

MOTION RE FLOOD SITUATION IN INDIA

THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND IRRIGATION AND POWER (SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA) : Sir, I beg to move:

"That the flood situation in India be taken into consideration."

The Members of this House are anxious to consider and discuss the flood situation in the country. It is only natural. The calamity which descended on this country in the shape of these floods this year has been of vast proportions. The damage and the devastation caused by the floods have been immense. It is natural, therefore, that our minds should be exercised by this situation. I had, a few days ago, placed on the Table of the House a statement regarding the flood situation in the country. The facts and development, which have been brought to the notice of the Members of the House have created a deep impression on their minds. I confess my incapacity to give an adequate description about this situation in words. It has been an unprecedented kind of flood this time, but floods of very great severity have visited one part of the country or another fairly frequently in the past. It is proper, therefore, that we should apply our minds in the best way to this problem and we should do our best, our very utmost, to see that the incidence and the intensity of these floods are reduced to the minimum, if they cannot completely be eliminated. Therefore, Government must give very earnest consideration to whatever suggestions are made in the course of this discussion. I shall not take the time of the House in repeating the factual material already before it. I would, therefore, only acquaint the House with the developments that have occurred, the present situation and the steps that have been taken or are proposed to be taken to deal with this problem.

I have received communications in the course of the last two days from the various States about the present situation, and on the basis of these reports and telegraphic communications, I shall give to the House the situation as it is now. Generally the flood situation has improved everywhere; after doing their mischief, the floods naturally subsided, but in some parts we are faced with the problem of water-logging. Because of the nature of the terrain and inadequate drainage facilities, water still remains covering large areas and that creates its own problems.

Assam: Floods have receded practically from all areas and the situation has * generally improved. Restoration of road communication has been very nearly completed except in Darrang District. Rail communication still remains unrestored. Erosion at Dibrugarh continues unabated. Large number of administrative offices and residences of officials including that of the Deputy Commissioner have already been dismantled. Threat to main court building has abated and dismantling suspended. Erosion is gradually easing off on the upstream side but is pretty rapid in Marwaripatti and residential quarters further downstream. Nine hundred and seventy-two families have been rendered homeless so far. Loss to business premises has also been enormous and has disrupted entire wholesale trade. Erosion continues in the river island of Majuli and has again started at Palasbari after a few days respite. Rate of erosion at Palasbari is not so severe. According to detailed report received recently from the interior, total death roll by floods is 22 as against 17 previously reported.

West Bengal: Flood water has receded everywhere except for about 500 sq. miles in the Malda District where it is receding slowly. Large areas, of which a detailed survey is not yet possible, are covered by heavy deposit of debris. Communication is still djs-

[Shri Gulzarilal Nanda.] mpted. Cooch-Behar and Alipurduar towns are still inaccessible by road and rail. Only communication to Cooch-Behar is by air. Rail and road communication with Assam is still closed.

Bihar: Gauges in all rivers have dropped by several feet and water has receded from large areas though water-logging still continues in low-lying areas. Paddy has been retrans-planted over small proportion of areas from which water is receding. Slow drainage from low-lying areas is causing anxiety regarding Rabi sowing.

Uttar Pradesh: Flood waters have receded in all parts of the State and situation has improved. Total area affected by floods is 4,000 sq. miles and the number of people affected is twenty lakhs.

More than 18,000 houses have been damaged. Thirty-eight lives have been lost and 2,000 cattle washed away. Approximate damage to crops is valued at Rs. 10 crores.

In the face of a situation like this, the question naturally arises as to what is being done about it. Our first thoughts will naturally turn to the question of relieving the distress and easing the hardships. Regarding this, I believe the House will agree with me that the States concerned have made very earnest efforts, have spared no pains, have endeavoured their utmost to reach every part of the areas affected. Maybe that in view of the vastness of the problem, they could not carry satisfaction everywhere. The first question that arises in a case like this, where large amounts of money have to be spent, is about the resources. The resources of the States may be limited and, therefore, the question is whether they are hampered in the matter of extending relief to the fullest extent possible by any consideration of difficulty about funds. That was made clear at a very early stage.

The States were informed by the Central Government that funds or finances should not come in the way of the fullest measure of relief and it was arranged that the Centre would give grant equal to half the expenditure on gratuitous relief including the supply of foodgrains at concessional rates. If the total expenditure exceeds Rs. 2 crores, the Centre's share is raised to 3/4th of the expenditure in excess of Rs. 2 crores and also with regard to the monies that have to be spent on giving loans, the Centre gave the assurance that if there is any difficulty-regarding ways and means, the Centre will come to the assistance of the States. The States submitted their schemes. Of course they went ahead as a lot of work had to be done and they also approached the Centre for assistance. I have got here the figure of estimated expenditure. About Rs. 16 or 17 crores of expenditure was the estimate a few days ago. I have got also the details of expenditure on gratuitous relief, agricultural loans, pest relief, rehabilitation and agricultural loans, house-building loans, cattle-purchase loans, supply of fodder, cloth, garments, blankets etc. on which the States have incurred various amounts of expenditure. I don't wish to take up the time of the House in giving all these details at this stage.

Now at this stage relief is the dominant thought and this process will naturally shade off into questions relating to rehabilitation for which preparations have to be made at once—rehabilitation of families who are dis-housed, families who have lost their land because of erosion or because sand is deposited on their holdings; numerous families will require attention in respect of rehabilitation but the bigger question is about positive measures to deal with the problem of floods. We have taken one important step and that is the formation of the Central Flood Control Board. This Board met on the 15th of this month. The function of the Board is to coordinate, to direct and to assist. This Board has in its hands the over-all

direction of policy and programmes in the country and its function is not limited to that. It would be in a position to see that the implementation of whatever programmes are settled proceeds according to schedule and whatever is necessary to be done on the spot, its implementation is assured. The States will do many of the things but through this Board the Centre will also take up any responsibility which cannot otherwise be performed. Meanwhile these Governments affected by the floods have also established their State Flood Control Boards and these Boards have to assess in the first instance the flood problems in their areas. They have to deal with the questions of priorities for the different areas in the States. They have to arrange for the collection of data and for the implementation and, of course, the maintenance of whatever flood control works are actually constructed. The Central Board met on the 15th of this month, as I have stated, and the Board addressed itself immediately to a very important task. The Boards to which I have already referred are charged with administrative functions. They are not the bodies which deal with the technical aspect of the problem. The collection of data, the drawing up of the programmes—these things have to be done through other agencies; and this Central Flood Control Board, the first thing that it did was to decide that two Commissions be set up—the Ganga River Commission and the Brahmaputra River Commission. It would be useful for me to explain to the House what exactly is the function of these Commissions because I might add that the Central Flood Control Board also decided that each of these States and their Boards should have a technical committee to help them and there will be those technical committees in the States which will assist their Boards in drawing up a programme of investigations, in drawing up a programme of works, and in any arrangements for implementation. These Commissions have a very important function. The function of these Commissions is chiefly the integration of the whole work, the

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rivers pass through more than one State. They create problems which are common to more than one State and there are difficulties between one area and another. What happens in one area affects the other area and if there are delays in carrying out the programme in one part, there may be a great deal of loss, waste and damage. And the river basin being one unit, it has to be examined for the purpose of investigations and for the purpose of preparing the programmes in an integrated and unified way. For this purpose the Commissions are intended to take up certain very definite responsibilities. They will integrate the data which arise. They will also approve of the programme of collection of data and they will keep a watch on the progress of these investigations and when the programmes are prepared they will incorporate them into a single picture. Of course, they will also be in touch with the progress of these programmes. They will recommend to the States what action has to be taken on an emergency basis to deal with emergency situations. This is the administrative and technical set-up for the purpose of dealing with this problem.

This is not sufficient, for if a programme is evolved, there has to be the supporting organisation and staff for it, and the technical personnel. The Government here and the Central Flood Control Board have taken good care to see that there is no delay so far as that is concerned. So immediately a Flood Control Wing was created in the Central Water and Power Commission with an adequate staff and technical personnel. Similarly the States concerned were also asked to assess their requirements of technical personnel and other staff. When this matter was examined at the Central Flood Control Board, the requirements of the different States were examined in detail under two heads. One dealt with the immediate requirements for the purpose of investigations and collection of data and such arrangements as are needed for immediate works and the other the

[Shri Gulzarilal Nanda.] complete programme of construction to deal with the problem.

I have explained what steps have already been taken. I may give a little more information about the programme. The Central Flood Control Board at which the Chief Ministers and their officers were present looked into the question of what steps had to be taken at once.

SHRI S. MAHANTY (Orissa): How many engineers were in that meeting of the Board besides the Chief Ministers?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Sir, I did not count them, but the room was full of engineers.

SHRI S. MAHANTY: But how many engineers are there on that Board?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: So far as the Commissions are concerned, they are practically composed of all engineers, though there may be the Inspector-General of Forests and some other people who also may have some contribution to make to a solution of this problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He is satisfied.

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Now I come to this practical question. What is going to be done immediately in the course of the year? The Board made one thing clear at once, that no time should be lost in undertaking both the collection of data and in going ahead with any construction needed for flood protection, that is to say, such works as we are in a position to take up at once. And the engineers who accompanied the Chief Ministers and the other representatives of the State Flood Control Boards were asked to stay on after the 15th to finalise the programme. On that basis something has been done. In the first place, a programme was made for surveys, that is to say, for the photographic surveys of about 30,000 square miles.

The very next day the Surveyor-General of India was asked to make the necessary arrangements and told that he would have all the facilities, for going ahead with the work. He was in doubt whether our engineers would be in a position to demarcate the 30,000 sq. miles. But the same day, the engineers gave him all the information about this area covering about 30,000 sq. miles that required to be surveyed. All this was in the presence of the engineers of the States so that there was no difficulty about knowing what was to be actually done.

Regarding the collection of the data, we want the cross-sections showing the maximum water levels, longitudinal sections and other cross-sections of the rivers. It was decided to take this in hand immediately and to complete the work within a few months' time. Then we have to arrange with Sikkim and Bhutan for the installation of rain-gauges and other investigations. As hon. Members know, the whole of it is a difficult problem and it can be tackled effectively only if we have in our possession certain data which have to be collected from outside our own country. So this also is being pursued.

As for the actual work to be taken up, I have got here the various items of work proposed to be taken up, with details. In Uttar Pradesh, there is the work on the spill of Gandak on right bank, costing Rs. 40 lakhs. In Bihar there is the 30 mile embankment on Burhi Gandak and other embankments for which estimates are being made. In West Bengal there is the construction for the protection of Sili-guri costing some Rs. 9 lakhs and at Jalpaiguri on the Teesta embankment the work for protective dam and diversion costing Rs. 1.60 crores and so on. In Cooch-Bihar there is the work of embankment and diversion costing about Rs. 59 lakhs. In Assam embankments are to be constructed under the Grow-More-Food scheme and also those under the protection schemes, for several places that have been threatened. Then there is the scheme for protection of Dibrugarh; ♦

also embankment on some of the reaches of the Brahmaputra.

SHRI GOPIKRISHNA VIJAIVAR-GIYA (Madhya Bharat): What is going to be the cost of protection of Dibrugarh?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: Previously it was expected to be about Rs. 2 crores, but then the idea was to have two or three miles of revetment. But now it appears that a much longer stretch will have to be revetted and the cost, therefore, is likely to be increased. But the whole of the situation regarding Dibrugarh is under close examination and technically, it is only when the floods subside that a final decision can be taken. But I will take up later on this question of Dibrugarh in answer to any other question that may arise about it.

SHRI BASAPPA SHETTY (Mysore): What is the total cost involved?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: As I have explained, I am dealing with only the immediate programme and I think all that will come to about Rs. 10 to 15 crores. It has not yet been precisely determined. But approximately it will be of that order.

SHRI RAJENDRA PRATAP SINHA (Bihar): Will the work be taken up this year after the floods subside?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: I am only speaking of things which should be taken up tomorrow, if not today.

As for the Kosi, a definite programme has been chalked out so that work on the flood protection embankment and other preparatory and preliminary work could be started this season, and should progress as far as possible.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.]

SHRI R. B. SINHA (Bihar): Are you going to do something about the Kamaia river also?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: It is not a complete programme that I have

given. I have given only cases which emerged from the discussions during the last few days. Consultations are in progress and whatever else can be undertaken will be taken up. Money is not going to be the limiting factor; personnel may be, but even in this case the works are of a character which is very simple. It is a question of getting large masses of workers together and if that can be done, work can be proceeded with immediately on many schemes. Personnel alone is the consideration. I have only given a gist of the action to be taken but I have got a fuller account of all those measures.

SHRI R. P. N. SINHA (Bihar): Are the Government getting, from time to time, progress reports of the works done?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: We have made arrangements for the supply of fortnightly reports—daily when the situation is serious, otherwise fortnightly—about the progress made about the works. If hon. Members are interested—I am sure they are interested—I will be sharing the information with them regarding the progress of these various works.

डा० रघुवीर (मध्य प्रदेश) : श्रमिकों का संग्रह करने के लिए क्या चीनी पद्धति का प्रयोग किया जायगा ?

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: I am! coming to that aspect of the question but there is one point before that. In regard to the programme of protective and control works, there are several stages and one such is the emergency stage. It has itself a preventive aspect. If we can be made aware of the onset of floods a few days ahead, then steps can be taken to prevent

] damage, to assist in the evacuation of the people and of the property and

! cattle to places of shelter on higher ground and also to arrange the organisation for relief. This could be done

I more effectively. This time it was not

I very satisfactory. If we had information that a flood of this magnitude

[Shri Gulzarilal Nanda.] was coming five or six days earlier, much better arrangements could have been made. Why is it that we are in this difficult situation? The waters that the rivers bring in come from other countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and even Tibet. Water rushes through the big slopes there and unless we are in a position to know what is happening far away in the upper reaches, it is not possible to predict the onset of the flood within any reasonable length of time. This is an important consideration. We should have arrangements, in co-operation with those countries, in their own interests also because floods do a lot of harm to them also—take away life and damage property. This matter has been taken in hand now.

The other thing is the question of prevention. This affects the problem of silt, the load of silt which the rivers carry and the silt deposits that may be raising the bed of the channel, affecting the course of the river. These are the things which would be dealt with in relation to the question of afforestation and deforestation. I have already given the substance of the decisions that we have taken in regard to positive measures so far as protection and flood control are concerned. These things would be started at once and what I have stated is only a limited fraction of what is being intended. In regard to what is to be taken up, say a little later, that is, after a year, data are required and I hope that we will have made considerable progress in the collection of that data during the course of the year so that a firm, sound and reliable basis for formulating a programme of short-term works and later also of other control measures like storage, dam construction etc., can be evolved. This is the position now.

In this matter, it is not a question of money. The amount of money that we are called upon to make available is of a relatively small magnitude, when we compare it with the loss which occurs year after year; this will

be a very good investment. The limitations lie in other directions. Shall we have sufficient trained personnel? Shall we have enough materials? Of course, materials are not of great importance; in this case they are available near at hand and in most cases it is only a question of moving the material to a particular place after which simple labour operations are required. This may be done partly by machinery also, but if there is not enough of machinery that does not matter much because in this case machinery and men are convertible and if we have large number of people it is possible to accelerate the programme very much. I might give an illustration. I mentioned the other day that in the case of Kosi, if we could bring together 2,30,000 men for a certain period in two seasons the embankments can be completed whereas the present schedule has been built on the assumption that there will be 50,000 men at the most and at this rate it will take about six years or so to complete the work. Here, it is a question of mobilising the people. Several steps have to be taken in this direction. What does this public cooperation idea involve? Public cooperation can take many forms in relation to this problem of flood control. At several places and at several times, works are held up and we cannot go ahead simply because the land on which something has to be done is not available. It has got to be acquired and land acquisition proceedings take an immensely long time. I have had experience of a certain project where the people themselves gave the land without any formalities having been gone through and then they were compensated. If that happens, we can compensate the people later on and we can go ahead with the work in the meanwhile; otherwise, we are prevented from proceeding further in the matter. This is one aspect of public cooperation but the major aspect, the thing which really counts very much is our capacity to bring together to the place where the work has to be done, large numbers of people, to direct their operations properly, to see

that their enthusiasm is sustained and to see that they really do good and useful work.

SHRI K. B. LALL (Bihar): May I bring to the notice of the hon. Minister one point with regard to the question of public co-operation? The Kosi Control Board has been constituted and not a single man from the public has been taken. I think in such matters, as the hon. Minister has already said, if public co-operation is required it will be forthcoming very well if one important man, even an M.P., a legislator or president of the Congress, from that area were taken on the Board. That would be a good link between the public and the officials. In the Kosi Board only officials have been taken.

SHRI GULZARILAL NANDA: The point that the hon. Member has raised is very important and the set-up which I have placed before this House and regarding which I have given information, is not sufficient from the point of view of public co-operation and of mobilising it fully. Therefore, more things have to be done and I may submit to the House that this question was considered in the Central Flood Control Board and this was dealt with at very great length. Something will have to be done regarding advisory bodies but non-official members need not be on these Boards. These Boards are for certain administrative purposes, to give sanctions and to get work done. For this other purpose we have to establish suitable arrangements and we must proceed quickly for that. That is being considered. The States have been asked, within the next 15 days to clarify their own ideas in the light of the discussions that took place in the meeting of the Board and to work out a programme for public co-operation. It is not quite an easy and a light thing. It is easy to say, "Let us adopt a certain method, the Chinese method or whatever it is," but it will involve a great deal of hard work and will call for leadership on an extensive scale. This will have to be done and the proposition of advisory bodies, as is suggested in one of

the amendments, is already being considered in this connection. This question of public co-operation is fundamental for the success of this programme. Speed is essential for any project, but so far as flood protection works are concerned, it is crucial because if you allow a long time to elapse while the construction of flood protection works is progressing, the hazards from the floods to the works themselves increase proportionately. It is on this basis that we have to appeal to the country. We are already making arrangements so far as the Kosi is concerned. We are meeting the Members from Bihar on the 24th. We should move for public cooperation at once. We should move the Members of the Assemblies and the leadership in the whole State should come together. We may have to go from house to house to enlist the people's co-operation and to move them to go. The seasons will have to be taken into consideration, I mean the time when they are free to go and work. For this purpose preparation will have to be made on a very big scale. It is not a matter of political parties. It is a matter for the entire country, for all parties, for those who belong to no party. If we work on these lines I believe we will find that the problem is not really so very frightful as we think it is now.

In this matter co-operation is coming from other sources also. I met this morning the executive secretary of the ECAFE and he said that the Bureau of Flood Control of ECAFE would be rendering all the assistance that lay in their power. The U.S. Technical Co-operation Mission and the High Commission for U.K. have all given their assurance that they will do whatever they can and they will help us in the first instance in the matter of getting all the experts that may be needed. We will give them all the information we have. We will let them look at the situation here and we will welcome any useful suggestion that comes from any quarter.

Sir, I have done.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the flood situation in India be taken into consideration."

There are two amendments. They will be formally moved.

SHRI S. N. MAZUMDAR (West Bengal): I beg to move:

"That at the end of the motion, the following be added, namely: —

'and having considered the same, the House is of opinion that—

(i) the situation should be treated as one of national emergency; and

(ii) with a view to mobilise public co-operation on the widest possible scale to meet this emergency both as regards flood control measures as well as the task of providing relief and rehabilitation facilities to the flood-stricken people, non-official advisory committees including representatives of all political parties and relief organisations should be set up at all levels'."

DR. N. DUTT (West Bengal): I beg to move:

"That for the original motion, the following be substituted, namely:-

'This House having considered the flood situation in the country approves of the programme and the steps taken by the Central Government regarding the flood control measures and financial and other aids assured to the State Governments for relief to the victims of unprecedented floods'."

SHRI R. P. N. SINHA: I had sent notice of an amendment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It is the same as Dr. Dutt's and he has moved it.

KUNWARANI VIJAYA RAJE (Bihar): Sir, the recent floods that

have been coming in parts of Uttar Pradesh, the whole of North Bihar, parts of Bengal and in considerable portions of Assam have naturally evoked a lot of concern in the country.

These areas have since been visited by Ministers of the Central Cabinet, engineers and lately by the Prime Minister himself. I do not propose to give a graphic account of the terrible hardships suffered by all those who have been affected by these floods for the seriousness of the situation has already gained countrywide recognition. Nor it is my intention to dwell at length on the inadequate relief measures taken by the Government. It is clear from the statement of the hon. Minister for Planning and Irrigation and Power that had the State Governments taken timely steps on the recommendations of the flood committees appointed from time to time, much of this disaster could have been averted. I feel that we have now reached a stage when we should consider above everything else, things which are of immediate necessity and importance. For instance we should consider what are these floods, why have they assumed this devastating character, what are the causes and what could be the remedy. The area covered by these floods is more or less known as the Gangetic Plain. Yet, curiously enough the river Ganges this year has not added much to the devastating nature of these floods, it is practically admitted on all hands that the flood has been mainly due to the heavy rainfall in the Himalayan region. This has also been confirmed by weather experts. Now, this is good enough explanation for rains confining themselves to the Himalayan area but this is not good enough to explain the devastating character of these floods. Rains of this kind, I am told, are not totally unprecedented in the Himalayan area. What is unprecedented is the flooding of the country by the waters coming from the Himalayan area.

Certain changes have taken place in the southern slopes of the Hima-

layas and its *terais*, as also in the plains over the last 20 to 30 years. Firstly, it is now an established fact that the denudation of forests in the Himalayan belt which stretches from west to east has gone on at a terrific speed. It is common knowledge that the people then in power in Nepal depended mostly for their wealth on the sale of these forests. They used to be sold dirt-cheap and were cut down mercilessly by the contractors who went from India to Nepal. In lesser degree similar things have happened in the portions under the possession of the Government of India. This is one of the most potent causes which explains the velocity of the floods and, as I will subsequently show, also the spreading out of the floods. Now, this denudation left the soft sandy earth at the foot of the Himalayas floating for a number of years when the rains came. It has all been washed down to the plains in millions and billions of tons. These have in their turn lifted up the regular beds of the rivers many of which in the last few years have been cultivated and actually in North Bihar, hundreds of them today just do not exist. While all this natural process of change in the contours of the levels in North Bihar has been going on, a tremendous change in the levels was suddenly brought about by the earthquake of 1934. I am told that the effects on this earthquake on the flow of water was apparent to a greater extent even in the monsoon of the same year. Since then, the attention of the Government has been repeatedly drawn to the dangers that lay ahead, but without any effect. All these have now turned North Bihar and other parts of India much more flat than what they were even before. The problem, therefore, is a very serious one and needs consideration not by one or two States individually but by all those who have been affected. I am glad to find that this fact has found recognition in the statement laid on the Table of the House by the hon. Minister for Planning and Irrigation and Power.

In the immediate measures that the Government proposes to take up, it has been mentioned that highest priority will be given for collection of hydrological and other data in Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Since the interests of these countries, as far as floods are concerned, are so inter-connected with those of ours, I do not see why a beginning should not be made by inviting representatives of those countries to serve on the National Flood Control Board as members of the contributing States. I feel convinced that unless and until we secure the support and co-operation of these countries, the functioning of the National Flood Control Board can never be effective. In this connection, I think it is worth while to mention that the interests of the people in the hills and the people in the plains are not only different but actually contrary. The people in the hills naturally need large tracts to be cleared for purposes of cultivation, whereas the people in the plains need the hills and the areas in the hills to be covered with thick jungle both for the purpose of maintaining a steady rainfall as also to check erosion of soil in the hills so that cultivable lands in the plains may not find their character changing in more than one way.

For a proper economy I think it is necessary that the States should be so constituted that there could be a balance maintained by the Government of that State if it had both plains and hills in its care. The needs of the people in the hills may then be catered by the people in the plains and *vice versa*. Conflicts could then be resolved from areas to areas and not left to the innate goodwill of certain persons in the various States. This of course is a bigger and wider issue but I had to mention it here on account of its special bearing.

Lastly, one thing is outstandingly clear; that is that the problem brooks no delay. Secondly, whatever has to be done must be done for all the areas

[Kunwarani Vijaya Raje.]

concerned and thirdly individual efforts on the part of States cannot be successful and last but not the least the co-operation of Nepal where the rivers which have created so much mischief originate is absolutely indispensable.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed further, I have to say that I have already got nine names before me and probably there may be a few more who want to speak. I want to know the mind of the House whether we shall continue to sit without the lunch hour, or sit for one more hour from 5 P.M. to 6 P.M. We have to finish the debate today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We can continue for one hour more after 5 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: All right. Dr. Nalinaksha Dutt.

DR. N. DUTT: Sir, I have moved the following amendment : —

"That for the original motion, the following be substituted, namely:-

"This House having considered the flood situation in the country approves of the programme and the steps taken by the Central Government regarding the flood control measures and financial and other aids assured to the State Governments for relief to the victims of unprecedented floods'."

It is a matter of great disappointment that when we are just getting out of the wood as far as the food problem is concerned, there should be visitations of such natural calamities as floods and drought in four States. It is rather a paradox that in the same country, in the same State we have both heavy rainfall and floods along with drought. Both have affected very seriously the sowing of crops. No doubt we are now giving great attention to the question of floods, but I think the hon. Minister should also pay attention to the people who are suffering from drought. Though this matter is not being discussed today, I have got to mention it incidentally

here, that people who have lost their crops on account of want of rain should have some sort of relief. Our Food Minister has been telling us that we have got ample rice in our stock, but that does not solve the problem of the poor cultivators who have lost their aman paddy. They have not got the money to go and buy from the control shops. Hence along with, flood our Government should pay some attention to the people who have suffered heavily because of drought. In West Bengal this is particularly important.

Now, coming to the flood question, I shall confine myself to West Bengal because there are other speakers who will speak about Bihar and Assam. In West Bengal the flood has receded but the people are suffering from starvation, diseases and other troubles and they are homeless. Our food position is good, but the difficulty is that of lack of communications. The Government has been trying its best to carry food to these parts of the country. They are so isolated that the Government has taken the help of planes to drop food in those isolated areas. It cannot be expected that this sort of aid will be adequate. Because of lack of communications by road or by rail or by any other means, it has become tremendously difficult to give relief to those persons who are actually suffering. The whole of North Bengal terai is an isolated region lying at the foot of the Himalayas. This portion is divided into three districts: Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Cooch-Bihar. By Siliguri, I mean Darjeeling District. All these three districts are intersected by several rivers and all the rivers are not important; some are mere rivulets but they become rivers during the rains. Further south intervening Pakistan we have West Dinajpur and Malda. These are the five districts which have suffered heavily. In the north we have the huge Himalayan range, Bhutan and Sikkim from where these rivers of misery are flowing. These rivers originate in these areas and fed by

snow-clad mountains and heavy rainfall in the hilly regions, they flow south. Normally these rivers are very shallow and have no definite bed and they move about in the plains without any fixed course. But when the rains come, naturally for lack of a bed, they spread over wide areas and cause this suffering to a large number of people.

1 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We will resume the debate at 2-30 this afternoon.

MESSAGE FROM THE LOK SABHA

THE INDTAN INCOME-TAX (AMENDMENT BILL, 1954

SECRETARY: Sir, I have to report to the House the following message received from the Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary of the Lok Sabha: —

"In accordance with the provisions of Rule 132 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha, I am directed to enclose herewith a copy of the Indian Income-tax (Amendment) Bill, 1954, as passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 18th September, 1954.

The Speaker has certified that this Bill is a Money Bill within the meaning of article 110 of the Constitution of India."

I lay the Bill on the Table.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The House will meet again at 2-30 P.M.

The House then adjourned for lunch at one of the clock.

(MOTION RE: FLOOD SITUATION K- IN INDIA—continued.

The House re-assembled after lunch at half past two of the clock, MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

DR. N. DUTT: I have mentioned the rivers that have been causing misery to this country.

SHRI S. BANERJEE (West Bengal): There is no quorum, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We have got quorum. Yes, please go on.

DR. N. DUTT: Now of these places Siliguri has not been very much affected because it is on a higher level. But Mahananda is a menace to this town. Some damage has been caused by the erection of the railway workshop on its bed. So I think the Government should give Hue attention to this difficulty. This river is now threatening the bridge. Now, the river Panchnai has suddenly changed its course and has overflowed Hill Cart Road and uprooted the Assam Link Railway near the Siliguri Station (North). And I am glad to learn from the Minister in charge that he has already sanctioned an embankment there. As regards Jalpaiguri, it is affected by the river Teesta which descends from Sikkim. Its speed is about 14 miles per hour. It is coming from 21,000 feet height, fed by snow-clad mountains. In the months of June, July and August, this river flooded several portions of the district and made several breaches in the railway embankments. And the water level on the 31st of July rose very high. But fortunately on account of the alerting system some people could be shifted and saved. Still it inundated three or four *bustees*. By the end of August almost two-thirds of Jalpaiguri was inundated. The Teesta river is a real menace to the town. We have drawn the attention of the Government to the menace of the changing of the course of the river Teesta. It is going to join Karla through Dhardhara. This tendency should be stopped. Now river Kaljani of Western Duars eroded 200 houses and damaged Ramsai and Jadabpur tea estates and breached the railway embankment. It has deposited silt from 2 ft. to 5 ft. on the paddy fields. The Tondur tea estate has been covered by sand which is 2 ft. to 3 ft. above the tea bushes. The next river is Jaldhaka. It is a mighty river in Cooch-Bihar. It