

[Shri M. M. Dharia.]

will necessarily get justice and that they will not be the victims of the whims of the higher officers or superiors?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA :

There is no question of being a victim of higher officers. The moment you have Class I and Class II officers you accept the proposition that there is some kind of technical knowledge and qualification. There are people who are directly recruited; there are people who have higher qualifications and if you say today that between Class I and Class II officers there should be no distinction, then the best thing for the Government of India would be not to have any categorisation at all. You have Class I, Class II, Class III and Class IV officers in the Government of India. That system has been there. It is entirely a separate question that one might say that the proportion should be 50-50; it may be stated that once a man from Class II has been promoted to Class I no one from Class I should be asked to take his place or no one from Class I should be reverted. That is entirely a separate question. But I personally feel that it would not be a very desirable or correct step.

SHRI D. THENGARI : May I know what is particularly sacrosanct about the date 1st January 1967 and since there is injustice done, will the hon. Minister assure us that instead of having a closed mind he would reconsider the case?

SHRI MEHR CHAND KHANNA : We can have any date—1st October, 1st December or 1st January. It is only an administrative decision but it has to be appreciated that the moment I step up Class II from 5 to 8 years and Class I from 3 to 5 years they are not going to benefit. What I am being told is this that in the case of Class II you keep it from 8 to 5 and in the case of Class I please step it up from 3 to 5. This cannot be done.

FLOODS IN NORTH BIHAR

8. SHRI AWADSHWAR PRASAD SINHA : Will the Minister of IRRIGATION AND POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the serious and wide-spread havoc caused

by the heavy floods in North Bihar resulting in large-scale damage to crops, destruction of a large number of houses and uprooting of several hundreds of families along with their cattle; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take or are taking to assist the Government of Bihar to alleviate the sufferings of the people caused by the floods?

THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

Floods in North Bihar

There had been heavy rains in Nepal Hills bordering Bihar and in the north-eastern districts of Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Champaran and Saran in the last week of August. This resulted in a rush of large quantities of water in the rivers of these districts, causing submersion of large tracts of land. The rivers mainly affected are Kamla Balan, Bhutahi Balan, Bagmati, Lakhandei, Burhi Gandak and the Gandak. Breaches have been reported in the Kamla Balan and Khirai embankments in Darbhanga district, Adhwara embankments in Sitamarhi sub-Division of Muzaffarpur, Bherihari embankment in Champaran and Saran embankment of Chapra. Serious erosion has taken place in the area adjoining Sikhanderpur in Muzaffarpur town on the Burhi Gandak river, causing a breach. The floods have disrupted road and rail communications in the area.

The assessment of the damage due to these floods is still being made, but according to information collected so far by the State Government, an area of 23.7 lakh acres has been affected, including a cropped area of about 15.5 lakh acres. The approximate value of the crops damaged is estimated by the State Govt. at Rs. 25 crores. A population of 3.6 million is reported to have been affected. Four persons are reported to have lost their lives.

The State Government have opened a number of relief Centres. A large number of boats has been deployed for rescue operations. Cash grants and loans are being given to the people affected by floods. Fair

price shops have been opened and medical and other assistance is being rendered to people. The Prime Minister has sent a cheque for Rs. 50,000 for flood relief in the flood-affected areas.

The present floods have been most unfortunate particularly as the State, after a prolonged drought, was hoping for a good bhadai harvest.

On receipt of information regarding the severe floods, I proceeded to Bihar along with my colleague, Dr. K. L. Rao and made an aerial inspection of the flood affected areas on the 30th August. We also inspected the serious erosion going on at Muzaffarpur. Five Members of Parliament and officials of the Ministry of Irrigation and Power and Central Water and Power Commission were also in the party. I had also discussions with the Chief Minister and other Ministers and officials of the State Government, regarding the flood situation and the measures to be taken.

A number of flood protection works have already been executed, but much more remains to be done. The experience of this year's floods will have to be studied and suitable remedial measures taken. There is no doubt that drainage conditions in North Bihar require improvement. An Expert Committee has already been appointed by us to go into this problem thoroughly.

In the discussions with the State Chief Minister and others, the immediate measures to be taken to deal with the situation have been indicated. The State Government have indicated that they would require Rs. 10 crores for their flood and drought relief operations. They have also indicated their requirements of foodgrains in the coming months and of supply of seed. The requests of the State Government are being considered.

SHRI AWADHESHWAR PRASAD SINHA : Sir, before I put a question to him permit me to express, on behalf of Bihar M.Ps., our sense of gratitude and admiration to the Irrigation Minister. On the 28th and 29th we were visited by floods and on 30th March at 9 o'clock he was there and he travelled by a big plane and a small plane till 4 o'clock. Then he had conferences with the Chief Minister, the Agriculture Minister, the Irrigation Minis-

ter and found out all about the situation. Sir, you yourself have been Governor of Bihar . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now come to the question; that was once upon a time.

SHRI AWADHESHWAR PRASAD SINHA : The statement is there of course in cold print. I would like to know what is the extent of damage of crops in the area ravaged by flood and of other damages done to the property of the poorer section of the people?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : I am grateful to the hon. Member for his observations. It is our duty to attend to this kind of work; whenever any natural calamity occurs it is for us to see it so that the rigour of the calamity is reduced as much as possible. So far as the area affected in North Bihar is concerned, about 23.7 lakhs of acres of land were affected out of which 15.5 lakh acres were crop areas. The number of people affected was about 36 lakhs and the loss to crop is estimated—this was the figure given to me when I visited Bihar—at about Rs. 25 crores. In the Champaran area about eight cattle were lost and also four lives.

SHRI AWADHESHWAR PRASAD SINHA : He met the officers of the Government of Bihar and the Ministers and they presented some of their demands for flood and drought relief, for supply of foodgrains and for supply of seeds. What is the decision of the Central Government with regard to these three demands of the Bihar Government?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : Sir, the entire matter was discussed by me and my colleague Dr. Rao who also spent a great deal of time in studying the problem of erosion at Muzaffarpur. It was of a very serious nature and from the discussions it was apparent that the flood this year was a very severe one and but for the action which has already been taken by the State Government perhaps the disaster would have been greater. I was glad to know that immediate relief which was essential was being provided by the State Government. They asked me to advance some funds for the purpose of undertaking these relief measures which will have to be continued for some time. Their estimate was that nearly Rs. 10

[Shri Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.]

crores will be required for providing various kinds of relief to the people and to begin with they wanted an advance of about Rs. 5 crores as ways and means advance to undertake this responsibility. They have also said that so far as the food problem is concerned, not only the flood but also drought in certain parts of Bihar have made it worse and it will be necessary that they should be given two lakh tonnes of foodgrains every month for another four months. In order to have wheat cultivation they wanted about 1.5 lakh tonnes of wheat seed. They also wanted that the breaches in the embankments should be repaired and for that necessary assistance should be given to the State Government. We also considered the question of strengthening the embankment. We are making enquiries in one or two places where, in spite of the repairs undertaken, the embankment gave way during the last one or two years. Sir, all these matters are under consideration. Soon after my return I submitted a note to the Prime Minister to be forwarded to the Finance Ministry for necessary action in this behalf. I am sure that necessary relief will be provided to the Bihar Government.

SHRI S. N. MISHRA : I want to ask two questions. The first one relates to the flood protection works which were contemplated to be undertaken during the Third Five Year Plan. Now, the precise question that I want to ask is whether all the flood protection works that were contemplated for North Bihar in the Third Five Year Plan have been completed and, if not, whether it has been because of lack of financial assistance from the Centre? Secondly, from the statement it seems that there is hardly any embankment which has not been breached in North Bihar. That raises a question about the technical soundness of many of these embankments. I find from the statement that an expert committee has been appointed. May I know whether this would also form one of the precise terms of reference of the expert committee, to go into the technical soundness of the embankments and evolve a policy on embankments? That is my question No. 2.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : So far as the work of flood protection is

concerned, that indeed poses a very serious problem, with which we are concerned, not only in Bihar, but also in many other States of India. With the small amount available at our disposal we have been doing our best, but I entirely agree with the hon. Member that because of shortage of funds something in a big way has not been done to reduce the rigour of floods. For that purpose we are giving another thought to this problem. I hope it will be possible for us to get adequate funds in the Fourth Five Year Plan to do something in a big way in order to reduce the rigour of floods throughout the country. So far as Bihar is concerned, there are two projects, viz., the Kosi project and the Gandak project, which are likely to relieve big areas of Bihar from the effects of floods. In fact, it has been seen that if the work on the Kosi and Gandak had not been undertaken, it was very likely that the devastation this year from floods would have been much more than what has already taken place. So far as Gandak is concerned, we shall see that work on that project is also completed as early as possible and the difficulty in the way of funds is sorted out. So far as the question of necessity of embankments is concerned, there are various views about these embankments, but from the little personal knowledge I have of these embankments, I have no hesitation in saying that, by and large, it has provided immense relief to the people wherever embankments have been constructed in the country. These embankments have to be kept in good repair. Because of the silt which our rivers carry, these embankments have, from year to year, to be examined and strengthened and their height increased. For that I feel that the State Governments have no adequate funds to undertake this big work. Take, for instance, in Bihar alone I am told that there are over 2,000 miles of embankment. It is impossible for a State Government, with many things to do, to keep them in good repair. Therefore, we are considering to what extent we can give assistance to the State Governments for the purpose of increasing the strength and improving these embankments all over the country.

SHRI RAMPRASANNA RAY : I have received several telegrams and also there is a newspaper report, published in the

"Jugantar", a daily of Calcutta, dated 31st August, that there has been unprecedented flood in the Harischandrapur police station in the district of Malda in West Bengal, which is a contiguous area to North Bihar, resulting in serious damage to standing crops and household properties of about fifty thousand people rendering them homeless and ten thousand people are still awaiting rescue operations. May I ask the hon. Minister of Irrigation and Power whether this is within the knowledge of the Government of India, if so, what does the Government of India propose to do to mitigate the unprecedented woes of the people who are suffering, for the time being and also to stop recurrence of this trouble in future?

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : This must have been the effect of the floods in North Bihar. We have reports that some areas in West Bengal have been affected by these floods, but the detailed information I have not yet got. I hope that in the meanwhile something will be coming from the State Government about this matter. As soon as these matters are brought to our notice, necessary action will be taken.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA : Two points emerge from the statement of the hon. Minister. One is there is paucity of funds. No. 2 is, whatever investment we have made on the embankments is practically going waste, if we do not keep them in proper repair. The question is we are investing large amounts of money on importing food. Can we not provide adequate funds and resources to the States, so that adequate flood protection measures are taken and that our food crop is not lost? Now, what is the estimate of the Government of India in the Fourth Five Year Plan and will you be able to meet all the requirements of the Bihar State Government, so that no damage to the food crop is done? No. 2 is, he has said that 2,000 miles of embankment have been built. Now, all this costs money and all this involves resources. It is no good building these embankments if we cannot keep them in proper repair. Now, I would like to have an assurance from the hon. Minister that adequate technical resources and financial resources will be made avail-

ing up these embankments do not go waste.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : As I have already explained, the problem before us is so gigantic that we cannot free the entire country from this trouble in a short period. We have to undertake programmes on a phased basis and I am sure if that work is done, after fifteen or twenty years a good deal of improvement will be made and this country will, to a great extent be free from the rigours of floods. So, within the next four or five years it is difficult to do it, though we want to do it. It is difficult to give the kind of assurance which the hon. Member wants, but I can assure the hon. Member that there is a general feeling that irrigation and flood control, in the Fourth Five Year Plan, should have priority and as far as possible and within our means some way will have to be found out, in order to undertake this work.

SHRI M. P. BHARGAVA : I just wanted to know from the hon. Minister whether, after a study of the behaviour of the turbulent rivers all over the country, any priorities have been fixed for controlling them, wherever these rivers are turbulent, because a lot of devastation takes place every year. During the last four or five years, as far as the rivers Bagmati and Kamla Balan are concerned, they cause devastation in the States of Bengal and Bihar and also in eastern U.P.

SHRI FAKHRUDDIN ALI AHMED : As the hon. Member is aware, priority has been fixed and it is due to that the work on the Kosi and Gandak projects was taken up in Bihar State. When the work on these two rivers is over, we shall have to consider other schemes.

NAGARJUNASAGAR PROJECT

9. MISS MARY NAIDU :†

SHRIMATI C. AMMANNA RAJA .

Will the Minister of IRRIGATION AND POWER be pleased to state :

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to a report published in the Hindustan Times of the 29th August 1966, to the

†The question was actually asked on the Mary Naidu.