

17.44 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

[English]

**Statement by the Minister of Agriculture in the House on 26th July, 1989, Regarding current Flood situation in the Country and the relief measures undertaken by Government**

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, we go to the next item—further discussion on the statement made by the Minister of Agriculture in the House on the 26th July, 1989 regarding the current flood situation in the country and the relief measures undertaken by the Government, raised by Shri Harish Rawat on 1st August, 1989. Shri N. Tombi Singh to continue his speech.

SHRIN. TOMBISINGH (Inner Manipur). Mr. Chairman, Sir, yesterday I was called exactly at the strike of 6 o'clock and as soon as I rose in my seat, I was requested by the Chair to continue today. So, technically and practically I have been on my legs since 6 o'clock yesterday. Therefore, I deserve a little more sympathy today.

The House has been over-flooded. For the last six hours we have been discussing this Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. With so much of eagerness and enthusiasm we have been discussing that. Now we have switched over to the problem of floods. We cannot exaggerate its magnitude today.

Today in the North-Eastern Section almost all the 7 sister States specifically Assam and Manipur are submerged with flood waters. Sir, I represent the State of Manipur and my voice is the voice of the real victims of my State. If I want to go back to my home, I cannot reach my own home today. I have to wade through waist deep water to reach my own home. This is the position. This flood is unprecedented in memorable history. Sir, the valley of Manipur is like the bottom of a bowl and the hill ranges look like the walls of the bowl. The whole valley looks

like to big lake. Now, if we look at the valley from above, it looks like a big lake. Such is the situation now.

According to our history and legend, Manipur Valley was under water some 2000 years ago. It got dried and became habitable only after a super human engineer drained the water through a tunnel of the Burma Valley. The written history of the Manipur Valley started in 33 A.D. This is the evidence of the historical claims. Since last Friday, that is, for the last five days the entire Valley has been flooded and the plight of the people is unbearable. There is no electricity, there is no relay of TV programmes, there is no newspaper and the administration, commercial business and educational institutions are not functioning and they have come to a stand-still. It is very difficult to move from one place to another.

Sir, there are three major rivers flowing through the Manipur Valley. One is Nambul which has flooded my residential area. I live in Ward No. 6 of Imphal Municipality. This area is under waist deep water. In the lean season, this river is harmless. It looks so clam and timid. But during the flood, it is furious and turbulent. This river is in flood almost every quarter and in this particular season, similar flood occurred twice in the same month, that is, in the month of July. In the first week of July, we had a big flood which submerged the residential and commercial areas of Imphal town. Only a small portion of the valley was affected. The other river is known as Imphal river which is slightly bigger than Nambul river. But this was also in spate and breached its embankments at three points. Then Imphal river itself with full reinforcement over-flooded the Nambul River and this has still worsened the situation. The third river is Iril river which is still bigger than Imphal river. This was also in flood and breached its embankments at certain points submerging the eastern parts of Imphal town. So, the breaches occurred in these three rivers and the water from these rivers submerged the entire valley.

Sir, there are two aspects of the floods.

One is the seasonal flood like the present one and the other is the permanent floods occurring around the Loktak Lake. This position has arisen due to Government's efforts to maintain a certain level of water in Loktak lake in order to supply water regularly to the Loktak Hydro Electric Project round the year. This has resulted in submerging the surrounding areas of paddy fields and other inhabited areas. This situation is continuing every time. I have taken up this matter with the authorities and also drawn the attention of the Government of India to this aspect of the matter and requested them that a through survey be made to find out the damage caused to life and property, how much paddy lands have been submerged, how many villages have been affected due to floods so that the people could be rehabilitated and given all help.

This year when all the rivers are in flood, particularly in Bishenpur District which is also in my constituency—4/5ths of the entire Manipur valley is in my constituency, I am in touch during the last five days with different portions of the Valley, different District headquarters — there are there districts in my constituency, I am very much pained because it is in a state of helplessness because when the Chief Minister left on hearing this news, he went from Delhi on Saturday to see the situation there. He could not land at Imphal Airport the same day because of the damage done to the communication facilities and bad weather. With much difficulty, he had to divert to Silcher where from he got a helicopter and reached Imphal the next day. On the same day, I am told, the Governor and the Chief Minister had an aerial view of the lake-like Valley and they were overwhelmed with grief because the estimated value of the damage caused by this flood has been much more than Rs. 100 crores. We have heard of cases of death in Maharashtra and other places, and in Mizoram, in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya these floods hit several persons. In Manipur, of course, we have not heard any cases of death; only two or three cases of death have been reported, but I have to confirm it. But the position is, two-thirds of the population of the

State live in death because they are helpless, they cannot go from place to place for any activity. In such a situation what is needed is that we should rush with relief material. Also, as soon as the flood water dries up, we should follow up with medical assistance as we are afraid that epidemic may spread in this Valley wherever the flood has come. The southern portion of the Valley will continue to face the fury of the flood because the northern portion will be drying up because it is a very acute slope. In the southern portion where the water will be just stagnant for many months, the people will be suffering and for such an area a separate programme has to be drawn. This is a measure for immediate relief. you can imagine a State where there is complete darkness for five days and all the activities are at standstill for a week. This is something very intolerable and very frightening.

So far as the temporary measures are concerned, I am told that soon after my presentation of this calamity in this House under Rule 377 on Monday, I met Bhajanlal Ji and he assured me that all assistance will be given and I am told that Mr. Rajesh Pilot has gone to see the flood situation in the North-Eastern States. He has seen Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, but so far I have not heard of his covering Manipur yet. If he has not done it, I would request the Minister that Manipur should not go by default because it is suffering in a very very unique way. This is so far as the temporary relief is concerned.

About the long-term plan, to control these floods, I had drawn the attention of the Government of India to it through so many motions and also speeches and I had from time to time received assurances that adequate steps would be taken. But one thing has been very disappointing. I will give one example. There is a project known as Singda. This is partly a State project and partly a Central project, wholly sponsored and financed by the Centre but undertaken by the State and the contractor is NPCC. This was started in 1976 to control the Nambul river which has caused repeated floods to the Imphal town and the estimated time of

[Sh. N. Tombi Singh]

completion was 1979. Now it is 1989 and there is no sight of its completion. This has not even gone half way. I do not know whether there is any basic defect in the design itself or any other problem of labour or financial insufficiency. Now, the fact is that this project has not been completed and this has resulted in the non-control of this furious Nambul river. If it is controlled the floods in a portion of the Manipur valley, particularly affecting the commercial area of the town of Imphal will be controlled. Similarly, all the rivers flowing from the foot-hills of Manipur valley are very close to the valley and if any flood comes there is no time for warning. So, the only solution to control these floods is to control them at their sources of origin. Now, there is no such plan. I would request the Government of India and also through the Government of India, the State Government because the Centre has to intervene in the problem since it is not merely a State problem, but also of the Centre. I want to say a few words about the Barak river. This Barak river incidentally originates from the Manipur hills. It is a gift of Manipur hills. But we do not get either the havoc or benefit from this river. This Barak valley floods should be controlled. It is rampaging this valley year in and year out and this year also the entire valley and the Silchar city is under water. The people have been asked to evacuate to safer places. So, in order to control the havoc that is created in Barak valley, we should control them at their sources, i.e. in the Manipur hills we can control them with convenience. This control will give huge amount of power and this will benefit not only the State but the whole nation, because huge quantity of water flows out and creates havoc in the Barak valley. This can be controlled in the Manipur hill area. This is a very important suggestion which the Government of India should take into consideration. The last point I want to make is that the surrounding areas of the Loktak lake which has submerged permanently so many villages and paddy crops, should be studied by a Central team so that we shall be able to compensate the people those who are affected and we can just give

them alternative settlement. This, I think is a very urgent problem and I hope that the Government will give serious thought to it.

17.59 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji): Sir, the impact of floods in the States of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh have been tremendous. My State of Goa which borders Maharashtra is practically cut off as far as rail and road links are concerned. The buses on the road line were kept stranded for more than two or three days. By road, the passengers have not been able to cross the border into the State of Goa. In Maharashtra, especially in three districts more than 400 people have lost their lives and railway line between Bombay and Pune was disrupted like anything. About one thousand fishermen were missing on the Western coast in Maharashtra and other States. Therefore, Sir, this was the impact of the floods which we are discussing now and which has been raised by my colleague Shri Harish Rawat which has been raised by my colleague Shri Harish Rawat. No doubt, the entire country is concerned about the flood situation in the country. Congress-I Members in their own humble way have contributed the salary of one month for flood relief and tried to help the flood victims.

Last time when the flood situation was discussed in this House, I had raised one vital issue as to why the flood should be the concern of the Agriculture Ministry alone. Is it directly connected with the Ministry of Agriculture alone? If it concerns the other related Ministries, they must also be represented in the House through the Ministers. If buildings have collapsed, the Ministry of Urban Development should be represented in this House and they should hear the Members speak on various aspects.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You can continue next time.