

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): About 18,000 people are living in Howrah maidan, and the situation is so bad that people are dying due to epidemics and starvation. It is a very serious situation.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: Does the hon. Minister want us to go on hunger strike here before he admits the seriousness of the situation? What is the meaning of this kind of a statement that it is not a matter of urgent public importance? I have seen with my own eyes people dying just on the platform of the Sealdah station, in the railway shed and before the First Class railway booking office. Do you ask me to believe that this is not a matter of urgent public importance (*Interruption*).

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: I am only making a statement that the allegation the hon. Member is making, that deaths have taken place due to malnutrition and starvation, is unfounded.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: That statement is not based on facts, it is not correct and it does not bear any correspondence to facts.

Mr. Speaker: However important the subject might be, there is no meaning in going on making statements and counter-statements.

The Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs (Shri Jawaharlal Nehru): The question before you, Sir, appears to me to be a simple one. I have no doubt at all that great misery is caused to these people on the Howrah maidan or at the Sealdah station. These people can get relief the moment they are in the camp. We cannot give relief in the streets or elsewhere, and the moment they go back they get relief. If it is said that the camp is not a good camp, it is not properly looked after, or relief is not properly given, it is a matter for enquiry in the camp. We have made the enquiries. Newspaper correspondents have gone there, others have gone there, and hon. Members

can go there and see. We say it is a good camp and that such little complaints as there may be can be dealt with there. They cannot be dealt with as people marching up to a heavily populated city like Calcutta, sitting on the Howrah maidan or Sealdah station precincts and trying to compel the Government to feed them there. Bengal, as everybody knows, has suffered greatly in many ways, and when a huge influx of refugees comes we can only settle them in other places. Bengal has settled as many as it could; there is no room for more. We have made, with the help of other State Governments, arrangements to settle them elsewhere. We are making them and it is a continuing problem. Then, if people go there and are induced to go there they get into difficulties. We are very sorry for it. It is right for them to go back and get all the help in food or otherwise they can. By sitting there and expecting that the help should go to them they merely aggravate the problem, the difficulties and miseries, and do not solve the problem at all.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: My submission is.....

Mr. Speaker: I have heard enough about it. So far as this matter is concerned, when it has been expressly stated by the hon. Minister...

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: Sir, I rise on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. When I am addressing the House there is no question of any point of order. So far as this matter is concerned, it is not denied that those people who are in the Bettiah Camp are being given the relief. Those who have gone out of the camp, evidently they want relief even though they are not in the camp and are outside. So far as that matter is concerned, it does not appear to be any breach of the undertaking that has been given by the Central Government or their obligations to these refugees. Now, so far as deaths are concerned, it may be, if

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they starve they must die. If they are not in the camp and do not get food by their own earnings or on the terms and conditions imposed by the Government that only those persons in the camp will be given relief, then they take the risk. However, as has been stated by the hon. Minister for Rehabilitation, there are ample opportunities to discuss this matter. 14th, 15th and 16th have been allotted for discussion on the Presidential Address. If these matters are so important—of course, they are matters of public importance, I do not deny that—there are ample opportunities, and it has been a convention of the House that, whenever there is an opportunity to discuss such matters as these the normal work of the House will not be adjourned. Therefore, I am not willing to give consent to this adjournment motion.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: May I submit, Sir, that it is not a question of relief as such to the inmates of rehabilitation camps that I have raised in this adjournment motion; it is a question of some interim relief being given to them on humanitarian grounds. They are persons who are under the charge of the Central Government. It is not a question of the general relief that is being given to the refugees. We are prepared, Sir, if I may make a submission, to persuade these people to go back to the camp, but for the interim period some relief will have to be given.

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: They will get relief, not interim relief, immediately they go there.

An hon. Member: You brought them there.

Shri T. K. Chaudhuri: I did not bring them out; I was at some other place at that time. I have some sense of responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Hon. Members ought not to talk to one another like this here.

So far as the point of order is concerned, I am afraid I do not see any point of order. As soon as they get back to Bettiah they will get relief and the Government is not willing to give any interim relief outside the camp. Relief will be given to them immediately they get back to the camp. There is no point of order in this.

FOOD SCARCITY CONDITIONS IN WEST BENGAL

Mr. Speaker: I have received notice of another adjournment motion relating to the situation created in West Bengal by the systematic refusal of the Union Food Ministry to take notice of the conditions of acute scarcity bordering on famine, obtaining for the past one month in 11 districts out of 14 in West Bengal, as a result of successive floods and the consecutive failures of four main food crops in the major part of the State, including the Rabi Crop of this year and other reasons, and to ensure an adequate supply of foodgrains or even the minimum quantity requisitioned by the State Government of West Bengal.

As a matter of fact, a notice was given by Shri Kasliwal, yesterday or day before yesterday, asking for opportunity to raise a debate on this matter of the food situation in the country at large, particularly in West Bengal. There are also a number of questions which have been tabled and I have admitted all those questions. Let us ascertain from the hon. Minister what the present situation is. I shall allow and permit all those hon. Members who have tabled questions and who wanted to give notice and who have given notice to raise a debate, to put supplementary questions to elicit facts. I have put them all together and I have allowed all the hon. Members to put questions. Further, these matters can again be raised on the 14th, 15th and 16th. Still, if these matters are considered so important, I will consider and see whether any opportunity can be