

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I am not angry with the Minister. In fact, I love him. But I am angry at the procedure adopted.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Because the Minister treated him as a casual labourer.

SHRI C K CHANDRAPPA: When Prof. Mavalankar asked whether this membership was only for those two days of the meeting, the Minister said, it may be so. I am very much surprised at that answer. The Committee may not be a statutory committee, the Committee may not be a committee of the type which the Minister mentioned, but the Committee was constituted with a certain purpose, with eminent people in the list. And the Minister said that they were selected on the basis of certain criteria. Now, you are selecting a delegation to go abroad to function as members of the Committee, to participate in the discussion. I think it would have been proper if those members could have been consulted — if it is not obligatory, it may be important — whether they would be available to go. That should have been ascertained. I think, in this case, it was not done. I do not know in what way these persons are more eminent than those who were already there. Here, two members resigned. One was already abroad and he was included. Another member, Mr. Ghosh, did not attend because of short notice. Why did the Minister take this trouble of informing somebody at short notice? When some people were associated with it, whether it is Mavalankar or somebody else, that is a different matter, they should have been given certain consideration. And there is no use getting angry over that point.

MR CHAIRMAN: He said that it was not only one man but he had given consideration to six persons.

SHRI C K CHANDRAPPA: If you compare only Mr. Gore and Mrs. Kochhar were the only two from

the earlier commission. What was the criteria in selecting these people? In what way they were more eminent than those who were already there? Who selected them? Whether there was any pressure from outside over the bureaucrats? That is something important to be looked into.

I would like him to reply dispassionately. I am not angry with you and you need not be angry with me.

DR PRATAP CHANDRA CHUNDER: All these months I have been answering so many questions and meeting all situations. I have never been angry. I have stressed certain points and submitted them with some sort of emphasis. I most respectfully request my hon. friends not to interpret it as a sign of anger.

However, as I have already explained, the selections are made ad hoc in respect of a particular sub-commission, and this has been the practice. There are four sub-commissions of which this Education-Culture is one. It is wrong to say that there was any pressure from outside. We judge the requirement of a particular meeting and then we decide who could be suitable for the purpose.

12.14 hrs

#### CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### DECISION TO CLOSE DOWN REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): I call the attention of the Minister of Works and Housing and Supply and Rehabilitation to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The reported decision of the Government to close down the Rehabilitation Department despite the protests of the Governments of West Bengal and Tripura."

**THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSING AND SUPPLY AND REHABILITATION (SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT):** The Department of Rehabilitation was set up soon after independence of India when a large number of refugees came from erstwhile West Pakistan to organise relief and rehabilitation measures for them. Later on the activities of the Department were enlarged when the refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan started flowing in. The Department of Rehabilitation is also responsible for relief and resettlement of repatriates from Sri Lanka, Burma, Uganda, Mozambique, Zaire, Vietnam, Tibetan refugees, displaced persons from Chhamb-Niabat area in Jammu and Kashmir and Sindhi refugees who had entered Rajasthan and Gujarat during the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971, and for their implementation.

Before this Government took over, the work in this Department was proceeding without a time bound programme of implementing the schemes. We have lately taken effective measures to accelerate the pace of resettlement. For instance, the work of Pottern Irrigation-cum-Resettlement scheme in Dandakaranya is being expedited. Allocation of funds for this scheme was enhanced last year from the previous average level of Rs. 90.00 lakhs to Rs. 4.40 crores. During the current year a provision of Rs. 5.60 crores has been made which would, if necessary, be enhanced depending on the progress of schemes. About 10,000 labour force have been employed on the Potteru canal works for this year and the Project has been asked to employ a large number (about 15,000) to expedite the works for the next year.

The refugees who entered Rajasthan and Gujarat in the wake of 1971 Conflict have been living in camps since 1971, for the maintenance of which the Government has been incurring expenditure of about Rs. 2.50 crores per annum. The Government have decided to extend the benefit of

permanent rehabilitation to them so that the camps may be closed as soon as possible. Both the State Governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat have submitted schemes for the rehabilitation of these Displaced Persons. A good number of families in Rajasthan camps are expected to be rehabilitated within a period of about 6 months from now.

881 families of Chhamb Displaced Persons as a result of Indo-Pak Conflict, 1971, still continue in the camps. Steps have also been taken for their early rehabilitation.

The Government are committed to tackling the question of rehabilitation of displaced persons with a greater sense of urgency. A time-bound programme of action has been drawn up with a view to securing speedier execution of various projects of rehabilitation. The Government is concentrating on a constructive, positive, long-term and permanent solution so that the displaced persons and refugees might merge with the general population of the country sooner, and Government is keen that they should not remain in a continued state of unsettlement and unrest in camps.

The Government is custodian of public funds and has the responsibility of their proper utilisation. They cannot allow the Department to continue indefinitely without a sense of purpose and without the objective of completing the work assigned to it in time.

The Government are, therefore, keen on the expeditious implementation of the schemes for rehabilitation effectively under a time-bound programme and with this being put through the work for the Department will consequently shrink.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU:** At the outset, I want to point out that I wanted to rise on a point of order when the Minister was rising to reply to the call attention. The reply, as you

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would have seen is not in conformity with the motion, but since I did not want to scuttle the discussion today, I did not rise on a point of order. You will kindly note that the motion itself says:

"Government's reported decision to close down the Rehabilitation Department despite the protest of the Governments of West Bengal and Tripura".

In his long statement, you might have noticed there is no mention about the points of view of the Government of West Bengal and the Government of Tripura. My point of order is whether you propose that I should further proceed or should wait for a further reply to my calling attention notice.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: Unfortunately, these letters have been received very recently, so much so that the letter from the Tripura Government is dated only 29th July, 1978 and you will be surprised that it has been delivered to me just now, only a couple of hours before I came over here. These letters are being considered, but unfortunately the premise is not right. In my reply I have tried to emphasize the fact.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH (Nandyal): When the Government of Tripura writes, why is there so much delay?

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: We are not discussing delays just now, but I am telling you the facts.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: They wrote on the 29th but it has been delivered only today. That is why I asked.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: If you have some question, you might put it, and I will answer it.

Why I emphasized that point was that the question is not of closing down the Rehabilitation Department

The fundamental thing is expediting the very slow progress of rehabilitation. And the Government does not refuse to fulfil its commitment. The Department will be closed down or wound up only after it has fully completed its commitments. That is the point. And that is why I entered into all the details. I wanted to give examples as to how we are expediting the process of rehabilitation and the things which were going slow we are trying to do quickly. The question is not of closing down the Department. The question fundamentally is to accelerate the pace of rehabilitation and relief facilities. That is the point.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Should I proceed, or

MR CHAIRMAN: Do you want to put more questions on this?

SHRI CHITTA BASU: It is not just a question for more clarification.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: Those two letters which came from the West Bengal Government and the Tripura Government are being considered. They have recently been received. We have not even come to a decision. We have not even sent a reply. In fact, the letter addressed by the Chief Minister of West Bengal was addressed to the Prime Minister, which was passed on to me only recently.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I want to discuss this point in a little more detailed manner.

Sir, the rehabilitation programme for the unfortunate victims of the Partition of our country, if it is to be at all meaningful, must be based on certain objective strategy. This objective strategy must necessarily include and aim at providing the victims with homes, secure livelihood and confidence in the future. I am glad that this objective was pursued with great vigilance in the case of rehabilitation of displaced persons from West Pakistan.

The fact is that the total number of refugees from West Pakistan was 47 lakhs and their rehabilitation was completed by the year 1955-56. The Government of India acquired land, built up houses and shops and handed them over to the displaced persons on a rental basis which were subsequently transferred to them on free hold basis.

Particularly. I also want to mention that the success of the Rehabilitation Programme for Punjab has rightly been described by Mr. M. S. Randhawa, a former Rehabilitation Commissioner, when he writes in his book

"Phoenix like the displaced Punjabi farmer has risen out of ashes"

Sir, the key to the success of the Rehabilitation Programme of Punjab lies in a very vital factor and that factor is the compensation to the dispossessed and it was of crucial importance in the case of West Pakistan refugees.

There is a book *The Story of Rehabilitation*, published by your own Ministry. I would like to quote a certain portion from it as follows:

"The concept of compensation is the off-spring of idealism. It was nurtured at the roots, by the Prime Ministers, compassionate concern for the millions dispossessed of their all by Partition. Nehru's emotional allegiance to the cause won for it many champions, none stouter than the successive Rehabilitation Ministers."

Sir, the fact is that as early as in 1949, the Government of India pledged itself to the payment of compensation and it is recorded in the book, *The Story of Rehabilitation*. But the compensation was to be paid to the West Pakistan refugees alone. In 1950, the Nehru-Liaquat Agreement was signed. Ever since, it has been

used as an excuse to deprive the refugees from East Pakistan. I am sorry. I regret, I do not fret and fume in anger, but I say that compassion and consideration were not shown to the displaced persons from East Pakistan unfortunately, as compared to the displaced person who had come from the western sector.

Therefore, the rehabilitation programme of the displaced persons from East Pakistan remains the saddest chapter of our history of the post-independence period of our country. Excuse me if I say that it will go down in the history of our country as an act of serious betrayal of the people of the uprooted millions, if the Government does not correct the mistakes and reverse the process and look at some of the fundamental and basic points in the matter of rehabilitation.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY:  
The time should be extended by another half an hour.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let him put the question.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I repeat that this will go as an act of betrayal of the poor displaced persons by the powers that be. I hope and trust, I am confident, that the mistakes committed by the first Government would be corrected now, and the right approach to the problem would be adopted.

Now let me come to the other point. What are the basic reasons for the failure, dismal failure, of the rehabilitation programme of the East Pakistan refugees? Firstly, under the Nehru-Liaquat Pact or Agreement, the East Pakistan refugees were not recognised as refugees. They were not entitled to any compensation at all. Rehabilitation was not accepted, and this is very very important, as a primary objective of the Government of West Bengal, or of the Government of India at that time. The aim and object of the Government was only



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to provide the millions who were coming from the other side of the border with some sort of relief and succour. The rehabilitation aspect of the human problem was never thought of. It was never the idea of the then Government to give consideration, to take into account the most vital part of the programme, namely, rehabilitation, and it was confined to giving relief.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He should conclude now.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Do not disturb me. It is a very important problem.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Only put a question.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I am doing that, but do not disturb me in that.

Relief was the main plank and rehabilitation was ignored. Relief was the primary concern; rehabilitation was secondary; why secondary, it was tertiary or even more down the line. According to me, and I am sure others would bear me out, the Rehabilitation Ministry of the Government of India confined themselves to relief, and not rehabilitation, particularly in the case of East Pakistan refugees. When I say that, I do not say that in anger or in emotion; I am only narrating a fact of the Government of India itself.

Now let me take up the 96th Report of the Estimates Committee of 1959-60. I do not want to go by emotions, I am now standing only on the basis of the records of the Government of India. Now I am quoting the 96th Report. I quote the relevant portion. It states:

"It was only sometime in 1955 and thereafter that the Government of India really settled down to tackle the problem of displaced persons from East Pakistan on rational basis."

The hon. Minister will find it in page 8 of the Report of the Estimates Committee.

I will again draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the Annual Report of his Ministry for the year 1958-59. It says:

"A stage has been reached when it was possible to have a clearer vision of the physical size of the problem."

It further states that there had been a shift in emphasis from relief to rehabilitation. Please mark the time. It was in the year 1958-59. It is a very sad part of the story. The Government of India took ten long years to really understand the problem, comprehend the problem, to really have a clearer vision of the physical size of the problem and identify the emphasis — from relief to rehabilitation. You took ten long years, a decade, right from the day the migration began, right from 1946 when the great calamity befell on Noakhali, you did not realise the gravity of the situation; you could have a clearer vision only in the year 1958-59.

It does not end there. The saddest part of the story is again there. Only one year after, in the Annual Report of your Ministry for the year 1961-62 says:

"The gigantic task of the permanent settlement of nearly nine million displaced persons has been tackled and by and large completed"

I want the entire House to know that in 1958-59, the Estimates Committee said that the Government was seized of the problem, had been able to comprehend the real physical volume of problem and only one year after that, they said that by and large the problem had been solved and the programme has been completed. Therefore, they said, the rehabilitation programme was to be wound up. The Ministry was then under Mehr

The Andaman project was terminated although officially it was recognised that Andaman was eminently suitable for integrated development and, particularly, the purpose of the rehabilitation of displaced persons from East Pakistan.

Now to speak of the Dandakaranya project. The Dandakaranya project was pruned and, ultimately, scuttled. It was made a haven for the contractors, for the house construction, chosen by the Union Ministry of Rehabilitation. It was a contractors' paradise at the cost of Rs. 120 crores.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU:** Only 5 minutes more

"Finally, the Government did not find it necessary to accept the Rs. 500 crore project given by the United Front Government regarding the comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation of the refugees of East Pakistan."

According to the Finance Minister of the State of West Bengal, the existing refugee population of 6.5 million has now increased to 8 million. This does not include the unregistered refugees whose numbers are legion. This population is about 15 per cent of the total population of the State of West Bengal, thereby creating addi-

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tional problem in the socio-economic set-up of the State which erodes into the viability of the State's economy itself. Now, the problem facing the State today is, (a) the future developmental programmes for 528 Government colonies and 149 recognised squatters' settlements, (b) the problem of providing housing and shelters for thousands of neglected communities occupying disused barracks, ruined building and hutments on stretches of waste land in different parts of the State and (c) the problem of providing them with gainful employment since livelihood is the major question today in the matter of their economic rehabilitation. For this purpose, the Rs 500 crore project has been formulated by the Government of West Bengal so that these problems, as I have identified, can be properly tackled.

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much time more will you be taking? You have taken another 10 minutes.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: The record shows that 2,02,000 West Pakistan refugees had been found employment through employment exchanges by 1960. The orders were also issued by the Government of India to various Ministries, Departments and public sector undertakings to absorb West Pakistan refugees to fill vacancies. A Bureau of Employment was set up in the Home Ministry to ensure that the directives were adhered to. The Bureau found employment for 80,000 refugees from West Pakistan. This I state from the story of rehabilitation. As far as the Bengali refugees are concerned....

AN HON. MEMBER: The time should extended.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What extensoon? For how long are we to say?

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I will finish in 2 minutes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Every time, he says, 5 minutes, 2 minutes and he has taken more than half an hour.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I will finish in two minutes.

As for the refugees from eastern Pakistan, according to your Ministry's Annual Report, not more than 204 of the East Pakistan refugees secured jobs through Employment Exchanges. I have nothing more to say because there is no time.

Under these circumstances and having regard to all these things, would you kindly see that the entire approach to rehabilitation is changed now, that the mistakes committed by the earlier Government are corrected now and that a really objective strategy for rehabilitating the East Pakistan refugees is formulated? For that, would you kindly assure the House that you would constitute a Committee of Members of Parliament to review the entire programme of rehabilitation and find out its successes, if any, and weaknesses, if any, and to recommend comprehensive measures for it?

Would you kindly resume the rehabilitation process in the Andamans for East Pakistan refugees?

Would you kindly consider the right earnest and accept the Rs 500 crore project submitted by the Government of West Bengal to tackle comprehensively the problem now facing West Bengal today?

I think, the Minister will answer these questions not in anger but really to convince the House and the nation.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: Sir, I fully respect the feelings and the concern that the hon. Member has shown. But I would beg to be excused to remind the hon. Member of his own logic only half an hour before when he started raising objection to the fact that the answer provided by me was not to the question asked. The hon. Member has not only totally departed from the original content of the call-attention motion but has also gone outside the orbit of the functioning of the

Rehabilitation Department itself. He has been trying to retrace the history of rehabilitation from the very beginning to the end, and he is expecting me to answer all that! Anyway, I can answer his questions.

The main thing which relates to his question is about the letter that has been received from the West Bengal Government as well as another letter from the Tripura Government. I have already submitted that these letters are being considered, and we will see what can be done.

I would like the hon. Member to confine himself only to today's call-attention which has been put—with regard to the shrinking of the Rehabilitation Department. I have said that the Government is committed to certain things, the Government have to fulfil all its commitments. The Government is not as heartless as the hon. Member, Mr. Chitta Basu, has tried to paint it to be. I would not like to comment on whatever has happened in the past. I would only say that things were moving slowly. I expected some word of appreciation from the hon. Member that we have accelerated the pace of rehabilitation. He mentioned about the Dandakaranya Project. The Dandakaranya Project, which was conceived in 1958, did not even get started till 1964, and when it got started, it got started at a snail's pace. But from last year we have immensely increased the pace of its completion. That I have already said in my original statement. I have quoted the figures, the allocations and the way we are pursuing the matter. I would like hon. Members putting questions to me as to what are the steps that we are taking with regard to accelerating the pace of relief and rehabilitation.

As regards the suggestion made by the Chief Minister regarding the Rs. 500 crores project of comprehensive rehabilitation, I am not in a position to say anything just now, unless we have given it our fullest consideration.

If that is the sort of the debate and the way and the direction the hon. Member has gone, we will have to find out some appropriate time and an appropriate forum for that. I am quite prepared, but right now I am not.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: Let us extend the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, there is no question of extension of time.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: 7 O'clock?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you like.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah):** I am glad the Minister has made the announcement that the Department will be wound up after all the completions of the rehabilitation task. The main thing is: what are the tasks? Here lies the main difference. The way the reply has been given is not satisfactory. He has mentioned one Patratu scheme and said Rs. 5.60 crores has been allotted. But the State Government has demanded Rs. 500 crores. Is the difference minor?

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT:** They may demand Rs. 10,000 crores.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** You will have to understand. This is the main difference. And Mr. Chittu Basu tried to explain that the past government has already declared in 1959-60 that the rehabilitation problem has been mainly solved and that only some residual problems remain and you are carrying forward that understanding and the reply shows that. That is the reflection of that understanding.

Here is our main question. You are a new government. You have to assess the whole problem in a new way to see the reality.

Sir, I have got here a copy of the memorandum submitted by the West Bengal Government to the Seventy Finance Commission demanding an

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extra Rs 500 crores allotment for refugee rehabilitation question. Simply to impress upon the Minister I am reading some of the portions.

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT I have read it sir

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE You read it Sir

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT I have read it and I am fully aware of what is written in it

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE But the reply does not reflect that

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT I will give you the reply just now

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE The reply does not reflect, but let the other members know

MR CHAIRMAN When he has got it what is the point?

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE You and the House ought to know, Sir. We are discussing it in the House. Otherwise I could have talked with the Minister separately.

I personally met him last month. I gave a copy of the memorandum of the refugee organization. I am the general Secretary of that organization—the United Central Refugee Council. That is the oldest organization. There in their memorandum also this problem has been elaborated. I met the Prime Minister. I gave the same memorandum. The immediate reaction was, "We have spent so much money. How much money can we spend?" Unfortunately the press statement which appeared in the Delhi press carries a similar comment made by the Minister, "How much money we can squander away?" Sir, this very outlook of squandering away the money shows the attitude. It is not that the rehabilitation problem should be tackled properly but the outlook is squandering away the money. If the money is spent for proper rehabilitation

Only a portion I will read from this memorandum submitted by the State Government. It says

The magnitude of the problem of displaced persons in West Bengal has never been appreciated on a realistic basis at the level of the government of India, though a number of committees and study groups have from time to time studied this issue. The policy at national level has been characterised largely by haste in de-recognising the problem.

So, when he declared that it is going to be wound up the continuation of the old policy is reflected by this decision.

That is why we felt very much concerned. The State Governments, Government of West Bengal and Tripura immediately protested. I also issued one statement, it appeared in various newspapers. I also sent a copy to you and the Prime Minister. The State Government is demanding that there should be one separate independent Ministry of Rehabilitation. But Rehabilitation is not your major portfolio, it is your minor portfolio. This shows the Government's—the Central Government's—attitude regarding rehabilitation. Only it is tagged as a tail of another portfolio. He has to pay major attention to housing problem. (Interruptions)

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Bengal) What is his designation?

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE Housing. Formerly Mr. Mishra you may know that Shri Khadilkar was a Minister for Labour and Rehabilitation. Then Shri Mirdha was the Minister for Cooperation and Civil Supplies and Rehabilitation. Now, unfortunately, the burden has fallen on this Minister who is a Housing Minister. His Ministry has been tagged with this problem. I sympathise with the Minister because he does not know the problem. I invited him to come to West Bengal.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT:** I had been to Danakaranya.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** You come with us; we will take you to the place and you will see under what conditions the refugees are living there. The memorandum of the West Bengal Government says:

**SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA:** You must include in your designation 'Rehabilitation' in order to protect their interests.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** Mr. Chairman, the time will be saved if I may read that.

"That State Government consider that the present population of displaced persons in this State will be of the order of 80 lacs if we also take into account the number of persons who stayed on in West Bengal after the 1971 exodus."

There were three exoduses after the partition—1950, 1964 and 1971. In 1971 exodus nearly one crore people came; all did not return. Those who left were nearly fifteen lacs. So taking this, all told that is about 80 lacs people who are refugees there.

"About 1/6 of the total population of the State belong to the category of displaced persons, and most of them have never been properly rehabilitated or absorbed in the economic mainstream of the State."

So, one-sixth of the total population belong to the category of the displaced persons. That is the magnitude of the problem. If that is not understood then you cannot help to solve this problem. That is why full cooperation of the State Government and your Ministry is absolutely essential. I am not denouncing this Government. But, unfortunately, the situation is like this. The Ministry is carrying the old outlook, old tradition. According to them, the main problem of rehabilitation has been solved. Only a residuary is left. Here we are bitterly opposed.

The main problem has not been solved. It is only a partial solution that has been there. If you keep this problem alive in this way it becomes more and more complex and serious.

One survey was made for 25 colonies. The report of the survey is this.

**MR. CHAIRMAN:** He has already got the report. Please make a mention.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** It is very revealing. That is why I am finding out. I am not reading the details.

"The survey revealed that about 72 per cent of the families in urban Government sponsored colonies, 91 per cent of the families in squatters' colonies and 87 per cent of the rural small traders and fishermen families in Government sponsored colonies and 97.6 per cent of families in Government sponsored agricultural and barujibi colonies live below "the poverty line".

The Study Group was formed by the previous Central Government. That Study Group has revealed that those refugees who have got some plots in agricultural area have got such a land which is not worth cultivable; there is no arrangement for irrigation and nothing of the kind. They are living under extreme and sub-human conditions.

This is the whole magnitude, the gravity, of the problem. It is serious. That has to be understood. That is our main problem which we want to highlight here. There is enough time. We can discuss that later on.

But, my point is that you should call the representatives of the West Bengal Government and discuss with them. You yourself go to the State and see with your own eyes whether there is any basis in the claim which they are making. Then through your Cabinet you try to implement the schemes which the West Bengal government is preparing for them.

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I was the Chairman of a committee formed by the United Front Government in 1967 for assessing the refugee rehabilitation problem. We started to make an assessment. For several months we assessed. The problem was so vast it required more time. But because of the conspiracy of Indira Gandhi and of the Central Government—the United Front Government was toppled. So that committee ceased to function.

Sir, I am the Secretary of the organisation which is dealing with the refugee problems. I went to Calcutta two days ago to meet the General Council of that organisation. The moment this announcement appeared in the Press it has created such a concern among the refugees that they have decided to observe August 20 as a day of protest against this decision of the Central Government. Their representatives will come to Delhi and meet you. I hope you will receive them, discuss with them and try to know their problems. They will also meet the Prime Minister. My question is: Will the Minister take the initiative to call the representatives of the State Government of West Bengal to have discussions because they have placed a proposal for rehabilitation demanding Rs 500 crores. According to them this is the minimum required to solve these rehabilitation problems. Secondly, will you go to West Bengal to see with your own eyes the real depth of the problem and will the Government reconsider the whole thing in the new context and change the present policy of winding up the department. On the other hand, our proposal is that there should be an independent department to quicken the speed. If a consideration is given for solution of the rehabilitation problem speedily, then a separate independent department is absolutely essential and by applying full concentration and energy you can solve the problem of rehabilitation within three to five years with the full cooperation of West Bengal and Tripura Governments.

Sir, the political situation is such that still people are coming from Bangladesh. Tripura government and West Bengal government approached the Central Government to politically change the atmosphere so that friendly relations with neighbouring countries grow and develop so that those who are coming feel some security there and do not and come here. Though there are economic reasons for which they are coming yet if it is not checked the problem will become impossible to be tackled. Further, without the Central Government taking the entire responsibility of rehabilitation, the State Government is not in a position to tackle this. It is a national problem. It should be solved nationally and only Central Government by taking full responsibility can solve it and in this matter the cooperation of all other State Governments is also very essential. Otherwise those who have got rehabilitation outside West Bengal if they may feel insecure then again the problem of rehabilitation for them also will reappear as it has reappeared due to some conspiracy or some mischievous moves by a section of the people organising or urging Dandakaranya refugees for going to West Bengal. So Sir, my first question is this.

1700 hrs

Will the Government reconsider the whole thing in the light of the Memoranda and the letters received from the Government of West Bengal and also that of Tripura?

Will the hon Minister personally agree first to go to the spot and see the magnitude of the problem and then try to expedite the solution of the problem? Then only the question of winding up of the Department will arise.

THE MINISTER OF WORKS AND  
HOUSING AND SUPPLY AND RE-

**HABILITATION (SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT):** Mr. Chairman, Sir, I have been trying my best to avoid making any controversial remarks, because, this subject which is under discussion is a very delicate one and I would not like it to fall to my share to bring in any indelicate things.

Sir, I personally would not like to compare the West Pakistan refugees with the East Pakistan refugees. I have got figures. But I do not like to rake up old issues. It will not be a very nice thing to do. So, Sir, I tried to avoid them.

Now, my hon friends Mr. Samar Mukherjee and Mr. Chitta Basu kept on reminding me of the letters which the Chief Minister of West Bengal wrote, demanding that a minimum of Rs. 500 crores should be provided for solving the problem, as it is conceived by them in West Bengal. Now, I tried to avoid mentioning it myself. I would not say I am not concerned; I am equally concerned with the problems. (Interruptions) You read the letter and you have quoted the letter that Rs. 500 crores was demanded by the West Bengal Government from the Finance Commission. Why are you putting this question to me and to the Rehabilitation Department? This Rehabilitation Department has been assigned a job. If you want anything outside that assignment, it will have to be dealt with and considered at an entirely different forum.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** Government has received this letter with the demand that Rs. 500 crores is required for rehabilitation. The only reason is, they have approached the Finance Commission to allot this money, because, no money has been allotted in the Sixth Five-year Plan or any additional money has been separately allotted from the Department. That is why I am raising this problem so that you may consider and make a re-assessment of the problem in the light of the new situation.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT:** There is this dialogue with the West Bengal Government. Have we at any time resisted cooperation with the West Bengal Government? No. The present crisis was created on account of desertions from Dandakaranya. We have extended the fullest cooperation; we have had dialogue; whenever they demanded it, it was done. And, if you want me to visit West Bengal, to look into the state of affairs, with my own eyes, well, I am prepared to do it. Therefore, the question is not this. The question is of the winding up of the Department. I say, the rehabilitation problem, however big it is. Will have to be accepted by the Rehabilitation Department and it will have to be solved also by the Rehabilitation Department. Will you agree that after the problems have been solved, it should be wound up or not? That is the only point now. There is no point in objecting to the winding up of the Department. What I have done is, I have only related it to the fact that we are accelerating the pace of rehabilitation and providing relief.

**SHRI CHITTA BASU:** How?

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT:** 'How' is a question which will have to be discussed.

**PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY** (Calcutta South): Mr. Chairman, Sir, We are unnecessarily complicating the situation. Nobody would disagree with the hon. Minister that when the task of rehabilitation is over, the department should be automatically wound up. Nobody will disagree with that kind of situation.

**SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE:** That announcement is not necessary.

**PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY:** I belong to the ruling party. I would like to point out certain discrepancies. The hon. Minister must realise this thing. I am sure he would agree with me on this point.



[Prof. Dilip Chakravarty]

The ushering in of the Janata Government at the Centre roused hopes not only amongst the people at large but also amongst those hapless people who have crossed the border. They also have a feeling that they are going to have a new dealing. Now, I will give some figures from the Reports. From the Annual Report of 1976-77 it is stated like this:

"1,337 families have been resettled in agriculture and 61 families in non-agricultural trades upto the end of November 1976. During 1977-78, 1435 families of displaced persons are proposed to be settled."

In the Report of 1977-78, it is stated like this:

"Upto the end of November, 1977—375 villages have been set up and 21,323 families settled therein".

It is a very interesting report. There is a gap. I do not expect an answer from the hon Minister now. But this is about Dandakaranya resettlement. Expectations are there and I know that there is sincerity in the Government to do something. But doing something does not mean writing it on the paper. That does not create rehabilitation. I have some experience in social work, particularly on refugees. I know how much time it takes to bring the refugees from the Railway Station to the camp and taking them to the rehabilitation site. In the Statement made by the Minister of Works and Housing and Supply and Rehabilitation today, in para 3 it has been stated:

"Both the State Governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat have submitted schemes for the rehabilitation of these Displaced Persons. A good number of families in Rajasthan camps are expected to be rehabilitated within a period of about 6 months from now."

Now, whoever has prepared this draft statement....

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: I have prepared it myself and I claim that it is right.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: I would like to accompany the hon. Minister after six months from now and see how the rehabilitation is completed. I also take it a challenge. It is not a quarrel. It is a question of rehabilitating them. But this never happens. If it happens, you will be performing some magic like Satya Sai Baba. Now, anybody who is having some idea about the process of rehabilitation in this country would not accept this. So, our anxiety is that priority must be given not winding up of the Department but it should be given on the completion of the task of rehabilitation. If the statement of the Minister has that prefix, there is no dispute. The hon. Minister must be knowing about the Dandakaranya refugees and also the refugees of West Bengal. There are thousands of families who are yet to receive land patta, right of land ownership. That ownership is yet to be given to refugees both in Dandakaranya as also in West Bengal. Mr. Samar Mukherjee will bear me out because he is the General Secretary of the oldest Refugee Organisation. Now, the pattas are not given. Government announcements are there. Announcements are made in this connection both at the State level and also at all-India level. But it is yet to be done. About Dandakaranya, there are many villages which are not named as yet. You are dealing with human problem. You are not merely transporting the commodities from one place to another.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All these points you are not to quote.

PROF. DILIP CHAKRAVARTY: Sir, if I am not interrupted, I will finish it quickly. Now, you have to create an identity for the refugees in Dandakaranya. The problem is more so because even the villages where they have been settled are yet to be given

names. That is why I would ask the hon. Minister and through him the whole Government to treat it as a human problem. I know that they have a mind to take it but possibly they need a little more assistance from the Government. I know that he does not have that attitude. That is why I requested him so many times to send a parliamentary team to assess the situation. Possibly that is still awaited. I hope, he will agree to do that. What we need is a thoroughly new look on this question.

I would like to tell that in Malkangiri and Paralkot zones, 8192 and 7454 families were settled respectively on record. But what actually happened, I do not know. Seventy percent of these people went towards West Bengal. This is not the first time that there has been an exodus from Dandakaranya to West Bengal; previously also it happened. In 1975, the same Satish Mandal was there and he was arrested in Malkangiri area. This time, some political capital is sought to be made by some interested persons, but we have to find out the real problem. It is no use accusing this or that person, no use pointing out that one Minister or Deputy Minister has been there and encouraged them to go to West Bengal. That is not the situation, the situation is otherwise. They require some sympathy, they require identification and this cannot be done merely through the Dandakaranya Development Authority. There is another point. A mistaken notion is sought to be created by publicising that so many crores of rupees have been spent on Dandakaranya Development Authority. If you work it out, it comes to nearly Rs. four crores per refugee family, but this has not really been done. As has been stated by my hon. friend, Shri Chitta Basu if you work out the amount spent on refugees from East Pakistan, it would come to a much lesser figure. Then what you did—I mean the Govern-

ment of India - for West Pakistan refugees. This is, therefore, a thoroughly mistaken notion.

What has to be done is to create a unified authority. There is a dual authority in Dandakaranya and that is creating problems for them. DDA people go to the villages where refugees are settled; the State Government, tribal department, officers cross the refugee villages and go to the tribal villages. This creates animosity between the people. These are the problems. A unified authority, an integrated approach and a human approach is required. If possible, some social workers at non-official level should also be identified who can go and devote their time there. Some steps have already been taken in this direction; you must be knowing that. Some of your officers attended a meeting day before yesterday. These things should be encouraged.

Let the Minister come out and say that he would instil a new outlook under his leadership, leadership of the Janata Government. Let us have a new approach to the whole situation.

The Dandakaranya refugees are neither here nor there. Seventy percent of them have gone to West Bengal facing bullets, facing humiliation, facing torture and all sorts of things. What they need is a little consolation, and conditions of return. They are completely dejected, frustrated and destitute. They have no illusion about getting settled in West Bengal and from now on will make up their mind to get settled in Dandakaranya itself. This is from where you have to start.

**SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT:** Mr. Chairman, Sir, my learned friend, Prof. Chakravarty has a complete command over English language and while I would not like to annoy him, I would say that he was making an

[Sri. Shikandar Bakshi]

extravagant use of the English language. I was trying to co-relate the word 'priority'—whether I want to have priority for winding up the department or priority for settling the refugees. I have not been able to analyse it properly, in what manner the word priority is related to the present question. The extravagance was also evident from the fact—with due apologies to the hon. Member, I do not mean any disrespect to him—that all his speech was outside the orbit of the calling attention. My friend says that villages have not been named; and, therefore, there was some deficiency in rehabilitation. I do not know how it can really be correlated with rehabilitation, although I might remind him that in modern cities, roads are now being numbered. It is happening even in Chandigarh, one of the modern towns that we have. There also villages are being numbered and are being identified by the numbers which have been assigned to each village.

About Dandakaranya I have been trying to avoid a debate—which will hurt. But I will tell you that I have been to Dandakaranya myself. I have met people. I have visited their villages, along with the West Bengal Minister of Rehabilitation, Mr. Radhika Banerjee and two Ministers of the Orissa Government. I have met a number of people. I have addressed their meetings. One thing that I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Member is this: there was not one single person complaining against anything which had not been done from the point of view of rehabilitation or relief. The complaints were only of a general nature, which could come from any Indian citizen. I studied it very deeply, along with Mr. Radhika Banerjee; and we did not come across a single complaint which

was related to the process or requirement of rehabilitation.

My friend spoke about those refugees who came in the wake of 1971 and said that they were got settled in Rajasthan and Gujarat. He said that the period was 6 months. But I am aiming to finish it off in 3 months. That is what ought to have been done by now. That is where I say that public funds were squandered. But no Government should do it. They are the trustees of public money.

We are not being heartless. There is no justification for the continuance of this Department. Unfortunately, the Calling Attention Motion related to a very limited question, viz., winding up of the Department; and they thought that because the Department was being wound up, the question of pending work arose. What I say is that the Department of Rehabilitation will be wound up after the job is done.

There need not have been any debate. The futility of this debate lies in this. I have heard lengthy speeches. They were good speeches, but a Calling Attention Motion should have been framed in a different manner. I assure him and my other friends that the Department of Rehabilitation has only two aims; to accelerate the process of rehabilitation and to save public funds from being squandered. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House now stands adjourned till 11 A.M. Monday the 7th August.

17.18 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned at Eleven of the Clock on Monday, August 7, 1978/Sharavana 18, 1900 (Saka).