

country. It is rampant everywhere. The entire society is in its grip and it has destroyed our moral character, ideals, principles, etc. In such a situation, Government should make every effort to eradicate it. If the Government show any carelessness and laxity in this regard, then all our schemes of development work and for providing relief to the poor will not succeed and we shall not be able to achieve the 'Swaraj' of Bapu's dreams in which the people of the poorest section of the society will get the same facilities as are available to kings and emperors.

[English]

- (iv) Need to provide central assistance to the people affected by severe drought in Kalahandi district of Orissa.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI (Bhubaneswar): With your permission, Sir, I wish to raise the following matter of urgent public importance under Rule 377:

The entire State of Orissa was severely affected by drought. Kalahandi is one of the districts in Orissa which is 450 kilometres from Bhubaneswar and is on the Orissa-Madhya Pradesh border which faces perpetual drought conditions in most of its areas. Drought in this district has now created conditions of severe scarcity. Agricultural unemployment is high. About 60,000 people in the Boden block and about 20,000 persons in the Komna block of this district are now in starving conditions. Nearly 25,000 people in the Sinapalli block and another 15,000 in the Khariar block are in dire straits today. There is absolutely no work for them. People do not have any belongings in their houses except a few utensils. Several people have already left their homes for Raipur and other places of Madhya Pradesh in search of work.

I urge upon the Central Government to send immediately a Central Team to the District to study the gravity of the situation and to allot adequate funds for opening large number of mid-day meal centres and also for starting drought relief work in every village. And, Sir, I am very happy that the Prime Minister is going to that

area.

- (v) Need to provide financial assistance to farmers affected by devastating floods in Idukki district of Kerala.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Idukki): Sir, many parts of Kerala were seriously affected by a devastating flood in which about 72 people lost their lives and thousands of houses were destroyed. Heavy damage to the agricultural and cash crops has occurred, dealing a crushing blow to the economy of the State.

Idukki district had to bear the major brunt of the nature's fury. Torrential rain and landslides have destroyed vast areas of standing crops. Idukki is the single district which contributes 70 per cent of the cardamom and 30 per cent of the pepper exported from India. Almost the entire quantum of tea produced in Kerala comes from this district. Most of the major cash crops such as pepper, cardamom, coffee, rubber, coconut etc. have suffered serious damage. According to an estimate, in this district, 12,000 hectares of pepper, 11,000 hectares of cardamom, 1,000 hectares of rubber and 400 hectares of coconut have been damaged. Similarly, 5,500 hectares of ginger and 5,400 hectares of banana have also been damaged. The total loss due to the damage of these crops alone in Idukki is estimated to be a little over Rs. 40 crores.

The loss of these valuable foreign exchange earning crops has crushed the economy of Kerala State and Idukki district in particular. It may be remembered that the impact of the damage of perennial crops such as these will be felt for many years, because, it takes several years for these crops to give yield. Widespread damage of such crops means less of production over a long period of time. In these circumstances, the Central Government should provide liberal assistance to the affected farmers. Planting materials, fertilizers and pesticides should be supplied to them free of cost and the entire cost of labour for soil conservation should be paid as grant. The entire cost of the rehabilitation should be met by the Central Government. I would request the

[*Prof. P. J. Kurien*]

Government to take immediate steps in this regard.

- (vi) Need to set up T.V. Relay/Transmission centres in Balasore and Baripada districts of Orissa during the current financial year.

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore): Sir, the district of Mayurbhanj in Orissa, being purely a tribal one and the district of Balasore in the State of Orissa being a flood prone and cyclone-affected district, establishment of TV Relay/Transmission centres is most essential to educate the illiterate tribals and the rural masses of both these districts. In addition, the district of Balasore has been well-placed on the defence map of the country, due to the location of biggest Proof and Experimental Establishment, observation centre, and the unique National Test Range, which is the second of its kind in the world and needs special priority in the matter of TV net-work and telecommunications. The State Government of Orissa has requested the Centre to establish one low-power TV transmission/relay centre at Balasore, the headquarter town of Balasore district and at Baripada, the headquarter town of Mayurbhanj district in the 7th Plan period, giving topmost priority.

In such circumstances, I would request the hon. Minister for Information and Broadcasting to sanction low-power TV Relay/Transmission Centre—one each at Balasore and Baripada in the State of Orissa in the current year, to fulfil the long-cherished demand of the users, who have purchased hundreds of TV sets from 1982 and kept them idle.

- (vi) Need to direct the Reserve Bank of India to remit the old debts of co-operative Banks to benefit the small and marginal farmers of West Bengal.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura): Before I raise it, I want to draw the attention of Mr. Janardhana Poojary to this.

Due to repeated natural calamities such as devastating flood in a large area of West

Bengal in 1978, severe drought in the said State in 1982-83, serious crop damage due to pests and insects and widespread flood in 1984, a very large number of small and marginal peasants have become defaulters to cooperative banks and other nationalised banks and are being deprived of any further benefit of loans and other assistances. The situation has been greatly aggravated by the fact that in many cases the debts have become three times more than the principal and consequently have gone beyond the capacity of repayment by the poor debtors. Most distressed are the marginal farmers who are often below the poverty line, as they are deprived of almost all benefits of subsidy schemes and are totally thrown at the mercy of moneylenders. The situation in many other States is also not very different.

In view of this critical situation, I urge upon the Minister of Finance to direct the Reserve Bank of India to remit the old debts of cooperative banks at least for the marginal farmers so that the cooperatives can free the marginal farmers from remaining defaulters. I also urge that the old debts of marginal farmers in other banks also be re-examined and such debts be remitted. In any case as the preliminary step where the interest has become more than the principal for the small and marginal farmers, the interest must be remitted. For this purpose, if necessary, funds should be released from the Central Debt Relief Fund. I earnestly request the Finance Minister to consider this question urgently.

- (viii) Need to set up a steel plant at Vijaynagar in Karnataka.

DR. V. VENKATESH (Kolar): A decade ago, our late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi laid the foundation stone of a steel plant at Vijayanagar in Karnataka. But unfortunately one reason or the other is given and the work on the steel plant is delayed. There is absolutely no problem of infrastructural facilities like water, electricity etc. In fact the Chief Minister of Karnataka has announced in the State Assembly on 6th April, 1985, that he is prepared to supply the required quantity of electricity at any moment as per the demand by the