

the following matter of urgent public importance under rule 377. 500 acres of land with standing crops on it, belonging to the Scheduled Tribes, in Chapada taluka in Jalgaon district in Maharashtra, has been taken away by the Forest Officers of the Maharashtra Government. The standing crops have been destroyed by these officers and the poor Scheduled Tribe farmers have been deprived of their lands. It is reported in the *Daily Maharashtra Times* published on 11-8-1978. It is a grave situation of public importance. The Scheduled Tribe farmers, whose lands have been taken away by the Forest Department of the Maharashtra Government, should be restored to them immediately. Though, on the face of it, it seems that it is a matter within the purview of the State Government, the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is a question within the purview of the Central Government. Hence, I request the Government to take note of this serious situation.

(v) REPORTED SEVERE DROUGHT CONDITIONS IN PARTS OF MAHARASHTRA

SHRI ANNASAHAB P. SHINDE (Ahmednagar): Sir, I am thankful to you for allowing me to make a statement, which is extremely important from the point of view of the drought-prone areas of Maharashtra. Despite the reports of very encouraging rainfall during the current monsoon so far, very severe drought conditions are developing in parts of Maharashtra. While north India, and particularly the Gangetic plain, is reeling under the onslaught of floods, it is difficult to believe that drought of unprecedented severity is developing in Ahmednagar and adjoining districts of Maharashtra. In the post-independent period, there have been years like 1952, 1966 and 1972 etc. when drought did affect very large areas of Maharashtra, but the severity of the current drought is so much that even the drinking water has become scarce in thousands of villages even during the rainy season. Some of the major rivers like Pravara, Mula,

major tributaries of Godavari and the Godavari river itself are not having normal monsoon flows. In fact, Pravara river is absolutely dry and not a drop of water is there. Though Godavari, Pravara, and Mula rivers have their source in an area exceeding 150 inches of annual rainfall, at present the rivers are totally dry. This had never happened in the post-independent period or in half century. All the agricultural crops are very badly affected. Lakhs of landless labourers and small farmers are badly in need of employment. Farmers are unable to maintain cattle for lack of fodder. Drinking water, as mentioned earlier, is a serious problem in thousands of villages. Severe epidemic may develop, if necessary precautions are not taken in time. Prices of essential commodities, particularly foodgrains, are showing a tendency of going up and economy of the large area is adversely affected. Ahmednagar district and parts of Pune, Sholapur, Sangli, Satara district and areas of Marathwada adjoining to Ahmednagar district are in great distress. Even in the north Konkan, standing rice crops are reported to be getting affected for lack of adequate rainfall. Most of the major reservoirs are having very low level of water and are not filled up though normally by 15th of August most of these reservoirs start overflowing. Bombay city itself may not have adequate supplies of drinking water from the reservoirs in the western ghats. There is a need to undertake massive relief operations. Both State Government and Central Government will have to take urgent steps to meet the situation and provide necessary relief. The Government of India should not take a technical position that drought relief is a State subject. The Government of India has been always generous in helping all State Governments whenever any natural calamity overtakes any area of the country. Immediate steps will have to be taken to alert District administration. Adequate financial resources will have to be made available to Zillah Parishads and District

[Shri Annasaheb P. Shinde]

Collectors. Massive employment programme will have to be taken up. This unfortunate natural calamity will have to be used for building up productive agricultural assets. Recoveries of Government and cooperative loans will have to be suspended. Fodder will have to be made available for cattle at reasonable prices and number of relief measures will have to be taken forthwith.

I request through you, Sir, that the Government of India should immediately get in touch with the State Government of Maharashtra, get the first-hand report of the situation and the Minister of Agriculture should be asked to make a statement about the unprecedented drought situation developing in parts of Maharashtra.

12.58 hrs.

RE. PROPOSED UNVEILING OF
STATUE OF SHRI AUROBINDO IN
PARLIAMENT HOUSE

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Akola):
Sir, I have given a notice....

MR. SPEAKER: Today.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Kindly see, this is a serious matter. I want to draw the attention of this House because tomorrow when that is done, later on, if I bring it to your notice, it will be too late. We are setting a bad precedent in this House. Sir, we are doing a disservice to a great spiritual leader of this country by bringing his name in the political arena and trying to unveil the statue of great Aurobindo, in the Parliament. What are we trying to do? On one side is the statue of Gokhale and on other side, you are trying to unveil tomorrow the statue of Aurobindo. There are so many spiritual leaders in this country—Maharishi Dayanand, Maharishi Shivananda, Saraswati Shirdanand. Whose name will you stop from having a statue? We have

received the invitation today. This will be unveiled by you.... (Interruptions). I am not against Aurobindo. What are you talking?

MR. SPEAKER: This has been decided by the General Purposes Committee. (Interruptions).

SHRI VASANT SATHE: There is Swami Shradanand, Swami Vivekanand. Are they not great spiritual leaders?

MR. SPEAKER: This matter has been decided in the General Purposes Committee. (Interruptions).

SHRI VASANT SATHE: I can understand if portraits of leaders like Nath Pai, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and such other persons.... (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: It is not in the list; I am not allowing.

13 hrs.

SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHE-
DULED TRIBES ORDERS (AMEND-
MENT) BILL—contd.

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now take up for consideration the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill. Amendments were clarified for circulation of the Bill for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon, for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee and for reference of the Bill to a Joint Committee, moved on the 2nd August, 1978.

The Minister, Shri S. D. Patil has also given notice of an amendment No. 55 for reference of the Bill to a Joint Committee. I have permitted him to move his amendment. He may move it. There is also a change in the name of the Member from the one mentioned in the amendment circulated to Members. He may mention that also.