

18.54 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Haryana Government had demanded Rs. 1800 crore. If the hon'ble Minister say that we have not demanded, then today we demand that Rs. 1800 crore should be allocated to Haryana. If the Minister, who claims to be the well-wisher of the farmers, give this type of false statement, it is very sad.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I demand that the funds demanded by the Haryana Government should be immediately given to it. But alongwith it, I would like to appeal that it is a common collective appeal. It depends on time, but if we see history, as we have heard from our grandparents that there was a time when people used to eat bark of trees at the time of drought. Today, the hon'ble Minister himself has agreed that our godowns are full of foodgrains. We are not short of foodgrains. Today, we are in need of only 23 million tonnes of foodgrains, while we are having 69-70 million tonnes of foodgrains in store.

Haryana is a State, after Punjab which gives maximum contribution to Central pool of foodgrains. In that regard, I would like to say that our water management system is not good. Many big projects are lying pending. If we connect the basins of cauvery and Ganga, it will be beneficial for the country. The Supreme Court has given the ruling that SYL should be constructed before 15 January. But as per date nothing has been done over there. Can the construction work of SYL canal be completed in such a short time? I would like to submit to the Government that pending water projects, particularly SYL project should be completed in the stipulated time limit so that the farmers of Haryana, particularly of Mahendergarh and Narnaul of Southern Haryana may get its benefit. There is no dispute with any State. It is the Supreme Court's ruling.

In the end, I would like to say that sometimes ruler and administrator doubt whether they will be able to reform the system with strict compliance to rules, but I would like to say that in view of public interest rules should be strictly complied to in case of SYL canal. If done so, it will be in the larger interest of the country. You are repeatedly giving me signal, that time is over. While expressing my

gratitude to you, I conclude and appeal that we all should work together to tackle the drought situation. The opposition has some responsibilities in this regard, at the same time. Government has more responsibilities. The poor suffers more, therefore, special attention should be paid towards the poor. With these words, I conclude.

MR. SPEAKER : Now, the hon'ble Prime Minister will intervene.

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE)** : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have not risen to give reply to the discussion, the discussion will continue. . . .  
(Interruptions)

SHRI PRAKASH YASHWANT AMBEDKAR (Akola) : Sir, after Prime Minister's intervention, nobody will sit in the House.

MR. SPEAKER : I will be here, I will listen.

SHRI ATAL BIHAR VAJPAYEE : My colleague, the hon'ble Minister of Agriculture will give reply to the discussion. Shri Yadavji has presented some information in regard to the situation arisen due to drought during the discussion. It shows that drought is widespread, severe and Union and State Governments are making efforts to handle this situation.

19.00 hrs.

Sometimes this allegation hurts me that Union Government is discriminate among the States on political ground. I deny this allegation. If it is the part of politics, then I do not want to say anything but during last three-four years, we have not discriminated among States on any matter. The fact is that we have taken initiative in helping those States, where BJP Government is not in power. . . .(Interruptions) NDA moves with the cooperation of regional parties. . . .(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Ramdasji, please let him speak. You may please sit down.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : I have some figures with me for comparison. I do not claim that I am the winner

[Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee]

in any argument but when allegations are levelled, the befitting reply has to be given. Severe drought hit the country in 1987 also. I would like to mention the steps taken by the then Government.

In 1987, 8-7 lakh tonnes of foodgrains were distributed under different employment schemes, whereas in the current year we have distributed 19-25 lakh tonnes of foodgrains free under 'Sampoorna Gramine Rozgar Yojana'. In 1987, Rs. 842 crore were spent on employment generation, whereas in the current year, already 2000 crore rupees have been spent, and more will be spent in future. . . .(Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN) : Everybody listened to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. Now would you not listen when the hon. Prime Minister is speaking? She would speak later on.

MR. SPEAKER : You please keep quite.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, effective steps have been taken in view of the severity of the famine this year. Centre is fulfilling its obligations and is providing assistance to the States. The financial condition of several States is not satisfactory. Hence while formulating the schemes we are paying attention to the fact that the interests of the States should not be neglected.

A provision for 10 thousand crore rupees has been made for the Food for Work Scheme wherein States would be provided the foodgrains worth 5 thousand crore rupees annually. The remaining Rs. 500 crore is to be given as cash to the States. Similarly the State Governments can implemented various small irrigation projects and water harvesting schemes. We want that such schemes be completed in time so that the people may get relief from the drought.

Sir, steps have been taken in the entire country to provide some relief to the farmers regarding the burden of loans. The interest realisation on the crop loan has been stopped. We have said that the loans on crop along with

the interest thereon would not be realised during the current financial year. The Government have announced for providing relief in the payment of crop loans in view of the severity of the drought. This benefit would be available to all the drought affected areas.

We do not want the issue of drought to be politicised. There is no dearth of the will power, rather it is strong. Decisions are also being taken without delay but the root cause of the problems coming to the fore at various places in the system have been received in legacy and we have failed to rectify in the last four years. We provided foodgrains and it became available to the States but the problem was how to send it to the districts, tehsils and the villages. Some States stated their problem in that though the centre is providing free foodgrains to them, who would bear the cost of its transportation when they lack sufficient funds to meet it. This is the problem and the decision have been taken keeping this thing in view.

I would like that we should consider by sidelining our political interests even though the politics goes in for the entire 365 days and the elections also do take place every now and then. The issue of vote also comes to the fore at some place or the other but in view of the severity of drought it can be said that unless States and the Centre cooperate with each other and all the political parties cooperate even in the centre, it would be very difficult to overcome this crisis. I would like to appeal all to extend their cooperation in combating this drought.

Shrimati Sonia Gandhiji said that the all party meeting has not taken place. Now a days even the meeting of the Chief Minister is an all party meet. The meeting of the Agriculture Ministers had taken place. We maintain contact and exchange our views and we have also extended our cooperation to the States which have constituted their all party committees. We should avoid the instinct of playing politics and I do not know as to how much we can do so in electoral years.

All of us are suffering from the same disease and I shudder to think as how far our country would face this dreaded drought. Drought strikes every two to three years. There are no foodgrains, fodder and the drinking water and a permanent solution to this problem be found out.

Though this issue was considered after Independence but desirable attention was not paid to this issue. May be the dearth of resources was the reason of failure. Effort to link all rivers can be made. Still only 40 per cent land is irrigated and the rest is still without water. Water is life and if enough attention had been paid earlier towards the various water harvesting projects situation would have been different. However, I would like to urge upon the House to cooperate me in this regard. All of you should decide collectively. I assure you that there would not be lack of funds in the project for linking all the rivers.

When the projects to broaden highways and construct new ones was started, doubts were raised regarding the mobilisation of funds at such a large scale. The money is in the country, the need is to spend it properly. Rivers can be linked and the talks can be held with the neighbouring countries. There is a need to raise this issue at a war footing. How long would we continue to face the drought? Allegations and counter allegations would follow and the life would become even more miserable. Now, the foodgrains production has increased and our farmer and the scientists deserve congratulations for this. However, the news of starvation deaths are being reported despite the availability of foodgrains. The truth of the news is only revealed later on. Clarifications are given but what impression does it convey to the psyche of the people abroad and they are forced to ponder as to what kind of country this is where the people are dying of hunger despite the fact that the godowns are filled with foodgrains.

This is not an issue of party. Today different States are being ruled by different parties. We have to take every Government along with us and extend our support to all as well seek everyone's support. However, the starvation deaths lead to controversies. One part of media is interested in such happenings to keep their newspapers running. This is not right and I do not want to dwell in it detail.

Such an incident has also taken place in Orissa. Somebody had gone there to take a photograph. When he got the news that a person had died due to starvation but to his dismay he found that there was no death and he declined to take photograph. Rather he waited for him

to die. Later it become clear that there was no possibility of starvation death there. However, ensuring the proper distribution of foodgrains is the responsibility of the system and we are somewhat lacking on this count. We will have to find a solution for it.

However, I was talking about linking rivers. Supreme Court has taken initiative only later on after our meeting in the Centre had taken place. One presentation took place and the Government and the Ministry was asked to formulate a scheme. I invite Soniaji to cooperate with us in this work. This would change the destiny of our country. It will take time to link all the rivers and to find a solution to drought problem but we have enough time to accomplish our task. A task force on Cauveri and Ganga has been set up.

Now-a-days I am associated with the Cauvery dispute and the dilemma is whether to hear Karnataka's arguments or look at the Tamil Nadu's interests. Court though arbitrate, takes a lot of time. How can we resolve these riparian disputes? The decision of the Supreme Court should be accepted but how long the issue of sharing the river water would remain as the bone of contention between us. I am of the view that the entire House should start thinking and making progress in this direction and it is what we want to convey through the session and Government's programme.

There are several other issues and I would not say much on it. I would like to reiterate that drought be kept aside of the politics. Drought be viewed as a humanitarian issue. There is no fodder for the animals. Though we have been supplying it yet it is not adequate. Similarly there is a dearth of drinking water. Transportation of the free drinking water, fodder and foodgrains is being done by Railways. There is no shortage of foodgrains in the country but there is a problem of its distribution and I invite that all hon. Members give their suggestions to improve the condition in their respective constituencies to the State Governments and send the copy of the same to the centre also. The menace of the drought is going to last long. Now new crop is to be sown. How much losses will be suffered is hard to estimate but we should be ready to face all the circumstances. I wish that the discussion prove fruitful from that point of view.