

bone of every activity whether it is agriculture or industry. I would request the Government to approve the third stage of the Bhatinda Thermal Plant, third stage of the Ropar Thermal Plant and also a gas-based power plant to that State. They should also come out and sanction the atomic power plant which is hanging for the last decade or so. An Expert Committee has already toured the country and they have selected the site at Patran in Patiala District and Chanikaur Sahib in the Ropar District. They should give justice to that State instead of having political considerations instead of seeing everything from the political angle they should come out with broad-mindedness to help that State in its endeavours for the development of power and industry and other things.

15.58 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

On the other hand, the Government is spending a lot of money on the security forces on the para-military forces on par and that is a big drain on the resources of the State. They are always banking upon the security forces for the solution of the problem in their State. Basically, this problem is a creation of the Government itself. Instead of spending so much on ammunition, on equipment, on the security forces, they should solve the Punjab problem and divert the amount which is being used for security forces, on the development of the country.

Recently, State has suffered hundreds of crores of rupees due to floods. Property, live-stocks, human lives, roads and everything worth, perhaps, three to four hundred crores of rupees have been lost. Patiala and Sangrur districts are the worst sufferers.

I would request the Hon. Agriculture Minister and the Central Government to give liberal aid and assistance to the people of Punjab who have suffered a lot due to the recent floods.

16.00 hrs.

In the end I would request the Govern-

ment to announce the once thousand crore development project or the package deal for the State. They should also give liberal aid and assistance to the State so that it tries to stand on its feet because it has in the recent past suffered a lot due to uncertain situations and conditions in the country.

I cannot support these Demands. I would request the Government to mobilise its resources by taking stern and strong action against economic offenders and smugglers and also take stern action to root out corruption from higher political circles.

I thank you Sir for giving me this opportunity.

16.01 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: DAMAGE DUE TO
EARTHQUAKE

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BHAJAN LAL): Sir. As Honourable Members are aware, an earthquake shock struck Eastern and North-eastern parts of the country at 0439 hrs on Sunday, the 21st August, 1988. Its epi-centre lay about 70 kms. northeast of Darbhanga near the Bihar/Nepal border. It had an intensity of 6.5 on Richter Scale and a focal depth of 20 kms. Another tremor, of somewhat less intensity and with approximately the same epicentre, followed 15 minutes later at 0454 hrs.

The most serious impact of the earthquake fell on Dhar. The worst affected districts in Bihar are Darbhanga, Madurai and Munger. The earthquake also affected Saharsa, Motihari, Beth and Hazari Bagh. Besides Bihar, the earthquake impacted on West Bengal, Assam, Sikkim and Tripura. Shocks were felt in Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kursiang and Calcutta in West Bengal; but loss of life has been reported only from Bihar. No information has been received of damage to National Highways. Nor is there any information about damage to major irrigation projects. Also, it would appear that no major damage has been caused to public

[Sh. Bhajan Lal]
buildings.

On receiving information about the earthquake, the Prime Minister rushed yesterday to the worst affected areas of Bihar. He was accompanied by Union Ministers of Health, Urban Development and myself. He held initial discussions with the Chief Minister and his colleagues at Patna airport. He then proceeded to Darbhanga, Madhubani and Munger. At all these places, he met and talked to a large number of people, including those who had come into the towns from rural areas. Flying at low levels by helicopter, he made an aerial survey of the 3 most seriously affected blocks in Madhubani district: Jhajharpur, Andhthrari and Rajnagar, as also river embankments in the area. At Darbhanga and Munger, the Prime Minister visited the hospitals where injured have been admitted. In Darbhanga he also visited the Medical College Students Hostel which was surely damaged and the *madarsa* which had collapsed. The Prime Minister was deeply moved by the loss of life, the large number of persons injured and the damage to property caused by the earthquake.

Upto 9 P.M. yesterday, the Government of Bihar have received reports of 164 persons dead and 1209 injured. It is anticipated that, as further reports come in from rural and remote areas, the toll might rise but probably not to the levels earlier apprehended.

The Prime Minister announced a grant of Rs. 30 lakh from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. From this grant, Rs. 10,000 will be given to each of the families of the deceased. Assistance will also be extended to those who have injured and have lost their dwellings. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that to tackle the situation the voluntary agencies and the people will themselves come forward.

The Prime Minister made enquiries at the hospitals he visited about the medical assistance being extended to the patients. There was a reported shortage of medicines

in the hospital in Munger. At his instance the Union Minister of Health stayed behind at Patna to make arrangements for all medical requirements to be met.

Detailed information about damage to dwellings is being collected. The Prime Minister has directed the State Government and the Union Minister of Urban Development, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, to make a full assessment of the damage caused to property with a view to extending the required assistance including the preparation for a Special Scheme for assistance to the economically weaker sections whose dwellings have been seriously damaged by the earthquake.

Immediately on receipt of information about the earthquake, the Prime Minister directed all Departments and Ministries concerned to establish contact with local authorities involved in relief work, to take stock of the situation and coordinate the relief assistance with a view to providing succour to the affected people. On Sunday itself the Agriculture Ministry had established contact with all the affected States to ascertain the extent of damage and to make sure that the necessary measures are taken promptly by the State Governments.

The Ministry of Agriculture convened a meeting of the Crisis Management Group which include representatives of all Departments/ Ministries concerned to assess the situation and to extent help to the State Governments wherever necessary. The Ministry of Defence has despatched 5 Army Columns for assisting the Bihar Government in rescue operations.

A Column of Engineering was despatched to Bihar by air yesterday. The Ministry of Health has sent a team of 8 Specialists from New Delhi to Bihar along with essential medicines.

It has been ascertained from the Bihar Government that adequate stocks of essential commodities, including petroleum products are available in the earthquake affected

areas.

The Inter-Ministerial Crisis Management Group in the Ministry of Agriculture is meeting every day to monitor the relief operations and to provide necessary support and direction. The Committee of Secretaries headed by the Cabinet Secretary reviewed the situation yesterday and will meet at regular intervals to oversee the relief operations.

It is well known that severe earthquakes of this type are often followed by aftershocks. These have to be regarded in the proper perspective and the need not cause any undue concern.

The immediate tasks before us are to provide medical attention to the injured, extend assistance to the bereaved families and provide relief and help to rebuild the damaged dwellings and to rehabilitate the affected people. As a result of the Prime Minister's visit, the people's spirits are high and their self-confidence fortified.

In a natural calamity of this type the sympathy of this House and of the entire Nation is, of course, with those who have been affected by the earthquake. I have no doubt that the nation will meet this challenge with a stout heart and will all the resources at its command. I would like to assure the House that the Government will take every possible step to see that adequate relief is effectively provided most expeditiously to the affected people.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: Sir, there should be a discussion on it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You give a proper notice for that.

16.10 hrs

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (GENERAL), 1988-89 - CONTD.

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House will resume discussion on the Supplemen-

tary Demands for Grants in respect of the Budget (General) for 1988-89. Already we have taken four hours whereas the time allotted was only two hours. I would request the hon. Members to be very brief and finish his speech in five minutes as the Minister has also to reply. Shri N. Tombi Singh...

SHRI N. TOMBI SINGH (Inner Manipur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I appreciate your desire that the Members should be very brief. I have also been advised by my Whip to be brief. I will confine only to a point which I would like to mention taking advantage of this discussion on the budget, although this is a supplementary budget. Here is a subject which I can discuss with some convenience and justification under the general discussion on a budget.

This regime of the Prime Minister is a regime of solutions. We have solved so many intricate, tricky and knotty problems. We have solved the problem in Assam by the Assam accord. Tripura has been settled. Mizoram was settled long back. A few days back, we have settled the Gorkha Liberation Movement. We can also mention the Punjab accord. If things have not come to our satisfaction so far out of that accord, it is not the Government to be blamed. There have been other factors.

I am raising a measure which does not involve any expenditure under the Home Ministry, although the Finance Ministry is not directly affected. I will request the hon. Finance Minister to convey this to the Home Minister. This is about opening of the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Many of our friends - leaders belonging both to the Opposition and the ruling side - do not know the implications of the demand for reopening the Eighth Schedule.

There are certain communities and States which are still deprived of the right to a place in the Eighth Schedule. Manipur is a language of the Manipuri people. It is the official language of the Manipur state. It is the *LINGUA FRANCA* of the different tribes and communities in that State. It is also spoken by people residing in Assam and