

(ii) Market condition being unfavourable.

(iii) Goods damaged in transit and hence not easily saleable.

(iv) Buyers having gone into liquidation or their whereabouts being not known.

(v) Refusal of buyers to make payment (In these cases legal action is taken).

(vi) Goods lost in transit and claims pending with insurers.

(vii) Restrictions imposed on remittance by foreign Government/Exchange Control Authority.]

12 NOON

# CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

## GRAVE FLOOD SITUATION IN ASSAM

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Golap Bar-bora.

SHRI MAHITOSH PURAKAYASTHA (Assam) : Before Mr. Bargbora proceeds to call the attention of the Minister I have a submission to make, because we also gave a Calling Attention Notice on Assam floods. Here in this Calling Attention Notice, Sir, only the Brahmaputra river has been mentioned, but there have been these floods also in the Barat river in Cachar district, and our names are not there in this Calling Attention Notice. At least our names could have been included in this. Also why has the Minister come up with this Statement only in regard to the Brahmaputra river. The Statement should have incorporated the havoc caused by the Barat river in the Cachar district also.

MR. CHAIRMAN : There should have been a separate notice for this.

SHRI MAHITOSH PURAKAYASTHA : We have given, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Even if it be the case, I could select only one out of many. Please sit down.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

SHRI GOLAP BARBORA (Assam) : Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Irrigation and Power to the grave situation arising in Assam due to the devastating and unprecedented floods in the Brahmaputra river.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (PROF. SIDDHESHWAR PRASAD) : Sir, the south-west monsoon advanced into Assam on 2nd June, 1970 and generally widespread rainfall occurred over many parts of Assam. The monsoon activity increased in the week ending 24th June resulting in a few heavy rainfalls. The monsoon was not so active during the first week of July but revived in the following week causing heavy rain in Assam between 12th & 15th July. The rainfall in North Assam during this period was about 46% above normal. The monsoon activity was sustained during the week ending 27th July. The heavy rainfalls recorded during these two weeks were 13 cms. on 12th July at Gauhati, 17 cms. on 21st July at Passighat and 11 cms. on 22nd July at Sibsagar.

According to the India Meteorological Department, the Monsoon rainfall this year has been normal over Assam.

During the active periods of monsoon, floods occurred in the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. During June, there was erosive action by the Brahmaputra river on the Kokilamukh protection works near Jorhat and on the embankment near Fakirganj. During the latter half of July, the warning stages were exceeded all along the Brahmaputra. Among the south bank tributaries, Burhi Dehing in Lakhimpur District and Dessang in Sibsagar District were in high floods. Of the north bank tributaries the river Subansiri in Lakhimpur, the Jia Bhorali in Darrang District and the Pagladiya and Puthimari in Kamrup District were also in high floods.

There was one breach on the left side of Pagladiya embankment just upstream of the railway bridge and three breaches in the Puthimari embankment, two upstream of the railway bridge on either bank and one in the Right bank about five kilometers downstream of the bridge. Water rushing through these breaches disrupted the road communications and caused heavy loss to the standing crops and dwelling houses. In the Sibsagar area, the road embankment along the Brahmaputra from Desangmukh to Dikhowmukh, breached causing disruption of traffic and submerged vast areas.

So far, 14 breaches and 12 cuts have been reported in the embankments on the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. In addition to the floods in the Brahmaputra, there has been severe erosion leading to loss of large areas in Lakhimpur and near

Fakirganj, Hamidabad and Tusipara in Goalpara District. The floods in the Brahmaputra basin are now receding, but continue to be high except at Dibrugarh.

According to the preliminary assessment made by the State Government, the damage due to floods in Brahmaputra valley consist of loss of crop on 1.8 lakhs and damage to about 35,000 houses. The total loss is about Rs. 8.6 crores.

The State Government have taken necessary measures for giving relief to the people affected by the floods in the Brahmaputra valley. A sum of Rs. 15 lakhs as gratuitous relief and Rs. 7.4 lakhs as seed grant have been sanctioned so far. The Prime Minister has also given Rs. 50,000 for the flood affected persons from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

The Union Minister for Irrigation and Power along with the Minister of Assam State inspected the flood-affected areas of North Kamrup District on 22nd July and held discussions with concerned officers regarding the steps to be taken to prevent breaches in embankments in North Kamrup district and urgent flood control works to be under taken in the affected areas of Assam.

As the Hon'ble Members are no doubt aware, in pursuance of the Prime Minister's announcement in the Parliament in December last, the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission was inaugurated on 24th July, 1970. The Commission will investigate, evolve and implement a comprehensive plan of flood control in the Brahmaputra valley and will work under the overall guidance of Brahmaputra Flood Control Board headed by the Union Minister of Irrigation and Power and consisting of Minister representatives of the State of Assam and the Adviser NEFA.

**श्री जो० बखोरा :** उपसभापति महोदय, असम में बाढ़ की परिस्थिति बहुत गंभीर है। अभी अभी माननीय मंत्री जी ने जो बयान दिया उस में सारी परिस्थिति के बारे में रोशनी नहीं डाली गयी। उन की जो रिपोर्ट है कि 35 हजार मकान नष्ट हुए हैं लेकिन जहाँ तक हमारी सूचना है उसके अनुसार करीब ३ लाख मकान धम गये हैं और 20 लाख से ज्यादा लोग परेशान हैं। इस बाढ़ से और करीब करीब असम का सारा मैदानी इलाका, सारे जिले एफैक्टेड हैं और अभी भी उन्होंने जो रिपोर्ट दी जुलाई महीने में मंत्री महोदय के वहाँ पहुँचने का बात जिस में कही है, लेकिन जहाँ तक मुझे मालूम है उस समय मंत्री जी ब्रह्मपुत्र बाढ़

कमीशन की परीटिंग में उस समय वहाँ गये थे। अब तक वहाँ तीन बार बाढ़ आ चुकी है। पहले 21 जून को, फिर दुबारा जुलाई के मिडिल में और बाद में एक बार और आई। ऐसी परिस्थिति में देखा गया है कि असम के सभी लोगों के मन में एक शोक है कि इस को जैसे एक राष्ट्रीय पैमाने की समस्या मान कर महत्व दिया जाना चाहिये था वह नहीं दिया गया है। अभी तक सेंटर का कोई भी मिनिस्टर बाढ़ पीड़ितों की हालत देखने के लिए नहीं गया। प्रधान मंत्री जी पुरलिया में सूखे की परिस्थिति को देखने गये थे या देश में जब कहीं पर कोई दैवी प्रकोप होता है तो केन्द्र के मंत्री वहाँ का दौरा करते हैं, लेकिन यह दुख की बात है कि प्राइम मिनिस्टर या केन्द्र का कोई मिनिस्टर असम में जो लाखों लोगों पर बाढ़ का प्रकोप आया हुआ है उस को देखने के लिए नहीं गया। उन लोगों के रिलीफ और रीहैबिलिटेशन के बारे में राष्ट्रीय पैमाने पर कोई बात नहीं की गयी है। इसलिए मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि कब तक और कितनी जल्दी मंत्री महोदय केन्द्रीय सरकार की ओर से असम के बाढ़ पीड़ितों के पुनर्संस्थापन के लिए और उन को सहायता देने के लिए कोई कार्यवाही करेंगे।

दूसरी बात यह है कि यह देखा जाता है कि जब कभी भी ऐसा कोई दैवी प्रकोप होता है तो सरकार के जो अलग अलग डिपार्टमेंट्स हैं उस समय उन का कोई कोऑर्डिनेशन नहीं होता। वहाँ इरोजन हो रहा है। उस में क्या किया जा रहा है। वहाँ आज रास्ते टूट गये हैं, कभी कभी रेल का रास्ता भी बंद हो जाना है। इन सब के बारे में एक कोऑर्डिनेटिड ऐक्शन हो जल्द से जल्द, जिस से लोगों को राहत मिल सके। इस बारे में सरकार क्या कार्यवाही कर रही है यह भी मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ। और बाढ़ का जो प्रकोप हर साल असम में होता है और जिस को हम लोग देखते हैं उस से इस इलाके को बचाने के लिए, वहाँ के लाखों लोगों को ताबाही से बचाने के लिए क्या कदम सरकार उठा रही है और यह भी मैं जानना चाहता हूँ। यह ठीक है कि ब्रह्मपुत्र फ्लड कंट्रोल बोर्ड सरकार ने बनाया है लेकिन फ्लड कंट्रोल बोर्ड कब तक कुछ कार्यवाही कर पायेगा और उस से लोगों को कब तक सहायता मिल पायेगी इस बारे में भी मंत्री जी कुछ उत्तर दें। और मैं चाहूँगा कि बाढ़ पीड़ितों को सहायता का जो सवाल है इस को मंत्री जी राष्ट्रीय पैमाने पर लें और प्राइम मिनिस्टर या केन्द्र का कोई

[ श्री जी बरबोरा ]

प्रमुख मंत्री ग्राम में जल्द से जल्द जाय और हो सके तो संमद के कुछ सदस्यों को भी यहां से भेजा जाय जोकि वहां की परिस्थिति के बारे में जानकारी हमिल करें और देश भर में आज जो हम चीज को दबाया गया है यह एक दुख की बात है। जो आप की इन्फर्मेशन और ब्राडकास्टिंग मिनिस्ट्री है इस के जरिये मामूली मामूली चीजों के बारे में फिल्में देश भर में दिखाई जाती है, लेकिन ग्राम की वाद के बारे में उस की ओर से कोई प्रचार नहीं किया गया है। प्रेम द्वारा भी हम को राष्ट्रीय समस्या मान कर हम के प्रचार की कोई व्यवस्था नहीं की गई है। इस बारे में भी कोई को-ऑर्डिनेटेड व्यवस्था हो यह भी मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से चाहूंगा।

**THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (DR. K. L. RAO) :** As my colleague has said, we have set up the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission Board in order to tackle this problem of the Brahmaputra floods in a very serious and accelerated manner. It has to be noted that the Brahmaputra floods cause the largest amount of trouble in the country because that area has a very heavy rainfall year after year. Due to the very narrow valley and the peculiar topographical features of the valley every year there will be floods. There will be a large amount of water that has to go down to the sea. In Assam rainfall is of the order of 160 inches per year, whereas in the rest of the country it is hardly 30 to 40 inches. Therefore, floods in Assam will be an annual feature and it will remain so, but then we have got to reduce the suffering of the people and the damage due to floods and that is what we are intending to do, in an accelerated manner, by setting up the Flood Control Commission. With the organisation which has been set up I hope that in the next few years it will be possible to make an impact on the problem. The main trouble in the case of Assam floods is that, though we have done a lot of work and Embankments have been constructed by the State, breaches occur in these embankments. This is what causes the greatest amount of suffering. This year, for example, the estimated damage caused by the floods is Rs. 8.5 crores, out of which nearly Rs. 7.8 crores is due to two breaches, viz., one in the Puthimari embankment and the other in Dessang embankment. On account of this the crops have been affected and that is how the greatest loss has occurred. Therefore, the main thing that we have got to attend

to immediately is to see that the embankments constructed are strengthened and raised and maintenance ensured, so that there will be no breaches. This is the first task to which we are addressing ourselves. I hope that within the course of the next few years it will be possible to make an impact on this problem and to reduce the suffering and loss caused to the people.

Then, with regard to the other points, about co-ordination, I do not exactly understand the question. So far as the Railways are concerned, they are not affected very much this year. The roads are breached because the canals are breached. Water goes across the road breaching it. Unless we close the breach in the canals, the roads cannot be put in order. For example, I have had a complete discussion with the railway people, with the roads people about the various breaches and so on. I think there is a fairly good amount of co-ordination, but the main defect, so far, has been that we do not have a very comprehensive organisation, a well-equipped organisation, to tackle this problem and that is what we have done now.

**SHRI BIPINPAL DAS (Assam) :** The statements made by both the Ministers, I am afraid, have not done full justice to the problem that we are facing in that part of the country. The extent of damage that has been caused by the floods this year is much more than what the Minister has said in his statement. It is true that floods are more or less an annual feature, annual phenomenon in Assam. This time the floods that we had are unprecedented, and according to our information not less than 20 lakhs of our population have suffered and all the six districts in the plains of the Brahmaputra Valley have been simultaneously under water. This has happened for the first time after long years. Now the question is one of immediate relief. Immediate relief is what is wanted. As far as immediate relief is concerned, the State Government has so far spent Rs. 26 lakhs for relief. You know, Sir, the State Government resources are very poor. I want to know whether the Government of India consider the problem in Assam as a national problem and, if so, to what extent the Government are prepared to give immediate relief. I would ask the Minister to state here whether the Central Government would render relief to the extent of at least Rs. 1 crore because in this regard the estimate of the extent of the damage caused is Rs. 10 crores. That being the case, I would demand of the Central Government that it should extend relief of Rs. 1 crore and I want to know whether it is prepared to extend it

or not. The sum of Rs. 50,000 given by the Prime Minister is just nothing.

Secondly, it is good that they have started the Brahmaputra Flood Control Board and the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission. It is very good, too late of course, but quite good. I would like to know what are the major schemes that this Board or the Commission have taken in their hands. Simply construction of embankments and dykes here and there I do not think will solve the problem ultimately. What are the schemes? When do they start operating? How long it will take to complete the schemes under this Board or Commission? This is my second question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : That will be enough.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : Only one more. It is a fact that the floods in Assam are a recurring phenomenon. They have posed a national problem because a surplus State in the matter of rice is being turned into a deficit State this year. Hundreds and thousands of people will suffer from epidemic. Epidemic has started already. Therefore, this problem is not a very small problem. A surplus State in rice is going to be a deficit State this year. Hundreds of people are suffering from epidemic. They are homeless. They are starving. Mr. Deputy Chairman, you may allow me to put my last question.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Ask the questions straight.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : There are various causes for these floods. Three of the major causes for the recurring floods in Assam are said to be (1) rising of the bed of the Brahmaputra after the 1950 earthquake; (2) large-scale landslide in NEFA hills; (3) large-scale deforestation that is going on in the surrounding hills and forests. Do the Government agree that these are three of the major causes of floods annually in the State and, if so, what steps they propose to take to solve this problem?

DR. K. L. RAO : Under the Flood Control Commission we have set up a very strong technical organisation, and the various questions the hon. Member has posed will all be investigated, will be gone into, and they will try to find a solution to the various questions. Regarding the other question which the hon. Member asked about relief, the Government of India has got a certain formula. Whatever

is required has got to be spent by the State. They have got to incur a certain amount of expenditure and the balance is given by the Government of India. That is the standard formula which we go by for providing relief funds.

With regard to the schemes that are to be taken up by the Board, the Flood Control Board also has met and it has drawn up a series of schemes which have got to be done this year. They are going to meet again in the month of October at Nowgong. Every three months they propose to meet and review the various works that have got to be done. We are fully aware that embankments are not the only solution, but the question of alternative or other methods of detention basins and dams have not been investigated. They have been mentioned but they have not been investigated so far.

And all this work is going to be taken up by the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission and I hope, with the large amount of adequate staff that we are providing now, it will be possible to get some scheme going on. And when the schemes are ready, I am sure the Commission will tackle them.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : He has not answered my most important question. Excuse me, Sir. One of the causes is the rising of the bed of the Brahmaputra after the 1950 earthquake. That is the most serious thing. Is the Government prepared to think of doing something about it?

DR. K. L. RAO : I told the hon. Member, Sir, that these questions are to be discussed and gone into by the Flood Control Commission. They have got to be investigated. With regard to the earthquake, it is a well-known fact that Assam is an area where large earthquakes occur. Naturally, the earthquakes cause hill-slides and soil goes down the river, and that has been exact trouble from 1950. But exactly to what extent that can be counteracted by any human effort is the problem that has to be gone into. I may tell the hon. Member that the earthquake that has occurred recently has not affected any hill-slides.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (West Bengal) : I think the question regarding the floods in Assam is not to be treated as a routine ritual. I am afraid the statement which has been made by the hon. Minister is nothing but a repetition of a routine statement which is being prepared by their Secretariat or office. The Assam flood is not only limited to Assam, it has assumed by

[Shri Chitta Basu]

this time the proportion of a national problem. I quite agree with my hon. friend, Mr. Das. This time the flood in Assam altogether unexpected and unanticipated. As a matter of fact, the flood in Assam has become a natural phenomenon and it causes enormous damage to the life and property of the people. I have got certain figures in my possession which suggest that the average annual damage is estimated to be Rs. 7.7 crores. In 1962 and in 1966, the damage was of the order of Rs. 22.60 crores and Rs. 24.69 crores. Not only is there loss of life and property but I think every year after the flood there is erosion of land on the banks of the river. And there is a figure...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : What is the question now?

SHRI CHITTA BASU : I am coming to it. You should not treat me in this way. It is a very important issue. The Government should note it. On an average about 20,000 acres of land every year are washed away by erosion. Therefore I want to know whether the Government of India views it as a very serious and important issue for the life of the people of Assam. I am not oblivious of the fact that the Government of India does not know anything about it. I know that right from the year 1959 to 1966 there were about nine Commissions or Committees which produced nothing except the voluminous Reports which are not also acted up and which are not given, if I may be permitted to say, even what their paper is worth.

Therefore now my question comes. What are the actual, specific, concrete measures that the Government of India have so far taken with regard to the three basic problems arising out of the flood of Assam? The three basic problems are flood, erosion and water stagnation. I want to know from the hon. Minister in specific terms as to how they have been trying to solve these three basic problems facing the people of Assam. My concrete questions are there. What is the status and the mutual relations of the two bodies, namely, the Flood Control Commission of Assam and the Flood Control Board? Why are there two bodies?

My other question is, whether there has been any short-term programme and what is the long-term programme? Have they been decided upon by these two bodies?

My third question is may I know whether the Government has so far placed any

order for purchasing dredgers for dredging the rising bed of the river Brahmaputra? When will the dredging be taken up? I want to know that particular date. And my last question is...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Three questions are enough.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : My last question is when and how the actual work of taming the river Brahmaputra begins. What is the basic technical difficulty in the matter of taking up the work of taming the river Brahmaputra. It has become a source of trouble not only to the eastern part of the country but the country as a whole. I want to know whether there is any hydro-electric potential if ever the Brahmaputra scheme is taken up.

DR. K. L. RAO : Sir, I want to submit that this year's floods are not unprecedented. In fact, this year's rainfall has been the average rainfall and the floods are just about the average. I want to remove any misunderstanding on that point.

With regard to the statement, it is unfair to say that it is a routine statement and one which has been written by some clerk. May I inform the hon'ble Member that every word in the statement has been written by me? The statement is based upon the latest information that I got from the State Government of Assam. I cannot take information from newspapers.

Then, Sir, with regard to the question of the hon'ble Member to know the solution of these floods, erosion and drainage, I appreciate his anxiety that it is a great problem for us. If I knew a solution of how to control the floods I would have solved the problem not only of Assam but of the country as a whole and the world over. It is the most difficult problem that has to be tackled. That is exactly what we are trying.

SHRI M. RUTHNASWAMY (Tamil Nadu) : What about the United States of America?

DR. K. L. RAO : The United States has not solved it. That is exactly what we have been trying to investigate and find out a solution. It is a very difficult problem. I would submit to the honourable House that the Assam flood problem is more difficult than the Mississippi or any other problem in the world.

SHRI CHITTA BASU : Why?

DR. K. L. RAO : The mere fact is this that the River Brahmaputra is a river

whose neither the beginning nor the end is with us. It is only in the middle, about 550 miles, that it is with us. Large quantities of water come from various points. The river and the country itself is highly unstable. There are huge slides and sediments. By that I do not want to say that we are not going to tackle the problem. We are going to tackle it. But it is a very difficult river and the problem is one which requires the sympathy of the hon'ble Members.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU :** You have enough of our sympathy.

**DR. K. L. RAO :** The hon'ble Member has asked : What are these Commissions and the Board? The Commission is an executive body. It consists of a Chairman and three members. All of them are engineers with a large staff.

Previously, in tackling this problem of flood control of Brahmaputra, we had very inadequate staff. We had only one Chief Engineer for the whole valley who was located at Shillong. Now what we have done is we have four Chief Engineers for the Valley whose offices are located in Gauhati. There are various Superintending Engineers located all along the whole line. That is, we have increased the staff to tackle this tremendous problem. The Commission is an executive body. Its purpose is to investigate, plan out, design and implement the work.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU :** Is it being done under theegis of the State Government or Government of India?

**DR. K. L. RAO :** Under the State, but the work is being done in collaboration with the Centre. Technically it is under the State Government. The Control Board of which I happen to be the Chairman determines the policy. The Central Minister will be its Chairman. Then there are five or six State Ministers and the Adviser of N.E.F.A. This is the policy-making body which projects the overall picture to be taken up. The Board meets once in three months. The commission meets from time to time.

There is another body, a technical body of Consultants. That is not yet constituted. We are trying to get for it as many experts from anywhere as possible. They will be there to advise, go into the problem and try to solve it.

Then the other question the hon. Member asked was about the short-term and long-term methods. There is no long-term or

short-term method. The whole thing will be a continuous problem. The problem will be tackled on a continuous basis. As regards dredging, we have ordered for two dredgers. Here I want to remove a misunderstanding in the mind of some of the hon. Members that we can dredge the river Brahmaputra. It is impossible. No river of that type can be dredged. But we have ordered for the dredgers and we are expecting one next year. And the function of the dredger is to reduce the pressure on the banks. There are six important places in the Brahmaputra valley where the land is being eroded, where erosion is pressing. Therefore, what we want to do is, we want to put the dredgers near those areas and try to dredge a channel 1,000 feet off so as to reduce the pressure on the banks, so as to divert the water away from the bank. It is anti-erosion measure. It has a limited value. For example, if there is pressure at Neamati and the land is being eroded, we put a dredger there, dredge a channel, say, one mile long 1000 feet off and try to draw the water away so that the pressure on land and the erosion may be reduced. That is the function of the dredger. It is not meant for dredging the Brahmaputra. Even if we want to do that, there is no place to deposit that soil. We have got to deposit it in the valley itself.

Then the other question was about the taming of the river for hydro-electric potential. The hydro-electric potential is very good. In the Assam-NEFA area, we have got one-fourth of the total potential of the country. The hydro-electric potential of the country is 40 million KW of which nearly one-fourth is in the Assam-NEFA area. It is one of the important places for us and we are trying to tap it. The only thing is the hon. Members must develop loads in order to justify the starting of these power Stations. Otherwise there is plenty of potential for hydro-electric power.

**श्री निरंजन वर्मा (मध्य प्रदेश) :** श्रीमन्, बहुत से ऐसे स्थान हैं जहाँ पर सूखा पड़ता है और बहुत से स्थान ऐसे हैं जहाँ वर्ष भर बाढ़ आती रहती है। तो मैं श्री राव माहब का ध्यान इस ओर आकर्षित करूँगा कि आज से लगभग कई वर्ष पहले से वे यह घोषणा करते आए हैं कि देश में एक इस प्रकार का सर्कुलर चैनल बना रहे है जिसके कारण प्रत्येक नदी का पानी दूसरी नदी में जाकर बाढ़ भी आना बन्द हो जाय और बहुत से सूखे प्रदेश मिचिन् भी हो जाए। मैं आपसे यह पूछना चाहता हूँ कि आपने अपनी इस घोषणा पर कुछ कार्य किया

[श्री निरंजन वर्मा]

या नहीं किया और अगर कार्य प्रारम्भ नहीं हुआ है तो चौथी पंचवर्षीय योजना में इस कार्य को आप आगे कहां तक ले जाना चाहते हैं ?

दूसरी बात यह बताने का कष्ट कीजिए कि क्या ब्रह्मपुत्र नदी के आसपास ऐसी और भी कोई छोटी छोटी नदियां हैं जिससे इसके बाढ़ के पानी को उन नदियों के द्वारा दूसरे क्षेत्रों में भेज सके या पाम में लगा हुआ जो पाकिस्तान का इलाका है और जो नदियों के पानी के लिए हमसे झगड़ा करता रहता है इस बाढ़ के पानी को किसी प्रकार चाहे हमारे कुछ द्रव्य भी खर्च हो जाये हम पाकिस्तान की तरफ दे सकते हैं इस योजना के बारे में कभी आपने ध्यान दिया है ?

श्री नेकी राम (हरिमाणु) : पाकिस्तान तो जाता ही है।

श्री निरंजन वर्मा : मै मंत्री जी की राय पूछ रहा हूं आपसे नहीं पूछ रहा हूं।

DR. K. L. RAO : Sir, as regards the linking of the canals to take away the excess water from one area to another where there is shortage of water, I have been thinking of that for some time. The idea is to draw the surplus waters from Ganga at Patna and take it down along the 78 degrees longitude, i.e. right in the middle of India, to feed the various canals in the Peninsular India. This is a very big project, a very colossal one. It cannot be done straightway. It has to be investigated. We have got to study the economics of it, find the finances and so on. Probably you may think "Why then is he repeating it again and again?" This is because it has become a reality in other countries. For example, in the United States they are trying to plan a scheme by which they can pump water from the Mississippi to areas in Texas which are 3,300 feet high. We are thinking of taking it up only 1,600 feet high. But they are already thinking of pumping it 3300 feet high. So, it is a possibility. The scheme is possible. But in view of our finances and various other considerations, it is a scheme which I think will not come to-day.

If it becomes a reality by the end of this century, we will be very happy. We can all feel very happy about it. At the moment simply it is an idea. We have been conducting just a sort of study. We are trying to give a more concrete shape. But still it is there. The idea has to be worked out. The idea is taken from the various

studies and plans that we have been making. It has to be worked out in a realistic way. We have to support it by field studies by taking the levels and collecting other data. It has not been done yet.

Then, with regard to the tributaries, that was one of the fortunate features in the case of the Mississippi. In the case of the Brahmaputra, as I said, the end of the river is not with us. If the lowest portion of the river, if the end—the closing portion—of the river, is with us, it would have been possible for us to put up another channel through which we could have reduced the levels higher up by taking away more water, by draining out the water in a much quicker way. But that is not possible. In the Brahmaputra the lowest portion is in the valleys. That is, if we take a section of the Brahmaputra, there are mountains on this side, there are mountains on that side, and the grounds slope lower into the mountains. The lowest points of the valley are occupied by the river. There is no way of taking out that water. Generally it happens that there will be some valley where there will be low ground. What the hon. Member has made is a very good suggestion. But unfortunately in the case of the Brahmaputra valley we have got high mountains, the Himalayas, the Garro Hills, etc. on either side and the grounds slope to the lowest point i.e., the river itself. Therefore, the water cannot be diverted, and the most economical way of draining out the water is to allow it to go along the present course.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY (Mysore) : Sir, we know the nature of the problem because, as many honourable friends have said, this is a recurring phenomenon and this has been with us from year to year. I am also aware of the difficulties which are in the way of controlling the floods in these areas. But ultimately the problem boils down to this. It is one of finding adequate resources. My friend, Dr. Rao, has set up this commission, this board and it may produce some schemes and I am sure it will produce some schemes. But I am afraid the fate of these schemes may be like the fate of the various other schemes produced by my friend, Mr. Hanumanthaiya, earlier. That is my problem. So we know the nature of the problem. It is not very simple. Therefore, my submission is that our approach should be first to see whether we have estimated, at least approximately, the cost involved to implement some of the schemes or the schemes that are going to be suggested, and whether they have explored the possibilities of raising these resources outside

India, if possible. The Fourth Five Year Plan has been drawn up. I know that during the Fourth Plan period with the resources which have already been deployed for various schemes we will be able to meet this problem. So we should know whether any estimate has been made about the resources required for controlling the floods and while controlling the floods about linking it up with the utilisation of the water as far as possible. I am putting this question whether Dr. Rao has explored the possibility of getting the finances from the international financing agencies. This is one of the methods that can be explored. I want to know whether he has already explored this method or whether he is thinking of exploring it.

DR. K. L. RAO : What the hon. Member has said is very important. Finance is very important. So far, we have spent on the Brahmaputra only about Rs. 25 crores all these years. Our plan is to spend Rs. 30 crores in the Fourth Plan. Out of these 30 crores, 15 crores should come from the State of Assam and the remaining 15 crores will be the contribution from the Central budget. Thus we find that finances are now multiplying and increasing. This is much more than what it used to be.

Although a firm estimate has not been made, about Rs. 250 crores will be required in order to make a dent or impact on this problem. It is not such a big amount which our country cannot afford, especially the problem being very big. Every year floods in this area are causing losses. The flood is very certain every year. It is not like the Sutlej where we do not have water sometimes. But in Assam, the rain-fall being as high as about 200", the flood is very certain. Therefore, considering the losses, it is in the interests of the nation that we should spend this amount and I am sure that the country will be able to find this amount without anybody's help. But before that, we must have specific schemes and that is why the commission has been entrusted with this work of formulating schemes. That is one of the objects.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : If the estimate is Rs. 250 crores, then what you are spending now in the current Plan, namely, Rs. 30 crores, is too small.

DR. K. L. RAO : I expected that the hon. Member would say that. What I said was that the extent of money required to be spent in order to make an impact on the problem, is this much? Suppose we spend Rs. 30 crores or even Rs. 100 crores, the flood cannot be effectively controlled

and therefore I must say that we must spend Rs. 250 crores.

SHRI BIPINPAL DAS : For that we must then wait for 40 or 50 years.

DR. K. L. RAO : We must have confidence in ourselves. I can assure the hon. Member that if we have very good, substantial schemes which will really have an impact on the problem, then I am sure that the money will be found. I do not think there will be any difficulty.

SHRI M. V. BHADRAM (Andhra Pradesh) : In view of the seriousness of the problem and also the sufferings of the people, will the Government of India consider the question of relaxing the standard in giving relief to the State? Will the Government of India relax that rule and give funds to the State Government so that they can give relief to the needy? Secondly, the Minister stated that some places are inaccessible because of road breaches. In such areas, will the Government consider the question of air-dropping food supplies?

DR. K. L. RAO : Firstly, the question of finance being made available by the Central Government has been considered again and again and it was felt that the flood control being a State subject, anything connected with that has to be financed by the State alone. On a number of occasions, expression has been given by the Ministers and the Committee of Ministers that at least in Assam, it should be a national item of expenditure. But we have not been able to succeed in that effort to make it a national item. At the moment, money is being given by the Centre, but it is given as a loan. Therefore, the problem has still not been solved, so far as finances are concerned.

With regard to breaches and the necessity of air-dropping food supplies, I might say that it is not necessary because the breaches are not so big. I went across one of such breaches. Probably a car cannot go, but heavy and high vehicles, such as army vehicles, can go. The breaches are not such as to impede the food supplies. If you have got a few boats and a few high-vehicles, the problem is solved. Inaccessibility is not that much.

SHRI MAHITOSH PURAKAYASTHA : The hon. Minister said about only the devastations caused in the northern part of Assam. He did not mention about the devastations caused by floods in the southern part of Assam, in Cachar district. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he



[Shri Mahitosh Purakayastha]

is aware that floods occur in Cachar district every year? While he was the Chairman of the Central Water and Power Commission he visited Cachar and recommended the construction of a dam across the Barak. Since he became the Minister, as Minister he visited Cachar in 1966 and assured the people that the construction of a barrage there would be taken up immediately. Since then, four years have elapsed. But nothing has been done. Will the Minister be pleased to state what steps have been taken to control the river Barak. Will he also explain, as Shri Chitta Basu asked, what are the works entrusted to the Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission and the Brahmaputra Flood Control Board? If, as he has stated, for controlling the Brahmaputra, a sum of Rs. 250 crores is required, then why is he spending only a paltry sum of Rs. 30 crores? How can that meet the situation? Will he also explain how he proposes to control the river Barak and save the people there from the devastation of floods?

DR. K. L. RAO : It is true, as the hon. Member has said, that the Barak is giving trouble for Cachar district. I went about inspecting things and trying to find solutions. But at that time no assurance was given. No assurance that we can control any of these can be given like that. In regard to the river Barak, the hon. Member is right that this river has been under our consideration for some time. But unfortunately some difficulties arose. We had investigated a very good project which, if taken up, should have been completely effective in controlling the flood in this area. But unfortunately that would have submerged some areas in Nagaland and Manipur and therefore there were objections. We found that it was not possible to overcome those objections. Therefore, we shifted to another place and we are continuing with our investigation. These difficulties do arise and they have been arising in recent times about submerged areas. The Barak is now being looked after by a separate Chief Engineer of Assam. It is not under the Flood Control Commission. I can tell that in the case of the Brahmaputra, we do not know the solution. But in the case of the Barak, we know the solution and we know how to control the water there. The difficulty is that we have not been able to overcome the objections of people whose lands would be submerged. That is the only difficulty and we will try to do whatever is possible.

SHRI S. D. MISRA (Uttar Pradesh) : Both floods and droughts are recurring

problems and it is unfortunate that the government talks of the floods only in the rainy season when some areas are washed away. After that, they forget all about floods. Is it not a fact that the small amount that is spent on flood schemes is also washed away annually by the flood itself? Is it not a fact that the Ministry itself set up a committee on flood control and they gave a blueprint which said that unless we have flood control measures in a very massive way, say for ten years, the floods cannot be controlled? What has been done to that? Only a paltry sum of a few crores is allotted in the fourth Plan for the flood control schemes. What does that report say? How much money is required to complete those schemes and how many years it will take? What is the money proposed to be spent and what is the money recommended to be spent? I want to know that.

Dr. K. L. RAO : What the hon. Member said is substantially correct. Now, you have to deal with the rivers in a massive way. Otherwise, it is likely to be washed out; at any rate it cannot control the river. In the context of these, the Ministers' Committee on Flood Control has drawn up schemes and suggested spending something of the order of Rs. 1,500 crores for the country. Even that, of course, was many years back. Now, I would expect it to be somewhere about Rs. 2,000 crores. If a sum of Rs. 2,000 crores is spent, then the problem of floods can be said to have been overcome by 30, 40 or 50 per cent at least. But the question is one of financial strain and the hon. Member has said that the Minister talks only at these times and not at other times. It is quite true because the hon. Members themselves forget all these things at other times. They put questions only now.

SHRI S. D. MISRA : It is the responsibility of the Ministry and the Planning Commission. Members can only put questions.

Dr. K. L. RAO : Yes, the questions are very useful and very educative. They give us a lot of stimulation. I am learning a lot of things from the questions. When the questions are put, I try to study the problem in depth. I know about it.

Now, I think in the Fourth Plan, for example, we have provided for flood control and anti-sea erosion, altogether about Rs. 100 crores and what we want is much more massive. The country's finances have to be improved to allot more money.