

16.10 hrs.

MOTION RE. DEVELOPMENT OF
SUNDERBANS

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): I beg to move:

"That this House notes with concern the poverty and backwardness of Sunderbans in West Bengal and recommends that a Parliamentary team should extensively tour the area in 1977 and at the same time the Central Government should—

(a) save the people and their land there from invasion of saline water coming from sea; and

(b) take steps to—

(i) irrigate the area.

(ii) rescue the area from severe backwardness that it suffers from".

Sunderbans is the outcome of the indomitable courage and tenacity of the people. Dire poverty and land famine have pushed people to live in that particular area where living is indeed very difficult today.

Today it is a very sensitive area because it is bordering on Bangla Desh and facing the Sea which has direct access to Diego Garcia, the American base in the Indian Ocean. Security can be ensured only through material growth, growth in respect of communications, rail transport, road transport, water transport etc. They are the poorest people, the greatest sufferers today.

This area suffers from the worst regional imbalances and you will be surprised to know that the other day when I was in Sunderbans I came to a place called Pather Pratima where I was told you can get a day labourers for your chapatis a day, working eight to ten hours a day.

On the one side is a part of Delta face and then between the Hooghly and Padma-Meghna estuaries there is a span of about 400 km. or 270 miles covering about 28,000 sq. miles.

The colonisation of the area started from about 1830. In 1963, 5,000 acres were used for the resettlement of the erstwhile East Pakistan displaced persons.

In recent years the fertility status of this area has gone down and it is mostly a single crop area. Even whatever little crop they are able to grow remains in perennial danger and that is due mainly due to the invasion of saline water coming from the sea.

This should be treated as a national problem. This is the first time, I reckon, that we are talking about Sunderbans at the national level. There are miles and miles of mud embankments there, but they are not good enough, they cannot stand the invasion of the saline water coming from the sea, and they often collapse. Therefore, the basic development constraint in Sunderbans, namely invasion of saline water from the sea, has to be stopped permanently. Otherwise, the problem would go on mounting. Even today it is colossal.

Only the national exchequer of this great country can meet such a challenge from nature, because the State Government, with their meagre resources, are neither equipped nor should be expected to meet the challenge of the sea water.

The problem is how to save 77,37,967 acres of cultivable land, i.e. about 1,000 square miles, inhabited by about 2,02,200 people according to the 1971 census. It has gone up considerably now. Out of the total population, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' population comes to about 43.3 per cent according to 1971 Census. The present figures are not in my hand.

The marginal embankments to protect this area, the land and the people, their property and living, cover an area of 3,500 km. They are mostly of a very weak nature and very temporary. In September, 1976, when nature became very aggressive in that region, at least 2,907 breaches were

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found and noticed. Embankments covering an area of 466 km. were washed away. About 1560 km. embankments were damaged. Only 264 km. embankments has so far been strengthened with the assistance of rural production programme and world food programme. This year, between April and June, further extensive damaged have taken place and a big length of embankments stands vulnerable.

I have already stated that the State Government has very limited resources. The Congress Government left the State Exchequer bankrupt. Even the works done in 1976 have not been paid for and the contractors have refused to take more in hand because the bills have remained unpaid. If we want to save the life and living of the people and the valuable national asset, namely, the land, from the fury of the invasion of saline water from the sea, we must have pucca, if possible, brick-built embankments. The embankments have to be heavily armoured because in specially vulnerable portions, the thrust is very severe. The embankments requiring heavy protection will cover an area of 250 miles. If we take into account Rs. 7 lakhs per mile the estimated cost will be Rs. 17.5 crores. The embankments requiring light protection cover an area of about 400 miles. At the rate of Rs. 2.5 lakhs per miles the estimated cost will come to about Rs. 10 crores. The total minimum requirement today is Rs. 27.5 crores. Besides closure bunds which could be created to protect the land, the phase I programme is expected to protect 50,000 hectares of cultivable land. I quote:

"Sunderbans Delta Project, phase I: Under the project three major closure dams had been proposed to be built....

These closure dams would create reservoir area of 3,850 hectares with a capacity of 102 million cubic meters.

The project includes construction of five master sluices to take care of surface drainage from the reclaimed area as well as from the areas lying further north draining so far into the Saptamukhi river system. Besides it the Phase 1 of the Project includes construction of 75 km. of marginal dykes. The total length of dykes would be 120 km. (75 km. marginal embankment and 45 km. for closure bunds). It is planned to have 120 km. of road throughout the length of the embankments with two lanes.

The total area of the enclosed land will be 1.25 lakh acres.... The area of the proposed reservoir would be 6,250 acres. Thus the total area under water after completion of the project is expected to be 10,694 acres. The net available land for cultivation excluding the water bodies and estimated requirement of residential use will be around one lakh acres. Therefore, about 20,000 acres of additional land would be available for cultivation. The other projected gains, in addition to flood protection (125,000 acres) are facilities for irrigation and development of fisheries. Nearly 17,000 acres "could be brought under irrigation and 10,700 acres of fresh water area would be available for culture of fish. The sweet water resources could also be used for industrial and other purposes. The another substantial benefit would be reduction (81 per cent) in length of protecting dykes to be maintained."

This is a very important piece of document.

The total cost estimated by the Dutch experts of NEDECO on the wage price level of 1961-62 was Rs. 16.5 crores and of 1972-73 was Rs. 21.31 crores.

The amount would not be required all at a time. It will take at least nine years to construct the whole thing. Therefore, the amount could be spread over a period of nine years. The Irrigation

gation and Waterways Department of the West Bengal Government had drawn up another project for the entire region excluding the comand area of delta project, Phase I, about which I have just now mentioned. That works out to Rs. 11,26,92,000. That would include sluices costing Rs. 162.52 lakhs, the remaining embankments Rs. 275.26 lakhs, revetment works at vulnerable zones Rs. 155.41 lakhs, retired and ring bunds Rs. 35.73 lakhs and overland crossbunds Rs. 498 lakhs.

We are very happy to see that the Central Government had come to rescue to a situation of this nature, under somewhat similar circumstances, in Kerala to save the people and land from the invasion of sea. In reply to a question of 20th March, 1973, which was replied to by the Minister for Irrigation and Power, it had been said:

"Taking into account the magnitude of the problem and the need for speedy implementation of anti-erosion measures in Kerala, the Government of India have agreed to provide special financial assistance during the last two years of the Fourth Plan to enable the State Government to implement a programme of Rs. 4 crores a year. This assistance should be released to meet the expenditure over and above the provisions made in the State Plan of Rs. 1.3 crores in [1972-73...] etc., et.

Again on 17th March, 1975, in reply to Unstarred Question No. 367 it was stated:

"A length of about 113 kilometres have been protected upto the end of the Fourth Plan with an outlay of Rs. 17.50 crores of which the Centre has provided special loan assistance of Rs. 4.59 crores. These measures are being continued in the Fifth Plan also for which an outlay of Rs. 20 crores has been tentatively proposed."

I am very glad to find that this has been done.

Recently, a reply has been given to Unstarred Question No. 26 dated 14-11-1977. The Minister had visited the areas affected by sea erosion in Kerala. In that reply it has been stated:

"However, taking into account the need for speedy implementation of anti-sea erosion measures in the State, the Centre has provided special loan assistance to the State Government for accelerating the approved anti sea erosion schemes included in the State Plan. The amount made available during the first three years of the Fifth Plan has been Rs. 3.75 crores. During the current year, an amount of Rs. 1 crore has been released so far for this purpose."

Therefore, this is the position. Here is a case which could be used as a parallel instance. It is a case where the people are suffering because of invasion by saline water coming from sea, and it has to be treated as a national problem. We would earnestly make this request to the Central Government through you, Sir.—The hon. Prime Minister has taken the trouble of coming and listening to us—to be generous and save these 20 lakhs of people from perpetual misery, poverty and destruction. The State Government resources are very meagre; if it is left in their hands, I do not think, in our life time, people will have any relief. The poverty there is something unbelievable. Prof. Madhu Dandavate should go there; we expect that he will inaugurate the railway line after the final location survey is done. He is keeping mum. That is the trouble.

There should be a massive programme for multiple cropping and crop diversification. Production of commercial and cash crops is also necessary. It is predominantly an agrarian area with 88.53 per cent of people in agriculture.

There is a deep pauperisation and the percentage of owner-cultivation to the total agricultural worker is: in

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1961 it was 65.86 per cent and in 1971 it was 49.84 per cent. You realise how much it has come down. The percentage of landless workers to the total agricultural workers is: 1961—34.14 per cent and 1971 it was 50.16 per cent and the productivity of the land also is steadily declining and the scope of employment is fast shrinking and the participation ratio is steadily declining. In 1961 it was 30.27 per cent and in 1971 it was only 26.44 per cent. The majority of the landless agricultural labour is chronically under-employed.

The Sunderbans has the lowest per capita income. The income of a family of 5 members is Rs. 185 per month which works out to Rs. 37 per month per head. The outstanding loan per family comes to Rs. 172.

There should be a ground water survey which is very essential and there should also be a geological survey to find out petroleum and other things that are likely to be found there. A Government of India team and ICAR visited the area in April 1973 and they have pointed out very clearly that the possibilities of production of cotton, oil-seeds, pulses, sugar beet are very immense. The possibilities are great. They have said:

"It may be mentioned in passing here that the British were the first to attempt at cotton cultivation in the Sunderbans in the year 1835. Their findings from the published literature of the time revealed that quality cottons can be grown in this area..."

Agronomically it has been stated by experts that cotton appears to fit well into a paddy-cotton rotation in this area. It is also reported that paddy yields following cotton are also higher than paddy after being fallow. This finding is also an important one while introducing a second crop in this area.

The next in importance is the problem of drainage. As I mentioned earlier, this should be given first prio-

rity to make the cotton programme a successful venture since the ill-drained area delays the preparation of the land and also comes in the way of timely planting.

The other points worth recording here are:

Farmers should be advised to switch over to high-yielding varieties of paddy like Jaya, Ratna IR 8 in the place of the long-duration traditional varieties.

The area is so suitable that the cost of cultivation for sun flower is: per acre Rs. 289, yield per acre—400 kg. and the gross value of the produce—Rs. 600. Similarly, for cotton—cost of production—Rs. 445, yield per acre—600 kg. kapas. and the gross value of the produce per acre—Rs. 1500. Similar is the case with moong dhal. Sun flower is the latest entrant into the Sunderbans area. There are great possibilities of growing sun flower. It is said that growing sun flower in the Sunderbans does have certain advantages. Sun flower is a plant which can hold its own with a little moisture and needs the minimum after-cultivation care.

Similarly there are many recommendations. I would like the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister for Planning to constitute a cell for Sunderbans and go into the details of the recommendations and the findings that have been placed on record so far. That will give a lot of guidance to the government.

Besides multiple cropping, there should be intense utilisation of the natural advantages and the resources. I have already talked about going in in a big way with drilling for petroleum because it has been opined by many that that particular area—to quote the language of the experts—is floating on oil. So this has to be borne in mind. We do not want our projects to be sabotaged by people in the country and outside the country which will be a great economic stake for us.

There are other things also. Forests and fisheries and agro-based and cottage industries. Production of salt is another. These are the important things they should look into. Construction of a communication and transportation system. Rural electrification—there is almost no electrification in the Sunderbans, almost nothing. Then, I can talk about Education, Health and Welfare measures. Then there are subjects like Animal Husbandry and Poultry Farms, Poultry Multiplication Centres, Hatching-cum-Food-mixing Units and Mobile Veterinary Dispensaries with permanent bases. Then you come to Coconut plantations. Plantation can be done in barren areas which are about 2 per cent of forest area, and there can be plantation in sparsely covered areas. Under Industries, you have composite ginnery with cotton-seed oil extraction plant. Then there are boat-building and servicing industries. You have powered crafts and traditional boats. Then you have Food-processing, Paper and Pulp, Engineering, Honey Refinery, Ice-Plant, Fish-meal and Building Materials Industries. Then you have Land Reclamation work and the development of transport linkages. Under Road Linkages you have the following works:—

Construction of Amjhara-Basanti-Majibdari road.

Basant-Herobhanga Resettlement Colony Road.

Kakdwip-Pathar Pratima via Gangadharpur Road.

Frasergunge-Bakkhali Road.

Herobhanga-Golabari Road.

Hingalganj Hemnagar Road.

Bhangarkhali Dulduli via Fakirtakia Road.

These are the things, Sir. Road Bridges, landing facilities, rail links are those things which are needed there. Mr. Madhu Dandavate knows that the Budge-Budge Diamon Harbour kakdwip Namkhana railway line has been found to be more than viable. I am not grudging that you have

brought that Jammu line which is not viable. I am not grudging about Trivandrum-Kanyakumari-Trinelveli line. Regarding return on capital invested, the Public Accounts Committee, which is a Committee of both Houses of Parliament, has stated in very clear language that railway should not go by return only as far as backward areas are concerned. Because of regional imbalances there have been great sufferings on the part of the people and they should not use the formula of return. However, the return is ten per cent in this area and it would meet with his requirements. Railway line is only a small part of it. Because I have been trying for it, Mrs. Gandhi has given an order saying nothing to do with Jyotirmoy Bosu's rail project. He might see something in the documents also. I therefore request the hon. Railway Minister to give orders for 'Final Location Survey' for all the railway lines and not only for Budge-Budge, Diamond Harbour, Namkhana line. It is a small thing. There are three Railway lines which should be taken up. There are other lines like:

Lakshmikantapur-Kakdwip.

Hasnabad-Pratapadityanagar.

Canning-Golabari.

Kindly go to that area and see that. The hon. Prime Minister has to come and visit that area.

They want hospitals, they want educational facilities etc. They want industrial training institutes. They want degree colleges, they want junior technical schools, they want facilities for basic education, they want handicrafts training centres, they want primary schools. They also have an Urban Area Development Plan. All these things are being neglected due to reasons best known to the authorities themselves. I cannot blame the present government because they have come and taken the power hardly eight months ago. I appeal to them that they should look into the matter of Sunderbans and save these

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people from the perpetual misery and suffering which they have been undergoing since time immemorial.

Then, so far as Education is concerned, the position is this. You have got only 0.8 schools per thousand population. The length of pucca road is very little. It is only 0.23 k.m. per thousand persons. We want a network of link roads. The total length of railway line in this vast region is 28 miles only.

So far as Inland Water Transport is concerned, it is the main mode of transport. As you know, this is a very sensitive area. There was an Inland Water Transport Committee in those days and this humble self has also been a Member of that Committee. We had made specific recommendations. It is not my handwritten thing although I was in it. I quote:

"It is essential to exploit the agricultural hinter land of the Sunderbans for the economic prosperity of this area. A provision of Rs. 61.84 lakhs may be included for this scheme in the Fourth Five-Year Plan.

"An efficient passenger-cum-goods service connecting important towns and villages in the Sunderbans is a distinct necessity. It is also essential that suitable landing facilities are provided at various points suggested by the State Government. The more important among these are Raidighi, Port Canning and Namkhana. Namkhana is the terminal point for road transport and handles pilgrim traffic of the order of several hundred thousands at the time of Ganga Sagar mela in January each year. Provision of these facilities should be included in the Fourth Five Year Plan."

But, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir if you visit this area, you will see that these are only paper exercises and nothing has been done. I am glad that Shri Dandavate has given an assurance—I take it like that—that the railway line

from Budge Budge—Diamond Harbour—Namkhana railwayline's final location survey, is shortly going to be done. I take it like that. There are other things also. For agriculture, what is needed is the inputs like seeds, fertiliser, irrigation water. This is an area where windmills could be tried very successfully. One windmill can do a lot. We have been writing and I have also been writing since 1967 as to whether, in Sunderbans, the windmills could be freely constructed so the power could be made use of for doing lift irrigation and other works. Besides cultivation of sweet potato, sugar beet, chilly and melon can also be done. What is wanted is processing facility. Otherwise, the growers are not getting the remunerative price for these. These are sometimes thrown away. We want the Planning Minister to tell us as to how he can help us in replacing the traditional amman paddy cultivation by the early maturing variety or high yield variety. The high yielding variety can give us 40 maunds and we can release the land by October for cultivating something else in that land. If the State Government is in a position to do that, why should I come to you with a begging bowl in my hands? This is a major area where pisciculture can be developed. Estuarine areas, fish farms, brackish water especially in Henry's Island are the areas where we can develop controlled tank for the purpose of development of fishery from prawn and other precious varieties. It is found by scientists that in brackish water, it is possible to produce 2.4 tonnes per hectare per year of mullet and 600 to 700 kgs of prawn per year. We would like the Government to take the initiative in the matter and go for this productive exercise. There is a great scope for the composite fish culture also. There are many other possibilities. At the same time I am sorry to say that the present Government although has taken the work in hand in Sunderbans, there are still some big land owners and so land reforms are very necessary.

I only want to conclude by saying that I am bringing this on the floor of this august House, in this highest national forum, with an expectation that the Central Government will come forward and treat this area as a special area and give us the maximum that they can spare for removing the sufferings and difficulties that Sunderbans is having specially from the sea water which is invading that year after year.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That this House notes with concern the poverty and backwardness of Sunderbans in West Bengal and recommends that a Parliamentary team should extensively tour the area in 1977 and at the same time the Central Government should—

(a) save the people and their land there from invasion of saline water coming from sea; and

(b) take steps to—

(i) irrigate the area.

(ii) rescue the area from severe backwardness that it suffers from."

SHRI S. K. SARKAR (Joynagar): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, at the outset I would like to congratulate Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu to bring forward this motion before this august House. I am happy to see that our Prime Minister as well as the Planning Minister sitting here.

The discussion on Sundarbans is vital not only for us but it is also vital for the whole nation. Sundarbans is one of the largest backward areas and a most accessible areas in the country. You imagine how it is inaccessible. Even a police station comprising of several thousand sq. miles Gosaba is still without an inch of metalled road. Nobody can see an inch of metalled road in that area. This is the most accessible part though Sundarbans

starts 13 miles down from the city of Calcutta. It is a blakish spot of West Bengal and the backwardness cannot be measured. It is so high that you cannot imagine. It is a mono chrop area. The area is protected by 2200 miles embankments by which you can imagine how far it is inaccessible. The total reclaimed area is 9.4 lakh acres. Out of this 6.4 lakh acres are under cultivation. Though Sunderbans is not properly demarcated yet in the British period a demarcation line was made and according to that line south portion of 24 Parganas is demarcated as Sunderbans area. There is no natural demarcation. The population of this area at present is near about 23 lakh and the area under cultivation is only 6.4 lakh acres which means less than 0.3 acre land per man. So, you can easily imagine that by mere land distribution the economy of the area cannot be improved. Some other method should be adopted to remove this backwardness. On that basis. I would request the Planning Minister to give due importance to our submissions.

This is an area which has only one crop and after that crop people have nothing to do for their avocation of life. It is a shameful matter for us to know that people after the paddy harvesting is over come to the cities with begging bowls. Most of them dwell on the footpaths of Calcutta. You will be surprise to know that 60 per cent of the footpath dwellers in Calcutta come from Sunderbans area. I would like to see that some concrete, viable planning is made for them. The State Government on account of its many constraints and limitations is not in a position to take up any scheme for the development of this area. Though Sunderbans Development Board has been constituted yet it has not been given any statutory support. The Centre should come forward not only for the development of Sunderbans area but also for all the backward areas of India.

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Sir, as regards the solution, I do not fully agree with the views expressed by Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu. It has its own natural gift. If we can exploit and utilise this gift it can be taken as a boon to the people of this area. It cannot be taken as a curse. Mr. Bosu wants to prevent the ingress of the saline water. I am not in support of this view because I know the ingress of the saline water brings worth crores of rupees fish. If we take one acre of watery land it gives 200 kg. fish. Out of these 200 kg 150 kg. would be prawns which would fetch a price of Rs. 40 per kg. It comes to Rs. 6000. It means one acre of fishery on land can give upto Rs. 7000. There is no parallel industry to the fishery. West Bengal needs development of fisheries. I am just giving you one example. In 1967 we had assessed the fish requirement of Calcutta city alone. Granting that 30 per cent are vegetarians, the demand of Calcutta came to about Rs. 72 crores of fish per year; that is the consumption capacity of Calcutta city alone. The supply figure is Rs. 22 crores. Out of that Rs. 22 crores, West Bengal's contribution is Rs. 5-6 crores, which means that Rs. 15 crores worth of fish comes from outside, that is, from Bihar, Orissa, U.P. or even Haryana. We are drawing our money in this way. Planning should be done in such a way that schemes can be implemented in West Bengal itself and it is easily possible; there are natural gifts. I want to draw the attention of the Planning Minister to this matter. If we extend the radiation of Calcutta economy to Sunderbans, it would automatically develop; that is the proper approach to planning. There is the great Calcutta market and its capacity is rated so high. Take for instance, coconut oil and poor Calcutta had to get it from outside. Calcutta is not self-sufficient in any of the things that it needs. It needs 100 crores worth of coconut oil and in about 30 years we have

sent out about 3000 crores. The annual demand for mustard oil is to the tune of 400 crores; in thirty years about 12000 crores would have gone out. So is the position about wheat, rice. Even salt we import from Gujarat and other places. We do not produce anything except some part of chillies. Even if we could produce only the fish that is needed, it will generate a growth in our economy in such a tremendous way that Sunderbans will develop automatically. There is no need to make a very great scheme.

My hon. friend is asking for a second crop of cotton. Cotton would be total failure; I can give my verdict. Soil may be suitable but climate and atmosphere are hostile. When cultivation of cotton starts here, in other regions there would be harvest of cotton. Nature is against us. North-Western and other cyclonic factors would cause damage. Government of India made a trial; it was a failure. It is not a scientific solution. Scientific solution lies in the other way. He asked for ground water. We require it. But I doubt whether ground water is available for the second crop. My friend is referring about scientists' opinion. Perhaps he is not aware that I am a member of the scientific committee of ICAR. Out of 29 experts, I am one in the scientific committee of the ICAR which is called operational research project. Second crop is certainly required. It must not be in the pattern of stereotype rice or wheat crop. It must be dry-land farming. Residuary moisture can be helpful and there is enough scope for that. The residuary moisture can give commercial crops like sunflower, safflower, till etc., by which Sunderbans can be benefited. So, the Planning Minister should evolve such a scheme as to make dry farming a success.

There is enough scope for horticulture. Coconut, on which we are draining many hundred crores of

rupees annually can be abundantly grown. Nature is very helpful for that. Areca nut and some spices can be grown. Bamboo cultivation can be developed. It may seem ridiculous but it would give a good generation of economy. Bamboo is used not only for domestic but for industrial purposes. The paper industry is suffering for want of paper pulp. Bamboo is a good constituent for pulp making. Man-made fibres like terylene can be made from bamboo. So, I suggest that bamboo cultivation may be taken up.

I support what Mr. Bosu said about the scope for industries in that area. One such industry is based on animal husbandry. The Calcutta market's monthly demand for baby food is 550 tonnes, i.e., 6000 tonnes annually. These are imported from other States such as Gujarat, Har- yana and U.P. If we can develop animal husbandry in Sunderbans, we can snatch away a portion of that money and develop that area.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: We live in one country. Why are you grudging it? You are talking as if you are importing from Britain or Germany.

SHRI S. K. SARKAR: Don't argue about the word 'importing'. I am not saying it in that sense. I am only talking of self reliance.

There is big scope for tourism. Sunderbans is a very beautiful place and there is no parallel to its beauty anywhere in India. If we develop tourism, we can earn foreign exchange.

I want to lay emphasis on communication. It is completely inaccessible. There are no railheads and no roads. Only the fringe of the area has been touched by railhead. Before independence there were no roads. Now roads have come into existence, but still a big portion is without any road. Gosava compris-

es of 7 islands but there is no communication. The only communication is by country boats. Some motor launches are there owned by private parties. I suggest that public motor launches should be introduced in the nationalised sector. There were four proposals for railheads. It was surveyed but the report was, it is not viable. If you really want to develop backward areas, railhead is essential.

This area should be declared as backward area. 24 Parganas district is perhaps the biggest district of India. Because the population figure is 85 lakhs. You can easily understand that it is administratively non-viable. There is only one District Magistrate and one District Judge. So, it would be better if the whole of 24 Parganas is divided into two, one in the north and another in the south. The southern portion will contain the Sunderbans. This proposal was discussed earlier in this House. I would request the State Government to approach the Centre in the matter. Unless you divide the district into two parts, there is no hope of developing that area.

I congratulate Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu for bringing up this motion and thank the Prime Minister for patiently hearing our submissions.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY (Barrack-pore): Sir, this House has now taken up this debate on the development of Sunderbans. Not only this, earlier this House has debated on the backwardness of Eastern UP. It is a very happy sign that problems of regional imbalance and the problems of regional development are being discussed in this House, and the Prime Minister is gracious enough not only to lend his ears, but also to share his feelings on the problem of regional imbalance.

If I may say so, India is a large desert of poverty-stricken areas, with pockets of prosperity, and unless

[Shri Saugata Roy]

this desert can be turned into a uniform area of prosperity, all the pockets of prosperity will soon be overcome by this desert. It is in this context that I raise this debate this time on the Sunderbans and discuss this situation, because I cannot expect friends from all over the country to be interested in the development of Sunderbans, as we from West Bengal would be. But if you view it from a national perspective of development of backward areas, the need for developing backward areas and the advantages of developing the backward areas, I think that the perspective would be totally clear.

Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu, while moving the motion, has spelt out most of the measures that are necessary for the development of Sunderbans. I will put it from the point of view of the economy of West Bengal. What we have now in the name of West Bengal is a truncated State. Originally, the composite Bengal was one in which the eastern part produced agricultural goods and Calcutta and its suburbs produced industrial goods. After partition, most of the agricultural goods producing areas have gone over to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. So, Bengal is a large desert of poverty today, of backwardness, with a small area of prosperity around Calcutta and the Asansol-Durgapur area. In the rest of Bengal, agriculture is backward, industry has not percolated and most of the people live below the poverty line.

It is in this context that we have to view the problem of the Sunderbans, because today what had happened is that West Bengal, which had an industrial base, is getting weaker economically, because the industrial base we had was a colonial industrial base, which used to serve the needs of the colonialists, and with their departure and with the slow demise of the Calcutta port, the economy of West Bengal is going down.

If West Bengal has to survive today, it has to be agriculturally strong and agriculturally viable. West Bengal is a rice-eating State. Most of the people are consuming only rice. But West Bengal is not self-sufficient in rice. It has to bring rice either from Orissa or from Andhra Pradesh. I will tell you the picture this year. After the cyclone, most of the harvest in Andhra has been washed away and Orissa will be able to feed us only for two months. I predict today in this House with all responsibility that in the month of February-March, the price of rice will go up to Rs. 10 per kilo in West Bengal, because in West Bengal we have no buffer stocks. In West Bengal, because of the Central policy of abolishing zones, no buffer stock is being built, nothing is being procured. Andhra Pradesh which provides us rice has been ravaged by cyclone. So, we have to view the development of Sunderbans keeping in view this year's perspective.

17.00 hrs.

Sunderbans, if properly developed, can become the granary of West Bengal. It can supply rice for the whole of the State and make it self-sufficient in rice, in which case most of the tension that occurs in West Bengal in June, July and August, when agricultural labourers leave their impoverished areas and go to the city of Calcutta, will disappear.

The Sunderbans that we have today in West Bengal is not the Sunderbans as it existed. The Sunderbans, as it existed had an area of 8,000 square miles, was a part of the Gangetic delta, of the Bay of Bengal delta. Most of it has gone over to Bangla Desh in the districts of Jessore and Khulna. What we have now is an area of approximately 4,000 square miles with a population of nearly two million.

Here, man has faced nature and created his own destiny. The refugees who were settled here have struggled against nature, forests and natural calamities to build their homes. But what happens today? If there is

a cyclone or a national calamity, the bunds get broken and the area is overrun by salt water and they get no crop. That is the main problem.

As Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu has also correctly pointed out, unless we make some effort to save the crops of these people from sea erosion and salinity this area cannot survive, and if this area cannot become economically viable, West Bengal ultimately cannot become economically viable because it will continue to be a rice-eating State.

As has been mentioned earlier, the development of Sunderbans cannot be taken up by any State Government, however strong or powerful. When the Congress was in power in West Bengal, they set up the Sunderbans Development Board. It had started a nucleus and built some roads, but unless massive aid comes from the Centre, nothing can be done.

In this regard, Shri Bosu also referred to the report of the Dutch experiment. If Holland can survive under the sea, there is no reason why an area like the Sunderbans cannot survive and become economically viable. It is a question which is confronting the people of Bengal, a challenge to the planners and economists of India.

There are two aspects of this matter—developmental and distributive. The developmental aspect consists of the development of bunds for saving the land from sea erosion, and the development of ground water roads, inland transport etc. It consists of far-flung areas. I have been to most of these islands. It takes 20 hours by launch to go from one place to another, and the launches are not frequent. The poor people cannot bring their produce from the internal islands, they cannot take them to the main markets. They are left to the vagaries of nature. So, what is necessary is firstly massive investment by the Centre to subserve the developmental needs of the area.

In this House, let me emphasize once again, for the last 8 months, somehow or other, we are finding that the ques-

tion of land reforms is not being given sufficient importance. Sunderbans is an area where land hunger exists in the crudest form. If such predatory form of exploitation, as it exists in Sunderbans continues, this area can never develop. I know of a High Court judge in Sunderbans who has got 2000 acres of land, all under different names. I know of another person in Sunderbans who has got 5000 acres of land. All the land ceiling laws have not been anything for them. During this part of the year, the poverty-stricken people are slightly better off. But in July/August, they have to eat the roots of the grasses that are grown there and the snails that they pick up there. It is all because of the predatory system of exploitation, a few people having all the land and most of the people not having any land at all.

SHRI S. K. SARKAR: What is the *per capita* land available there?

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: We know all their inclinations. Let not the members from West Bengal fight in this House on such issues. I know Mr. Sarkar has very strong views on this matter which are quite opposed to land reforms.

While you talk of developing backward areas we have to keep in mind the predatory nature of exploitation by the landlords and the jotedars. Besides keeping the developmental aspect in mind, we have also to keep the distributive aspect in mind. Land reforms alone will not solve the problem because unless the farmers are provided with their basic needs, their credit needs, they cannot survive. So, the cooperativisation is also necessary. The peasants must be persuaded and, if necessary, forced to go in for cooperatives. Only then the Sunderbans farmer can survive.

The State Bank of India has prepared a project report on the credit needs of Sunderbans. It is lying with the Central Government and with the head-office of the State Bank of India. Nothing has been done to implement

[Shri Saugata Roy]

that though the State Bank has opened a few branches at Gosaba and Nimpith and other interior places.

In conclusion, I have only two small points to make. It is with regard to the security aspect of Sunderbans. Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu, a habitual detector, has many times pointed out the danger that Sunderbans faces from outside influences. I entirely agree with him that foreign influences are operating in that area. In the project "Tiger" that is being set up in Sunderbans, there is foreign infiltration in the name of crocodile farm. American people are going there. Nobody knows about their intentions. Then, Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu mentioned about sun-flower and cotton cultivation. You will be surprised to know that in such a small project in Sunderbans, the Union Carbide has taken a lot of interest. They had pressurised the State Government in accepting their insecticide. Unfortunately, the State Government could not resist the Union Carbide at that time. One should be very careful about these things. Whenever the prospect of developing a backward area opens up, the multinationals immediately jump in, the Americans also immediately jump in. One has to be very careful about the infiltration of multinationals, particularly about the Union Carbide and such other companies in this area.

Lastly, I would request the Prime Minister, since he has taken so much interest in the development of backward areas, and the Central Government to take up Sunderbans development as a pilot project and let the planners in this country face the challenge of developing a backward area, an impoverished area, into a granary of a deficit State.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat):

Sir, before we can understand the real problems of the Sunderbans area, let us be conversent with the actual profile of Sunderbans. My hon. friend, Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu, has in his usual way, introduced the pro-

file of Sunderbans. I would only supplement certain facts, so that the entire House can know what Sunderbans is and what the Government should do.

As you know, 44.3 per cent of the total area of Sunderbans has been declared as reserve forests, and this declaration was made as far back as 1911. The entire economy of the region is dependent on agriculture, and that too practically on one crop, namely, *aman* paddy. From the techno-economic survey conducted by the Sunderban Development Board in 1973, it has been found that 94.61 per cent of the total families are dependent upon agriculture; only 5.39 per cent of the total families in the Sunderban area have got other occupations—occupations other than agriculture.

Again, you would be surprised to know that, of the total agricultural families of the area, 54 per cent of the agricultural families are landless; they have got no land. And in regard to those who have got land, let us understand what they are, what the problem, is. Of the total land-owning families, 85.72 per cent belong to marginal and poor agricultural families—who have got only two acres of land as their own. Naturally, you can understand what the economy is.

More than 50 per cent of the Sunderban population are indebted, and the outstanding loan of the indebted families on an average, is Rs. 787.18 per family. 25.27 per cent of the total population is literate while the State average is about 42 per cent. This is in regard to male literacy. In regard to female literacy, it is only 8 per cent while the State average is about 22 per cent.

Regarding transport, my friend Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu, would agree with me when I say that only 42 kilometres have got railways throughout Sunderbans; in respect

of road it is only 253 kms.; waterways 289 kms. I do not want to give more facts.

Now, the profile is complete. And what is the profile? The profile is one of appalling poverty, age-old agony and very low level of developmental programme in respect of basic needs of life, namely, food, health and education. Having this profile of Sunderbans in view, the entire House should address itself to find out the ways, I would not take much time of the House. The developmental programme of this area should have a concrete strategy, and the developmental strategy should be keeping these particular factors in view.

(1) Removal of all developmental constructions in the area, viz., the flood hazard and the hazard caused due to the intrusion of the saline water. My good friend, Shri Saugata Roy spoke something about the saline water invasion. It is practical physical invasion by the private land-owners, private fishery-owners who in a very clever way inundates vast areas of paddy land for creating artificial fisheries. He has mentioned some Jotdars' names who possessed illegally vast areas of land. I do not like to add to it because that is not the question. My point is that one aspect of the developmental strategy should be the removal of these developmental constraints, namely, flood hazard and hazard caused by the intrusion of saline water.

(2) A massive programme—this is the key—of land reforms. As I have already said, quite a large number of people of the Sunderbans are landless. A vast number of the agriculturists of the Sunderbans are poor and landless farmers while there has been a concentration of land in the hands of a few. Therefore, for any developmental programme, the key lies in the land reforms. Here I emphatically say that if there are no land reforms, all other structure and your developmental strategy are not going to help or are not going to bring about the desired result.

(3) There should be a massive programme in the area of technical production and productivity and it should be followed by crop diversification as mentioned by Comrade Jyotirmoy Bosu, regarding cotton cultivation, cultivation of sun flower and cultivation of other commercial crops ...

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): Most of them are State subjects.

17.17 hrs.

[SHRI DIRENDRANATH BASU in the Chair]

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Our hon. Railway Minister feels that they are State subjects. There is no doubt it. But I will come to the point raised by him.

(4) A more an efficient and planned utilisation of the natural resources of the Sunderbans, namely, the fisheries and the forests, the scenic beauty of the Sunderbans and the sanctuary. The developmental projects should be on these lines.

(5) Adequate infra-structures are to be built to support the developmental programme, namely the construction of the arterial transportation linkages and supply of power.

(6) The supply of the basic utilities of life, namely, health and education, etc.

Finally, a suitable instrument for implementing the programme of development.

Here I come to the Railway Minister. When he says that the matter is exclusively within the purview of the State Government, I think any Government and this government also accepts the continuity of the government. I think we do accept the theory of continuity of government. In the year 1972, of course, your party was not in power and the Planning Commission had some programme. I read here a particular answer given by the then Planning Minister, Shri Mohan Dharia. He accepted the need for having a special programme for the development of the Sunderbans region. He said this in his capacity as

[Shri Chitta Basu]

the Planning Minister of the Government of India. He said:

"A scheme called Sunderbans Delta Project has been prepared by the Government of West Bengal for the development of the Sunderbans area of West Bengal. The project is proposed to be completed in three phases which would take between 3 to 10 years."

In conclusion he said:

"As originally estimated, the project will cost approximately Rs. 200 crores."

The West Bengal Government is quite conscious of the problem. They have also developed a pilot project. Mr. Saugata Roy made a mention of it. That will cost Rs. 86 crores. Government of India, Planning Commission says, the project would cost Rs. 200 crores. The Sunderbans Development Board has evolved a project which is likely to cost Rs. 86 crores. So far no funds have been made available to the State Government. Sir, I do not want to take up old issues. The Government of West Bengal has agreed to allocate Rs. 1 crore for the development of Sunderbans area despite so many financial constraints on their part. My information is that the Sunderbans Development Corporation has also enlisted the sympathy of CARE organisation. They have made a donation of Rs. 1.20 crores. Thus in 1977-78 this would come to Rs. 2.40 crores. That project must be implemented. The Centre should come to the aid of West Bengal Government. They should supply them with the financial resources in this regard.

Then there was the Netherlands Expert Committee's project costing Rs. 19 crores. The cost might have increased to Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 crores. It has not been cleared by the Government of India. This has been referred to Central Water and Power Commission, Poona, and they are sitting over it. What stands in the way to give it clearance? The Netherlands experts have already worked out this

project in 1968. My second point is this. Mr. Bosu might have referred to the proposed construction of Budge Budge Nankhana railwayline. The hon. Minister for Railways is here. He is eloquent in saying in this House that the problems of the backward areas will be properly taken into account.

This is a plan project of Rs. 11 crores. Since he is present in the House, I tell him that the railway link between Budge Budge and Nankhana is not a separate railwayline. There is network of railwayline and throughout the Sunderbans, infrastructural development is must. Therefore, as I mentioned earlier, it is highly necessary to develop the infrastructure. The Railway Ministry should therefore give its clearance to that project so that infrastructure can be built up for development of Sunderbans.

My third simple point is this. There is dearth of power. And West Bengal is suffering from power shortage. The State Electricity Board have proposed that if there is proper harnessing of the quick flowing rivers in Sunderbans, there can be hydel power. At least you can harness the hydel power in Sunderbans and, at least that power should be made available there. Then you can really industrialise and bring about a social change in Sunderbans.

If these are made available, I am sure, we shall have a good profile for Sunderbans. I am not talking of the profile of the agony or poverty. But, Sunderbans will really be a place of lust and a beautiful profile of prosperity and happiness. Besides it would be a very beautiful place which Government of West Bengal can offer to the nation.

श्री उग्रसेन (देवरिया) : माननीय सभापति जी, जब मैं बोलने खड़ा हुआ तो मेरे एक मित्र ने यह कहा कि उग्रसेन को सुन्दरबन से क्या मतलब, उनको सुन्दरबन के बारे में क्या कहना है ?

इसका जवाब मैं इसलिये देना चाहता हूँ चूँकि मैं भी दुखिया हूँ, पिछड़ा हुआ हूँ और मजबूर हूँ, जहाँ से चुनकर आया हूँ ।

घायल की गति घायल जाने, और न जाने कोई ।

जो दर्द श्री ज्योतिर्मय बसु और चित्ता वसु को है, उससे कम दर्द मेरा नहीं है । माननीय सभापति महोदय, आप भी वहीं से आते हैं । मैं तो अंग्रेजी नहीं पढ़ा हूँ, लेकिन जब यह हमारे दोनों साथी अंग्रेजी में सुन्दरवन की गरीबी का वर्णन कर रहे थे तो मैं सोच रहा था कि काश ! वह अपनी मातृभाषा बंगला में इस बात को रखते, तो हम लोग भी अच्छी तरह से समझते ।

मैं जानता हूँ, मैंने जो कुछ रिपोर्ट में पढ़ा है । अभी इन लोगों ने कहा तो जरूर है लेकिन उसकी मुनवाई उस सरकार ने नहीं की । मुझे बंगला देश की एक महान आत्मा की उक्ति याद आ गई, मेरे गुरु लोहिया उसे कहा करते थे—

यदि तोमार डाक, केओ ना सुने आसे,
तबी तू ई एकला चलो, एकला चलो रे ।

अगर कोई तुम्हारी आवाज नहीं सुनता है तो कोई परवाह नहीं, कोई बात नहीं, फूले चलो । मैं अपने मित्र से कहना चाहता हूँ कि यह पिछड़ेपन की लड़ाई आज की लड़ाई नहीं है । मेरे पास भी वह रिपोर्ट है । 1835 में कपास की खेती अंग्रेजों ने शुरू की, मगर वहाँ पर अभी तक कपास की खेती नहीं हुई है । टेक्सटाइल की 41 मिलें अंग्रेजों ने बनाई, उनमें से 15 बीमार हो गई । जब गुजरात में उनके लिये रूई जायेगी, तो मिल तो बीमार हो ही जायेगी, उनके लिये कच्चा माल चाहिये । आई० एस० आर० आई० की जो रिपोर्ट है, उसमें लिखा है कि काटन की उपज के लिये सबसे अच्छी जगह सुन्दरवन है । अगर सुन्दरवन में रूई का उत्पादन बढ़ा दिया जाये, उसकी जमीन में थोड़ा वैज्ञानिक तरीके से खेती की जाये और उसके लिये वहाँ के किसानों को सस्ते दाम पर ट्रैक्टर, बीज और खाद दी

जाये और कीड़े मारने की दवाएं दी जायें तो कोई वजह नहीं है कि जो रूई गुजरात में पैदा करते हैं, वही वहाँ न पैदा कर सकें ।

वहाँ 22, 23 लाख की आबादी है । मैंने हिसाब लगाया है, 10 लाख एकड़ के करीब वहाँ पर जमीन है और उसका भी 54 फीसदी जंगल है । वहाँ अभी तक लकड़ी के व्यापार का भी सिलसिला नहीं हुआ जिससे जंगल काटकर खेती के लिये जगह बन सके । वहाँ आधी से ज्यादा जमीन पर जंगल है । जब समुद्र का खारा पानी वहाँ आता है, तो वह उस जमीन को खारा बना देता है । वहाँ बड़े जमींदार जरूर हैं, लेकिन जमीन की विषमता इतनी है कि एक आदमी के पास 0.03 एकड़ जमीन है । उत्तर प्रदेश का पूर्वांचल भी पिछड़ा हुआ है, मगर वहाँ पर एक आदमी के पास 0.5 एकड़ से लेकर 0.7 एकड़ जमीन है । सुन्दरवन में 90 फीसदी लोग जमीन के भरोसे हैं । लोग बाहर नहीं जाते हैं, क्योंकि इस का कोई उपाय नहीं है । जब जमीन इतनी कम हो और खेती पर इतने ज्यादा लोग निर्भर हों, तो परिणाम भुखमरी के अलावा और कुछ नहीं हो सकता है ।

एक माननीय सदस्य ने कहा है कि पिछड़े इलाकों की पूरी आबादी को सामूहिक रूप से बढ़िया इलाकों में भेज दिया जाये । लेकिन कोई भी व्यक्ति अपना घर नहीं छोड़ना चाहता है । हमारे वहाँ के लोग नौकरी के लिए कलकत्ता जाते हैं, और वहाँ बाबू साहब कहलाते हैं, लेकिन दशहरा तथा होली के अवसर पर भाग कर घर चले आते हैं । इस लिए उस क्षेत्र के लोगों को कहीं दूसरी जगह नहीं भेजा जा सकता है ।

अगर वहाँ पर घरेलू उद्योग के आघार पर छोटे मोटे कारखाने लगा दिये जायें, तो उन्हें काम भी मिल सकता है और उन की प्रति-व्यक्ति आमदनी भी बढ़ सकती है ।

ऐसे पिछड़े इलाके में, जहाँ बारिश होती है, गन्न की भी खेती हो सकती है । मैं सुझाव

[श्री उपसेन]

देना चाहता हूँ कि आई० सी० ए० आर० के बड़े बड़े वैज्ञानिक इस बात की जांच करें कि जब हमारे पिछड़े हुए इलाके में गन्ना पैदा होता है, तो क्या सुन्दरबन के वायु-मंडल में गन्ना पैदा नहीं किया जा सकता है इसका अलावा वहाँ ट्यूबर क्रॉप्स उगाई जा सकती हैं। अगर वहाँ चुकन्दर पैदा किया जाये, तो खंडसारी के लिए सल्फर प्लांट लगाये जा सकते हैं।

श्री निता बसु ने कहा है कि इस सम्बन्ध में प्लानिंग कमीशन की योजना है, जिस के अन्तर्गत 200 करोड़ रुपया खर्च किया जायेगा, और पश्चिमी बंगाल सरकार की भी योजना है। योजनायें तो हमारे पास बहुत हैं, लेकिन उन्हें कार्यान्वित नहीं किया जाता है, और हमारी प्रगति के मार्ग में यही एक बड़ी बाधा है। मैंने अपने देश की योजनाओं और दुनिया के दूसरे देशों की योजनाओं का अध्ययन किया है। मैं प्रधान मंत्री से कहूँगा कि एक समय-बद्ध योजना बनाई जाये—यह निश्चित कर दिया जाये कि अमुक अवधि के अन्दर इस काम को पूरा करना है। चाइना में यह निश्चित कर दिया जाता है कि किसी योजना को इतने समय के अन्दर पूरा करना है। जहाँ तक रूस का सम्बन्ध है, अगर कृषि विभाग तीन साल की योजना को दो साल और दस महीने में पूरा कर देता है, और दो महीने का समय बचा लेता है, तो सम्बन्धित लोगों को स्टेकनावाइटस कहा जाता है, उन्हें विशेष अनुदान मिलता है और उन्हें तरक्की दी जाती है।

सुन्दरबन एक क्रान्तिकारी भूमि है। बचपन में हम पढ़ा करते थे कि वहाँ जंगलों में क्रान्तिकारी रहते हैं, जिन्होंने आजादी की लड़ाई में प्रमुख भूमिका अदा की थी। ऐसा कोई हिन्दुस्तानी नहीं है, जो सुन्दरबन से परिचित न हो। हिन्दुस्तान का इतिहास इस बात का साक्षी है कि जिन लोगों ने आजादी के

सिर जितनी ज्यादा कुर्बानियाँ दी हैं, आज वे उतने ही ज्यादा भूखे हैं। हम लोग 1857 में लड़े, 1942 में लड़े, और आज हम सब से पिछड़े हुए हैं। और जिन लोगों के अंग्रेजों का साथ दिया—सूरजमल नागरमल, सिहानिया, बजाज और रगटा आदि—आज वे सब से आगे हैं। शादी ब्याह पर उन की तरफ से इतने बढ़िया कार्ड आते हैं। हम लोग भी कभी कभी उन के यहाँ जा कर चाय पी लेते हैं। सुन्दरबन में रहने वाले लोगों के बाप-दादाओं ने आजादी की लड़ाई लड़ी और इस का फल वे लोग आज भी भोग रहे हैं। 1857 की आजादी की लड़ाई में भाग लेने के लिए उत्तर प्रदेश के पूर्वांचल के लोगों को पहले अंग्रेजों ने दंडित किया, और फिर कांग्रेसियों ने—श्री सीगत राय ने—दंडित किया। अब जनता पार्टी की सरकार आई है। उस से हमारी बड़ी अपेक्षाएँ हैं। जैसा कि मराठी में कहते हैं—आमची पक्की खातिरी आय—हमें विश्वास है कि सरकार समयबद्ध योजना बनायेगी और उसको लागू करेगी। जैसा कि हमारे घोषणा-पत्र में लिखा हुआ है और हमारे प्रधान मंत्री जी ने कहा है कि जो पिछड़े हुए हैं उनको ऊपर उठावेंगे, उनके लिए विशेष अवसर प्रदान करेंगे। जो पहले से एक नम्बर मल पर या राजधानी एक्सप्रेस पर सवार हैं उनको बैलगाड़ी की क्या जरूरत है? बैलगाड़ी वालों को ही फास्ट गाड़ी चाहिए। महात्मा बुद्धने जैसा कहा है कि जो अशक्त हैं उन्हीं को वैशाखी दी जाये। मैं बौद्ध दर्शन का कायल हूँ। सुन्दरबन के लोग, आंध्र के लोग, तेलंगाना के लोग और असम के लोग और आपके क्षेत्र में भी मैं जानता हूँ लोग पिछड़े हुए हैं। मैं बचपन में कलकत्ता बहुत जाता था इसलिए मैं जानता हूँ। इसलिए वहाँ के लोगों को विशेष अवसर मिलने चाहिए। समय-बद्ध योजना बनायी जाये और सुन्दरबन के इलाके में छोटे छोटे उद्योग स्थापित किए जाएं। कपास की खेती का भी प्रबन्ध किया जाय। जैसा कि बसु जी ने कहा है कि इस की

खेती, वहां पर हो सकती है। समुद्र के पानी से जो भूमि खारी हो जाती है उस को वैज्ञानिक ढंग से ठीक किया जाय। मैं आशा करता हूँ जनता पार्टी की सरकार इस प्रकारसे वहां के लोगों को इंसानियत की जिन्दगी बसा करने का अवसर देगी। लेकिन इस काम में ज्यादा समय नहीं लगना चाहिए, क्योंकि समय निकलता जा रहा है।

इस देश का बंटवारा तो हुआ, दुख दर्द का बंटवारा न हुआ। उत्तर प्रदेश की गरीबी और सुन्दरवन की गरीबी में कोई फर्क नहीं है। मैं चाहता हूँ कि सुन्दरवन जैसे अनेक काले धब्बे इस देश पर लगे हुए हैं उनको जितनी जल्दी हो सके दूर किया जाय और उन इलाकों को आगे बढ़ाया जाय। तब तक और जगहों की तरक्की को रोक दिया जाय और इन इलाकों को आगे बढ़ाया जाय। इन शब्दों के साथ मैं चाहता हूँ कि रोज यहाँ पर लोग पिछड़े इलाकों की बात उठाएँ ताकि सरकार इसपर कुछ विचार करे और उसको मिटाने के लिए काम करे।

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chiray-inkil): I join myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Members of this House regarding the development of Sunderbans, a backward area in the 24 Parganas district. In this connection, Shri Bosu made a very important point about sea erosion, a natural calamity. In Kerala our people are the worst sufferers of this natural calamity and every year when the monsoon starts, part of our land is lost. I suggest that you should take it up on a war footing and use all measures that are available, including foreign technology and know-how.

I agree with what Mr. Sarkar said, he said that it was one of the largest districts. If there is a small district, more attention can be paid. I appeal through you to the present government of West Bengal to split that district

into two so that more attention can be given to this area. It would certainly be more advantageous. Mr. Saugata Roy spoke about the land and the people. It is not only land that is being eroded, Education facilities are poor; people are ignorant of their rights. They have been exploited by land owners; there is no proper implementation of land legislation. I want to bring to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister one phenomenon. New mobile courts have been started, they summon people, especially middle-class people; it is reported in the Anand Bazar Patrika by no less a person than a member of the executive of the Janata Party, Mr. Asok Das Gupta:

"It is characteristic that Samajra function as a sort of mobile cultural court indulging in summary trial of cases arising out of agrarian disputes in the interior of 24 Parganas."

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Jadavpur): All these tendentious reports are being quoted here. It is not relevant at all. He is helping neither Sunderbans nor Kerala by this.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Sir, when you occupy the Chair, you are no longer a Congressman. What he is saying is not relevant to the debate. He must be corrected.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: If you are so much interested to know the facts, you should go there and see for yourself instead of relying on such reports.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: If the area and the people are backward, it should not be exploited by anybody, neither by the jotedars nor by a group of political people. The rule of law should be applied to everybody. No less a person than a Janata leader has said it. The difficulty is, my CPM friends cannot tolerate criticism. (*Interruptions*).

I shall repeat the three points I made so that the Prime Minister may answer them. Firstly, sea erosion is a natural calamity. Secondly, the 24

[Shri Vayadar Ravi]

Parganas district should be divided into two districts. Thirdly, nobody should be allowed to take the law into their own hands and summon the people, try them and award punishment.

With these words, I support Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu's motion.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): Sir, I feel a little unhappy that even in the consideration of a matter which is non-controversial some heat of excitement should be generated. There are some honourable friends of mine who cannot live without it. That is my difficulty. Why bring into this matter the rule of law? The rule of law is difficult to maintain here. Even rules are not observed here. You must realise what a gigantic task I am facing. Therefore, we have got to be patient with other people, more than we are with ourselves. If we do not do that, we will not be able to achieve what we want to achieve. Sunderbans development is a subject where there is no question of controversy. I do not dispute the facts which are given. They are all there. They have been cited and I need not cite them again. But this is not the only area which is like this. There are many areas like this in this country and we have got to see that all these areas are developed. On that score I have no doubt. It is therefore that I am saying that we must pay more attention to these things, than paying attention to other things which will come in the way of developing these areas. We cannot look to only one side or to the other side.

Then the question of resources arises. Our resources are limited. When we try to mobilise more resources, then the demand comes "drop this tax" "drop that tax", but no alternative is shown as to how to raise the money for the projects. When the question of expenditure comes, people say "spend here" or "spend there". These are the things which provide an exercise for our brains as to how to reconcile them, and find some solution

for them. I do not mean to say that we must not find a solution.

The Sunderban area is not all in our country. Out of 8,000 sq. miles of Sunderbans, which is the delta between three rivers, 3,000 square miles are with us and 5,000 square miles with Bangladesh. Therefore, we have to be careful to see that we do not take up any development work, which brings us into trouble with them. Then another problem would be raised. Therefore, we have to examine it very carefully. That does not mean that we should not do it. We should do it, but it takes a little time.

There is a scheme prepared by the Ganga Flood Control Commission, by the waterways people, costing about Rs. 16.5 crores, and that has been approved by the Planning Commission. It has also been referred now to the expert agency which we have in Poona, which considers all the hydrological problems. This must not have a reaction in another place. I have found it from experience that when we raise the embankment in one place, the other place gets inundated. That will be transferring the misery from one place to another. That does not mean that we cannot find a solution for doing it in such a manner that the other place is not inundated. That requires careful examination of all the factors. We will do it not only in this place but also in other areas.

The other day we talked about the eastern part of UP. I do not know which is more miserable and which is less miserable. There are very backward pockets in every State. I have no doubt on that score. Every State practically has such parts.

If it is said that it is the business of only the Centre to do it, then, should the Centre assume power to run all these things? That would be dangerous. The States want more powers, more finances. But when it comes to producing money, then they say "you produce the money". We have to give more money to some areas which are

less developed in comparison with areas which are more developed. The Centre has got to see such things and the Centre must help in all these projects. I do not say that the States alone should do it. It is not possible for the States to do such things. But the State has to do its maximum for these people, for these areas, and that we are going to do. We are not at all unsympathetic to these problems. We are more than sympathetic, if I may say so. The main problem is that ways and means have to be found and the agencies have to take it up and work properly.

There is another scheme costing Rs. 18 crores for other matters connected with these areas. All these are being very carefully examined, not at leisure but as expeditiously as possible, and I am sure that steps will be taken to see that these works are taken in hand as soon as it is possible to fulfil the conditions for implementation without danger to other places or areas. For example, there is a railway scheme also. It has not yet been approved, it is being considered.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: It is a very small line.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: The railway line will have an impact on these embankments. You have to examine all these things together. Otherwise, it will create other disturbances.

Why did this happen? Before 1830 Sunderbans was a forest. There was no population whatsoever there. Then they began to colonise or populate and cultivate the area. There was no thought of the future. Therefore all these evils also have arisen. If it was necessary for them to go there. I do not ask why they went there. The area was there, and many people wanted to have occupation, livelihood etc. So, they went there, but in those days all these other things were not considered. We have now to consider and find a remedy for the evils of salinity that have arisen. Even fertility has become less in this area because of salinity.

All these things are being taken into consideration.

We can develop more fisheries there, we can also have forests properly developed so that they give occupation and income to people, we can have handicrafts and small industries also and every part has got to be treated as suits that part. That is how we are tackling this problem. The Planning Commission is taking it up and examining it. I can only assure my hon. friends that we will do whatever is possible for us to do and without any avoidable delay. That is all that I can say.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I will not take much time, I will only say a few things.

The hon. Prime Minister in his wisdom has said that there are many more backward areas. It is very true, and we are fully aware of the fact that there are many more backward areas in the country which require immediate attention and immediate developmental programmes, but here what I have tried to emphasize or highlight is that the invasion of saline water coming from the sea be specially taken up as a national responsibility and funds be found as best as the nation can find. I am not saying you must have Rs. 10 crores tomorrow. We are saying that the job will be spread over a period of nine or ten years minimum. The total outlay is only Rs. 13 crores. The annual allotment may not be more than Rs. 1.25 crores. Therefore, my humble appeal to the Prime Minister and the Planning Minister is that this aspect be treated as a national responsibility and funds be found for it, jointly with the State Government. I have not come with the object of extracting money through some demagoguery. I am trying to place facts before you. I say the State Government have to do to the best of their might. Therefore, I would request the hon. Prime Minister to give us some sort of assurance with which we can go back to Sunderbans. I may be there in the next ten days.

[Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu]

About Budge Budge, I suppose I am right if I say that the entire stretch of railway line rests on the mainland, not on the embankment. It has been found to be very viable. It has been cleared by the Railway Board, and the Railway Board has requested the Planning Commission to clear it as early as possible, but it has not been cleared. Therefore, my appeal to the hon. Prime Minister is that he should ask the Planning Commission to clear the project as early as possible.

Thirdly, my request is that a special cell—I have repeatedly mentioned it—be constituted in the Planning Commission for all the backward areas and for Sunderbans, because here invasion of the sea comes, and let that cell be saddled with the job of making advancements in these areas.

That is all I want to say. I do not want to say much because I have known the Prime Minister not today but from 1967 and he speaks less and he also likes to hear less. I sincerely expect that we will get something for these poor people who are living in perpetual misery.

About my hon. friend, Mr. Sarkar, he has talked about something. He perhaps did not realise that what I was quoting was all, without exception, extracts from the reports given by the scientists of eminence

SHRI S. K. SARKAR: I have also got extracts from different eminent persons.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I only say that whatever I have placed before this House is all, without exception, quotations and extracts from the reports of scientists. I do not quite understand whether by allowing saline water to come and inundate the paddy fields and cultivating fish there, that land will be rendered totally useless for decades for cultivation

SHRI S. K. SARKAR: That is not a place of habitation

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I only want to say that Mr. Sarkar should not sound like a fish monger. We do not want to create another thousands and thousands of displaced persons and hand over the land

SHRI S. K. SARKAR: I am not saying so.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I do not want to say anything more.

I would only appeal to the hon. Prime Minister that I have made out three points and let those points receive consideration. I have moved my motion which is a very innocent one. It does not censure anybody; it does not point out any lapse. The motion is, more or less, an appeal to the Central Government. I request that it may be adopted by the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shall I put the motion to the vote of the House or does the hon. Member want to withdraw it?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: There is nothing in it. It is an innocent one.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: He wanted an assurance. I have given it before he asked for it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Prime Minister has given an assurance.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: The motion reads:

“That this House notes with concern the poverty and backwardness of Sunderbans in West Bengal and recommends that a Parliamentary team should extensively tour the area....”

There is no dispute about the poverty and the backwardness of Sunderbans. It asks for a Parliamentary team to visit that area. That is the only motion. There is nothing pernicious in it.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): The Prime Minister has already given an

assurance. So, there is no need of a Committee going there. Accepting the spirit of what the Prime Minister has said, the hon. Member, Shri Jyotirmoy Bosu should withdraw his motion.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: If that is the pleasure of the House, I gladly withdraw my motion. I seek leave for doing so.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is it the pleasure of the House to allow him to withdraw the motion?

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

The motion was by leave, withdrawn.

17.57 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

FIXATION OF SUGARCANE PRICE

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Laxminarayana Pandeya.

डा० लक्ष्मी नारायण पांडेय (मंदसौर) : सभापति जी, दिनांक 14 नवम्बर को गन्ने की कीमतों के निर्धारण के मामले के लेकर सदन में एक प्रश्न उपस्थित किया गया था, जिसके उत्तर में माननीय मंत्री जी ने बताया था कि जो कीमतें निर्धारित की गई हैं, उनको देखते हुए किसानों में किसी प्रकार का असन्तोष नहीं है। लेकिन उनका इस प्रकार का वक्तव्य सर्वथा तथ्यों से क्लिप्त है। वास्तव में किसानों में असन्तोष है। किसान चाहते हैं कि उनके गन्ने की कीमत बढ़ाई जाए। गन्ना उत्पादक लोग कई वर्षों से इस बात की मांग करते आ रहे हैं कि गन्ना नीति इस प्रकार की तय की जाए कि जिसके कारण किसानों को उनके उत्पादन का सही-सही मूल्य मिल सके।

मुझे बड़ा आश्चर्य है कि प्रायः सभी औद्योगिक संस्थान, या उद्योग पति, उद्योगों

से जो चीजें तैयार की जाती हैं, उनका उत्पादन मूल्य स्वयं तय करते हैं या उनका मूल्य उसी प्रकार तय किया जाता है जैसा वह चाहते हैं। लेकिन किसान अपनी उत्पादित वस्तुओं का मूल्य स्वयं तय नहीं कर पाता है। या तो सरकार उसे तय करती है, या बाजार में व्यापारी तय करते हैं। सरकार को इस बात का ध्यान रखना चाहिए कि किसान अपनी उत्पादित वस्तुओं का जो उचित मूल्य मांगें वह उसको दिया जा सके या दिलवाया जा सके। आज किसान के मन में यह बात है कि सरकार उसके उत्पादन का मूल्य तय करती है किन्तु औद्योगिक उत्पादन का नहीं? अतः सरकार इसे ठीक करे। अन्यथा कभी भी पारस्परिक विरोध समाप्त नहीं हो सकता है। उस समय जो वक्तव्य दिया गया था कि किसानों को दिया जाने वाला न्यूनतम मूल्य साढ़े आठ रुपया निर्धारित किया गया है, मैं आप का ध्यान इस ओर आकर्षित करना चाहता हूँ कि बाजार में मिलने वाली जलाऊ लकड़ी 24 रुपया प्रति क्विंटल है और पशुओं को खिलाने वाला चारा भी 16 रुपया प्रति क्विंटल है जबकि गन्ना में से रस निकलता है, चीनी पैदा की जाती है और विदेशी मुद्रा भी अर्जित की जाती है, उसका भाव साढ़े आठ रुपए क्विंटल है। यह बड़ा ही हास्यास्पद है और इस पर सरकार भी विचार करने के लिए तैयार नहीं है। यह अत्यन्त दुख की बात है। आज भी किसानों का गन्ने की कीमत का करोड़ों रुपया बकाया है। 12 करोड़ तो मूल बकाया है पिछले वर्ष में गन्ने का मूल्य बढ़ा कर एरियर दिया जाने वाला रुपया इसके अतिरिक्त है। कुल ब्याज समेत मिला कर देखें तो कई करोड़ रुपया बाकी है। मंत्री जी के पास आंकड़े होंगे, वे देखें कि कुल मिला कर किसानों को कितना देय है। गन्ने के मूल्य के रूप में भी जो दिया जाना है वह भी बहुत अधिक है।