minister what

amount of assistance has been sought from the Government of India and whether any specific suggestion to declare some of the districts, particularly Purulia and Bankura, as drought affected areas, has been received from the State Government? Has any suggestion for releasing the money allotted to Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authorities for easing the problem of water supply in the Calcutta Metropolitan City come from the State Government? Has any request for additional Rs. 4 crores for rural drinking water supply scheme in addition to Rs. 1 crore already sanctioned by the Government come from the State Government? I would like to know from the hon. Minister what amount of assistance the Government of India is going to give to the State Government and what amount of assistance they have sought for.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : As I have already pointed out all necessary steps for providing relief to the affected people have been taken and are being taken by the Government. As I said the other day, we have a prescribed procedure under which the Central assistance to the State Governments is given and according to the limit imposed by the Finance Commission, if expenditure for any natural calamity—an amount of Rs. 2,61,00,000/- in West Bengal is incurred by the State Government exceeds—this limit, then 75% is contributed by the Central Government and 25% is contributed by the State Government. Now, so far as the present position is concerned the State Government, you see, has made two requests: One is for assistance of Rs. 2 crores for the purpose of providing general relief work. The State Government has also requested the Ministry of Health to allot Rs. 2 crores for the water supply scheme in that State. These requests are under examination by the Ministry of Health and it is for that reason that the Central Team is going there and it is after they have met them and made the assessment of the necessary expenditure which has been indicated by the Government of West Bengal, that necessary action in this behalf will be taken.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Mathur.

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर (राजस्थान):

आपने अभी सेंट्रल टीम के बारे में स्वीकार किया कि सेंट्रल टीम जा कर असेसमेंट करेगी। आपकी सेंट्रल टीम अकाल में सहायता देने के पहले जाती है। अकाल राहत काम प्रारम्भ होने के पश्चात आपकी सेंट्रल टीम यह देखने के लिए जाती है कि काम किस प्रकार से हुआ। इस दृष्टि से मेरा यह सुभाव है कि जहां तक आपने कहा कि अकाल राहत के काम को कार्यान्वित करने की जिम्मेदारी स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स की है और आपकी जिम्मेदारी केवल असेसमेंट करने और उसके लिए रुपया सेंक्शन करने की है, तो आपको यह भी देखना चाहिए कि वह रुपया ठीक ढंग से खर्च होता है या नहीं। आपकी सेंट्रल टीम ने कई स्टेट्स के सम्बन्ध में आपको इस प्रकार की भी रिपोर्ट्स दी हैं कि जो रिलीफ वर्क्स खोले जाते हैं उनके अन्दर उन क्षेत्रों की आवश्यकता को ध्यान में न रख कर प्रांतीय सरकारें राजनैतिक आधार पर रिलीफ वर्क्स खोलती हैं। उदाहरण के लिए राजस्थान के सम्बन्ध में आपकी सेंट्रल टीम ने एक ऐसी रिपोर्ट दी है। मैं यह जानना चाहूंगा कि आपकी सेंट्रल टीम यह जो असेसमेंट करने और रुपया सेंक्शन करने का काम करती है, उसके साथ-साथ जहां रिलीफ वर्क्स होते हैं उनके सुपरविजन की दृष्टि से क्या सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट आवश्यक नहीं समझती है कि उसके द्वारा दिया गया रुपया खास तौर से जिस काम के लिए दिया गया है उसी पर लगे और इसके सुपरविजन के लिए सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के पास क्या कोई एजेंसी है या नहीं है। अगर सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट के पास ऐसी कोई एजेंसी नहीं है तो क्या सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट इस प्रकार की कोई एजेंसी क्रीएट करना चाहेगी जिससे रुपये का दुरु-पयोग न हो जैसा कि राजस्थान में हुआ है।

श्री फखरुद्दीन अली अहमद : सेंट्रल टीम यह असेसमेंट करने के लिए जाती है कि किस तरह का रिलीफ दिया जा रहा है और उस रिलीफ के लिए कितने रुपये की जरूरत है, कितना खर्चा स्टेट गवर्नमेंट ने किया है और कितनी असिस्टेंस उसके लिए सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट को देनी चाहिए। आनरेबल मेम्बर ने जो यह सजेशन दिया है कि इसके अलावा भी सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट को यह चाहिए कि जो रुपया दिया जाता है सेंट्रल गवर्नमेंट की तरफ से उसका सुपरविजन किया जाय, मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि अगर हमारे इल्म में कोई बात आती है कि जो रुपया किसी खाम काम के लिए दिया गया है वह उसके लिए इस्तेमाल नहीं किया गया, तो हम स्टेट गवर्नमेंट को उसके मुताबिक लिखते हैं और पृष्ठते हैं कि किस तरह से वह उस रुपये को इस्तेमाल कर रही है।

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर : आपकी सेंट्रल टीम ने राजस्थान के सम्बन्ध में लिखा कि वहाँ पर राजनैतिक आधार पर रिलीफ वर्क्स खोले गये। क्या आपने उसकी जाँच करवाई ?

श्री फखरुद्दीन अली अहमद : इस वक्त वेस्ट बंगाल का सवाल है, राजस्थान का नहीं।

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर : यह जनरल प्रिंसिपल का सवाल है। आपने कहा कि हम उसकी जाँच करवाते हैं। तो आपकी सेंट्रल टीम ने जो रिपोर्ट दी, उसकी क्या आपने जाँच करवाई ?

श्री फखरुद्दीन अली अहमद : अगर जरूरत होगी तो जाँच करवाएंगे।

SHRI SASANKASEKHAR SANYAL (West Bengal) : Mr. Deputy Chairman Sir, it is a painful experience that relief is planned and implemented on purely political and partisan basis. Sir, in West Bengal, the Plans which are being

made are not being made at the Government level, as such, but the plans are being made at the Congress level, both at the Headquarters in Calcutta and also in the districts. Sir, one of the districts is Murshidabad which is partly affected according to the statement of the hon. Minister. Myself and Mr. Raha belong to this district. In order that the recipients are not confined to Congress voters, in order to assure that it is not extended only to those who subscribe to the political persuasions of the ruling party, and in order to allay this apprehension which has been voiced by my friend Sri Jagdish Prasad Mathur—that is our grievance and apprehension—is it not possible for the Government of India, in such places where there is interruption of electricity for tubewell irrigation, where there is a chronic failure of electricity, to advise the State Government or to take up the matter on their own initiative. That is number one.

Secondly, instead of waiting with wishful thinking for the monsoon to arrive, is it not possible for the Government to have shallow tubewells and hose pipes for irrigating the land. Thirdly, is it not possible to use the nationalized banks for the purpose of advancing seeds in affected areas to people, irrespective of their political persuasions? Is it possible to use the nationalised banks to see that these drought affected areas are brought under plough, because we are getting reports that on account of the drought there are fissures and complete cracks in the Mother Earth. I echo the apprehension of my friend, Shri Pranab Kumar Mukherjee, that ultimately if we do not bring up the crops yearly, then when the floods come, when inundation comes, we shall lose on account of drought and on account of heavy rains or floods. It is possible to forestall this situation for the Government by having its own machinery by way of guidance to the State Government, by way of supplementing the State Government's efforts and by way of assistance to the people who are affected?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : I have no information that the action

taken by the State Government is on political consideration. I think they have taken steps at governmental level. In order to provide relief to all the drought affected people and it makes no difference whether the people affected belong to one party or the other.

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR:
You can find out if you want.

SHRI SASANKASEKHAR SANYAL :
It is the information given by the party of the hon. Minister. Does our information count for nothing ?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED.
There is no substance in it, no corroboration that this matter was dealt with on political consideration. Merely on someone's mentioning it we will not act. The Central team goes there and takes into consideration the assessment made purely on economic grounds, technical grounds, what are the requirements. And the expenditure is being incurred and only to the extent Central assistance is necessary.

So far as the provision for water facilities is concerned, I find that the State Government have already provided Rs 60 lakhs for distribution and installation of tubewells and it is expected that about four thousand such wells with the above allotment will be distributed in all the areas. If anything more is necessary, we shall see what assistance we can give to them from the Central Government.

So far as the provision of seed and other facilities is concerned, I shall keep the suggestion of the hon. Member in view and see that all facilities are provided so that it may be possible for the cultivator to cultivate the land as early as possible.

SHRI SASANKASEKHAR SANYAL :
What about the apprehension that the money allotted may not be used for gearing the Congress machinery ?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED :
That is not so, Sir.

SHRI SANAT KUMAR RAHA (West Bengal): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, I apprehend that some sort of red-tapism is going on between the Central Government and the State Government. This sort of red tapism will enhance the crisis which is already created due to the drought in West Bengal. I would ask the Minister if he is aware of the fact that tubewell pipes are out of market in West Bengal now. This crisis is created by the blackmarketeers. I can see the crisis there from the newspapers and that crisis is being minimised by the Minister here. I do not know if the West Bengal State Government is making this statement to our Ministers. I want the exact figures as to how many tubewells in West Bengal in the drought affected areas have been out of order. I see from the papers that it is 80,000 and that tubewell pipes are out of market. The element that is finally necessary is the element of drinking water and for this purpose we are in earnest need of these pipes. What will the Government do ? Why should not the Central Government take its own initiative to go there without having redtapism between the two Governments and implement all the programmes for the supply of drinking water to our drought-affected people ? This is the first question.

Secondly, I would request that the Government should develop some sort of machinery which will not distribute relief on a partisan basis. It is our experience—when we see the figures in the newspapers—that a few States say “We are getting so many lakhs of rupees”. But once you go to the spot, the drought-stricken villages they say “We are not getting, we are not getting”. On the other hand, there are vicious circles of distribution. Therefore, I would request the Government to go on its own initiative—and not through the State Government—straight to the drought-stricken villages of West Bengal and effect prompt relief through a machinery of all the parties.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED:
So far as the first question raised by the hon. Member is concerned,—that because

[Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed]

of red-tapism between the State Government and the Central Government relief work is being delayed—I deny this allegation. The State Government has taken the earliest action possible and it is also in contact with the Central Government for necessary assistance and relief in this matter. I can assure the hon. Member that no red-tapism will be allowed to stand in the way of providing relief to the affected people in West Bengal.

So far as the other suggestion is concerned, I have already indicated that distribution of such relief is not based on any political consideration but it is for the purpose of providing relief to the drought-affected people, and that consideration alone will be the main guidance so far as the State and the Central Governments are concerned.

So far as the provision for tubewells is concerned, from the present indications it is apparent that the State Government have taken steps for the purpose of providing 4,000 tubewells. If any more are necessary and in that connection if any assistance is required from the Central Government, we shall do whatever is possible.

SHRISANAT KUMAR RAHA : The pipes are there in the black market

श्री श्याम लाल यादव (उत्तर प्रदेश) मैं केवल दो बातों की तरफ माननीय मंत्री जी का ध्यान दिलाना चाहता हूँ। जितनी धनराशि सरकार ने दी कि जो उनको व्यय करना चाहिए उसमें से कितनी धनराशि उन्होंने व्यय की। जैसा कि आपने शुरू में कहा था कि फाइनेंस कमीशन की यह मीफारिश थी, उसके आधार पर ही आप बताए। और दूसरी बात, इस बात को देखते हुए कि इस बात की आशंका है कि इस सहायता में जैसा कि कई प्रदेशों में अनुभव आया है कि एक राजनीतिक दृष्टिकोण से कार्य हुआ, क्या मंत्री जी इस बात का आश्वासन देंगे कि

जो सहायता का काम होगा वहाँ पर उन क्षेत्रों में या जिलों में वहाँ के विभिन्न राजनीतिक दल के लोगों की उसके लिए कोई समिति बनायी जायगी, हर क्षेत्र में और जिले में और उसके सहयोग और परामर्श से यह कार्य किया जाएगा जिससे कि यह सहायता कार्य सही रूप में जनता तक पहुँच सके और सहायता का पैसा बीच में ही खाया न जा सके ?

श्री फखरुद्दीन अली अहमद : मैंने कहा है कि फाइनेंशियल लिमिट दो करोड़ 61 लाख का है और अभी सबसे पहले हम को यह देखना है कि यह दो करोड़ 61 लाख रुपया स्टेट गवर्नमेंट ने खर्च कर दिया है या नहीं।

श्री श्याम लाल यादव : कितना खर्च किया है ?

श्री फखरुद्दीन अली अहमद : इसके फी गर्स मेरे पास नहीं आये हैं, मगर एक रिव्यूस्ट आयी है कि दो करोड़ रुपया उनको और इस काम के लिए दिया जहाँ तक सब लोगों को साथ लेकर चलने और काम करने की बाबत सवाल किया है, मैं बिल्कुल इनसे सहमत हूँ कि ऐसे कामों में हमें पालिटिक्स नहीं लानी चाहिए, सब पार्टियों को साथ लेकर किस तरह से अफेक्टेड लोगों की मदद की जाय उसका काम करना चाहिए। मैं यह सजेशन जो है इसको स्टेट गवर्नमेंट को भेज दूंगा।

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS (1970-71)
OF THE MANGANESE ORE (INDIA) LTD,
NAGPUR AND RELATED PAPERS

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE
MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES
(SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN) : Sir,
I beg to lay on the Table a copy (in