

[Shri S. Panigrahi.]  
 taking steps and will be taking steps, I am prepared to withdraw this Resolution and I again request the Minister to take steps with a view to finding out a colour for *panaspati*.

Sir, I beg leave to withdraw my Resolution.

*The Resolution was, by leave, withdrawn.*

#### RESOLUTION RE CONTROL OF FLOODS

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, I move the following Resolution:—

"This House is of opinion that in the light of the experience gained during the recent floods in West Bengal and other parts of India, Government should take early steps to appoint a Committee of experts having knowledge of the subject, to probe into the causes of the floods, review the existing flood control arrangements in the country and suggest effective measures for controlling the floods."

Sir, at the very outset I wish to make one point clear. As you know, Sir, before the Session started, in the months of September and October, devastating floods took place in many parts of the country, especially in West Bengal, Surat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Assam, and various other places were also affected by floods, and I thought, Sir, that the hon. Minister himself would have been enthusiastic in initiating a discussion on the subject at the earliest opportunity in this Session when the matter had already agitated the public mind, because that is the way of functioning of a parliamentary system.

Anybody who reads newspapers knows very well that the floods in West Bengal and at other places have been the subject matter of very powerful, strong and unremitting discussion

in the Press and otherwise. Accordingly I gave notice of the usual motion. Then, I thought that they might not take kindly to a suggestion of this kind; so I fell back upon this business of Private Members' Resolution, a second line of defence. Naturally, the ballot favoured and we are discussing the flood situation; otherwise this House would not have had an opportunity of discussing the matter in this Session at all. I ask the hon. Members opposite, specially the Members in the Treasury Benches: Is it the way to handle the affairs of the State? I do not wish to say anything more on the subject. Sir, I am very sorry about the attitude of the Government in regard to this matter.

Now, Sir, I would like to explain as to why I am suggesting the appointment of an Expert Committee. When I suggest the appointment of an Expert Committee, I do not mean that only official experts should be there; there should also be non-official experts. It should be a combined body of officials and non-officials to go into this question and submit a report to the Government or to Parliament for consideration.

Now, Sir, let me deal with the flood situation. In September-October, catastrophic floods occurred in West Bengal and also in other parts like Assam, Bihar, Surat and even in Andhra. But I shall mainly deal with the floods in West Bengal to point out as to why such a Committee is needed, to underline the importance of such a Committee today.

Sir, floods in West Bengal have been unprecedented, the like of which we have never known in the last fifty years or so. This is not disputed at all. The magnitude of the devastation and damage caused by these floods would stand out in the official figures themselves. Eleven out of the 16 districts of West Bengal were affected. I have got before me the statement by the West Bengal Government—Statistical Report on Floods, Cyclone, etc.—recently placed before the Assem-

bly there. Please note that out of the 16 districts, 11 are affected according to their statement. The geographical area of the 11 districts affected is 27,169 sq. miles out of which 11,000 sq. miles were affected. I am taking these figures from the statement here. Therefore, in these 11 districts, 41 per cent. of the total area was affected by the floods. If you take the total area of the State, which is 34,000 sq. miles, 32 per cent. of this total area of the State has been affected by the floods.

If you take the total cropped area of the State, you will see that 11.4 per cent. of it was damaged by the floods. Damage to crops in respect of clean rice comes to about 5.23 lakh tons. The approximate value of the crops destroyed is Rs. 31.59 crores. The number of houses and public buildings damaged and destroyed is 5,04,468. The value of the 4,81,000 dwelling houses damaged and destroyed comes to Rs. 722 lakhs. These are official figures. Anybody would say that a very catastrophic devastation took place in the State of West Bengal in the course of these floods in September and October. And have you seen any reactions on the part of the Government here? No. The Irrigation Minister does not move at all. I do not know what he is irrigating. Have you looked at the reactions of the Ministry? Nothing. All that they said was that the West Bengal Government had appointed a Committee. Therefore, everything has been done. Well, then why do you have an Irrigation Minister here? Why do you have a Department of Irrigation and Flood Control and Irrigation Conferences? Is it so that the Central Government should not take any initiative in this matter? That is, they have nothing to do even after such a catastrophic devastation has taken place. All that we have been told is that a Committee has been appointed by the Government of West Bengal, and the Minister sits here with folded arms in the Treasury Benches. Therefore, look after your Irrigation Department. It is to be looked after

by other people also, especially Members of the Congress Benches.

Sir, everybody knows what the reasons of the floods are. But there has been a systematic attempt to conceal the reasons. The West Bengal Government said that the floods were due to excessive rain. They said that the sea-level tide also was very high. They did not say anything beyond that. That is their position. Now, Sir, I tell you that in the beginning there have been excessive rains, but that is not unknown to West Bengal. We have seen excessive rains even before. Deterioration of the drainage system and the failure of the flood control measures are the two important factors for which the Government is particularly answerable. Then the Damodar Valley Project and other projects. There again, I will point out that the Central and the State Governments are guilty of many acts of omission and commission. The Damodar Valley Corporation, for which the Central Government is responsible, is also to answer for some acts of omission and commission.

Now, Sir, the point is that first of all we must deal with the deplorable state of the drainage system. Let us make one thing clear in the beginning. If these floods had taken place, say, fifty years ago, people would have attributed it to the vagaries of the nature and would have submitted to the dispensation of an unkindly nature. That is not the thing today. Now we live in a different age, with scientific advancement; there are measures for flood control. I have also arrangements in my mind which are supposed to control the floods. There are the Mayurakshi and the Damodar Valley Projects and so on. Therefore, you cannot get away by saying that due to excessive rains it was something beyond human control. I say this thing because the fault of man is sought to be concealed, and that is why the hon. Minister, sitting opposite, is not interested in having a discussion. Now it will be my task

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.]

here, in the public interest, to unravel the role of the Government, of the Damodar Valley Project and others. That is the most important point that I wish to make, and I hope the Expert Committee—if the Resolution is accepted—will go into it.

Sir, the Bhagirathi and Hooghly river systems constitute the natural drainage system. All rivers except Subarnarekha flow into the Bhagirathi and Hooghly rivers. Subarnarekha passes through Bengal into Orissa and then into the sea. Therefore, I say that the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system is very very important; the natural drainage of that river system is of the utmost importance to our people. To the people of West Bengal it is a life and death question from the point of view of flood control and so on.

Sir, here I should refer to the report of the Flood Control Committee appointed after the 1956 floods. They stressed the importance of this river system. The training of the river and the maintenance of the drainage capacity of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system is of supreme importance for controlling floods and for other reasons as well. In this connection I would also mention the importance of Farrakka Barrage which the Government is neglecting. Nothing has been done really to get it under way. What is the position now or at the time of the floods? There again, immediately I should point out that the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system is now totally incapable of carrying extra water from excessive rainfall. That point you must remember. Deterioration has been very rapid especially in the last 10 years, in the ten years of Congress rule. I am not blaming the party but the Government should do something. They have done nothing. The Flood Enquiry Committee which was appointed after the 1956 floods, said:

“The deterioration in the drainage capacity of the river has been very rapid.”

It is unofficially estimated that the capacity for carrying excessive rain water has been reduced by 40 per cent. in recent years. During this flood, the Bhagirathi-Hooghly system failed to absorb not only the excessive flood water but also that itself was in spate, with water spilling over the embankments and that also added to the devastation. It is more or less the same story with regard to the other rivers. For example, Biddadhari and Piyali are completely silted up. They play an important part in the drainage system of Bengal. In the upper catchment area of the Damodar Valley Project, deforestation, soil erosion etc. have contributed to the devastation. Repeatedly we had drawn the attention of the Government to deforestation and soil erosion problems and we asked for afforestation etc. They paid no heed. We had heard about *Vanmahotsavs*. It is a *Mahatamasha* under the Congress regime, where young ladies plant the trees, photographs appear in the press and you all smile around. Nothing was done for afforestation, so to say. Other drainage channels also silted up. So you see the picture, the picture of natural drainage systems drying up, silting up and neglect on the part of the Government in the matter of afforestation, in the matter of preventing soil erosion and so on. Then a number of channels have silted up. I need not go into all these matters. Take the Damodar Valley. On the right bank there is a channel and on the left bank there are some channels and they have silted up. Mayurakshi has no separate drainage system at all. There is decline in the natural drainage and silting up has become a great problem for the people of Bengal and the Government is utterly callous. They would not listen to anybody. They think that whatever they say would go or pass, like king Canute. Tick-tack from Delhi and the floods must stop somewhere. They expect the floods will stop that way. This is their idea of facing the situation. Therefore I say that these 10 or 12 years have been filled with neg-

ligence, callousness and omissions and commissions on the part of the Government, which have resulted in such devastations and catastrophies from which the people of Bengal are suffering and the people in other parts of the country are also suffering. These have to be gone into by an expert committee. I do not trust them. The people who do not have any elementary reaction to such human misery and terrible devastations should be the last persons to be entrusted with enquiries and so on. So officials and non-officials should be put on the job together to produce a report. This is the position with regard to the river systems.

About the State Government, the West Bengal Government is very very intelligent and very clever. They say that because of the absence of the Farrakka barrage, everything is held up and they want to make out as if the Farrakka barrage will solve every problem. We do not accept it. That is their game with the Central Government and also it is intended to hoodwink the people. We say that the Farrakka barrage is very very vital from the point of view of flood control. It is also an important question and it should be undertaken, but that by itself, would not solve the problem. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what they are doing with regard to the Farrakka barrage.

Coming to the D.V.C., have we not been told year after year, month after month, day after day, that one of the principal tasks of the D.V. project is the control of floods? What is happening? The question should be asked and an answer should be given in a very straightforward manner. Mr. Voorduin, who initially arranged these things, suggested eight dams with a total capacity of controlling 10 lakh cusecs of flood water. That suggestion was not accepted. Instead they thought it would be enough if four dams were constructed with a capacity to control 6½ lakh cusecs of flood water. Now

we had a flood this time because of 8 lakh cusecs of flood water. They rejected it. Why? We do not know. Everybody says that more dams are needed. Then why this expert's suggestion was rejected? Then it has been found out that in the project operations of the D.V.C. and Mayurakshi Project, there are very serious drawbacks and defects.

DIWAN CHAMAN LALL (Punjab): Sir, I do not want to interrupt the flow of oratory of my hon. friend but would it not be more appropriate if we had a quorum? There is no quorum at present.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: We can go on.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you want me to take the quorum?

DIWAN CHAMAN LALL: Let more people listen to him.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Even without quorum, discussions have gone on. I do not know. Whatever you like you may do, I would. But I hope this is not an indirect way, so far as the Official Benches are concerned, to evade my Resolution. I hope not. I think that will be the unkindest cut.

DIWAN CHAMAN LALL: There are people outside.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Therefore, they should be called. If you like, you call them. Shall I stop?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. As the question of quorum has been raised, let the quorum bell be rung.

(Quorum bell rings)

4 P.M.

(After a count)

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I find there is no quorum.

DIWAN CHAMAN LALL: I suppose we can go on without a quorum. There is no voting to take place now. So I think we may go on.

SHRI K. M. PANIKKAR (Nominated): But without a quorum the House cannot be constituted.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Diwan Chaman Lall has challenged the quorum. Since he had raised the question of quorum, we had to ring the bell and that we have done.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Diwan Chaman Lall pointed out the obvious.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The only alternative for me now is to adjourn the House for ten minutes and see if we can get a quorum. Shall we adjourn?

SHRI AMOLAKH CHAND: We wanted to hear Mr. Bhupesh Gupta.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: We may adjourn, Sir, for ten minutes.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Well, the House stands adjourned for ten minutes.

The House then adjourned for ten minutes at two minutes past four of the clock.

The House reassembled at thirteen minutes past four of the clock, Mr. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Is there a quorum?

(After a count)

There is no quorum, I am sorry I have to adjourn the House.

The House stands adjourned till 11 A.M. on Monday, the 14th December, 1959.

The House then adjourned at fourteen minutes past four of the clock till eleven of the clock on Monday, the 14th December, 1959.