

12.42 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: DROUGHT CONDITION IN THE COUNTRY

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI F.A. AHMED): May I lay the statement on the Table ?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

SHRI F.A. AHMED: I beg to lay on the Table a statement regarding drought situation in the country.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Gwalior): You will kindly allow a discussion on it.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

AN. HON. MEMBER: One hour.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: How can one hour suffice ?

प्रधन्यक्ष महोदय; मैं आप को कह भी हूँ तो क्या आप मानते हैं ?

Statement

The Hon'ble Members will recall that we had occasion to discuss the drought situation in certain parts of the country during the previous Session. At that time, the anxiety was mainly due to inadequacy of monsoon rains as a result of which summer crops suffered. Since then, the monsoon, although delayed, broke out in the second half of June over different parts of the country and continued till the first half of July. Unfortunately, however, we have been overtaken by a dry spell in large parts of the country since the first half of July. As a result, sowings of early paddy and the main kharif crops have been affected. Reports of drought conditions during the current year have been received from the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Besides these States, drought conditions are continuing from the last year in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Mysore.

2. The concerned State Governments have undertaken the necessary relief measures wherever found necessary. These measures include:—

- (i) opening of relief works, to provide employment opportunities to the affected population and to provide them purchasing power. e.g. digging and deepening of wells, tanks, construction of village roads, etc.
- (ii) distribution of taccavi loans;
- (iii) arrangements for drinking water supply;
- (iv) distribution of gratuitous relief to children, nursing mothers and the old and infirm, and
- (v) strengthening of the public distribution system of foodgrains: etc.

3. In accordance with the prescribed procedure for Central assistance, Central teams have visited the States of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal during the current year, and a team is visiting Tripura currently. A request for a Central team has also been received from Bihar recently. A J-hy loan assistance to the concerned State Governments, wherever necessary, has also been provided.

4. The prospects of kharif crops in unirrigated areas would depend largely on the behaviour of the monsoon during the next few weeks.

5. An emergency food production programme for implementation by the Central and State Governments to save the existing kharif crops to the maximum extent possible, is being formulated and being taken up. This includes—

- (i) putting all existing minor, medium and major irrigation works throughout the country into proper shape to operate round-the-clock;
- (ii) supply of pumping sets for utilising surface irrigation, wherever available, to the maximum extent;
- (iii) preferential supply of electricity for agricultural purposes;
- (iv) completion of all incomplete minor irrigation works on a priority basis;

[Shri F. A. Ahmed]

- (v) arrangements for immediate supply of fertilizers and pesticides for top dressing if it rains within the next 2 or 3 weeks; and
- (vi) formulation of a massive programme for rabi and summer production to meet the shortfall in the kharif crops

6 The stock position of foodgrains both with the Central and the State Governments continues to be comfortable and all the reasonable demands of the State Governments for their public distribution system are being fully met. At present, over 1,25,000 fair price shops are functioning throughout the country and the State Governments and Union Territories have been advised to strengthen the public distribution system in their States.

7. While the present situation would certainly need careful watching and preparedness, it should not occasion any under alarm. We are keeping in constant touch with the State Governments, and with their cooperation, we are confident of tiding over any difficult situation which may arise.

SHRI DINESH JOARDER (Malda)

The drought conditions in Bengal, particularly in the districts of Purulia, Bankura, Malda, West Dinajpur and Murshidabad are very acute. Last year, there was flood devastation which continued for three months. The people of West Bengal so affected have lost their homes, hearths, cattle and also their harvest. For the last ten months, there has been no rain particularly in Malda and West Dinajpur and people are dying in hundreds of starvation. Now there is famine condition prevailing in that district. The State Government has totally failed to cope with the situation or rise to the occasion. It has failed to give food to the hungry people, instead it is threatening them with dire consequences. In this condition, the people of Malda particularly are helpless.

MR. SPEAKER. We are going to have a general debate.

SHRI DINESH JOARDER. I draw the attention of the Central Government to say that they should take proper steps to

save the people of Malda from total starvation and death. It has been reported in the press also that the Prime Minister had told the Chief Minister of West Bengal that if there be any starvation death, the State Cabinet should resign. I draw the attention of the Prime Minister and also say that the State Government has totally failed to save the people who are dying in hundreds. In this 20th century and in this age of civilisation after 25 years of independence when we are talking of green revolution, we are still living on the mercy of the nature. If there is rain, there is flood and hundreds of thousands of people suffer, their homes and hearths and crops and cattle are washed away, if there is no rain, there is drought, starvation and famine. I draw the attention of the Central Government and urge them to take proper steps to save the people of Malda.

MR. SPEAKER. The statement is already there. We will have some discussion.

12 44 hrs

BUSINESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FOURTEENTH REPORT

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI RAJ BAHADUR) I beg to move

"That this House do agree with the Fourteenth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 31st July, 1972"

MR. SPEAKER. Motion moved :

"That this House do agree with the Fourteenth Report of the Business Advisory Committee presented to the House on the 31st July, 1972".

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA (Begusarai) I want to draw the attention of the House to a very disturbing trend to curtail progressively the durations of sessions of Parliament. There seems to be an unfortunate consistent trend in this matter. Last year, we met for only 102 days, whereas we had gone up to 157 days at one time. The average number of days