

Sbri Hem Barua: May I submit for your enlightenment . . . (*Interruption*). This adjournment motion was addressed to the hon. Prime Minister. We have addressed some calling-attention notices to the hon. Home Minister so that he might make a statement.

Mr. Speaker: They do not arise in view of this.

12.11 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

HINDU TRIBAL REFUGEES FROM EAST
PAKISTAN

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty (Barackpore): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Works, Housing and Rehabilitation to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

The hardships being suffered by Hindu tribal refugees migrating from East Pakistan, especially due to the outbreak of small-pox and other diseases caused by lack of arrangements of regular rations, treatment, transport etc.

The Minister of Works, Housing and Rehabilitation (**Shri Mehr Chand Khanna**): According to information obtained from the Government of Assam this morning, the position is that 3 persons in one of the camps in the Garo Hills were found to be suffering from small-pox. They had come from Pakistan and had brought the infection from there. Immediate action was taken to isolate them and arrange proper medical attention for them.

2. Mass inoculation against cholera and vaccination against small pox had already been completed in all the camps in the Garo Hills. Medical arrangements have been made in all camps and the refugees are supplied with rations, blankets etc. A sufficient number of doctors and public

health staff are on duty and cases requiring hospitalisation are shifted to the District Hospital at Tura.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: May I know whether it is in the knowledge of Government that in the interiormost parts bordering Mymensingh and Baghmara there are no arrangements for rations for these thousands of people who have come there, that people—women, children and old people—have to walk 32 to 35 miles to Dalu on hilly road in the burning heat in order to get their rations and that there is actually no arrangement for treatment or transport from these interior places for them to come?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: The information of the hon. Member, as far as I know from my personal visit to these camps, is entirely unfounded. These camps have been set up over quite a large area, right from near the border up to Tura. The number of camps that I visited was about 12 or 13 then. I wish to say that the Government of Assam deserves our congratulations and appreciation for the nice work that they have done in giving relief, that is, medical relief, rations and all those things, to these unfortunate people who have been driven out of East Pakistan.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: May I make a clarification? It is not my intention not to congratulate the Government of Assam. We want that we should try to find out exactly what the situation is. I have got letters from the people in the areas themselves. It is stated that very good arrangements have been made by the Christian missionaries and that they are doing excellent work whereas in the case of other Tribals these arrangements have not been possible. Therefore, without casting aspersions on anybody—I do not want to do that. . . .

An Hon. Member: That is good.

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: That should not be done. I hope, the hon. Minister will not try to turn this question into that form at all. I want that the attention of the Government should be drawn to the innermost interior parts where there may not be such good arrangements, like in Baghmara. That is why I am specifically mentioning this point.

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: We are not making any distinction between Hindu refugees and Christian refugees. Refugees are all refugees and they are a charge on the Government of India. We are treating this problem as a national problem. Whatever I could gather was that these camps were all mixed camps. They were spread over a long area. They are mostly by the side of the roads. These camps have been set up where there is water available. Now, as the monsoon season is fast approaching, the areas may become inaccessible; so, we are arranging to shift these camps to higher places, most probably near Goalpara. The Christian missionaries are giving some help to their own people, Christians. To that nobody can object. If any other organisation would like to go and help other refugees, that would be equally welcome.

Shri Daji (Indore): May I know whether rations and medical help are available in each and every camp or there is only a general pool from which they will have to draw?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: Yes, we have done our level best in this regard.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): May I know the scheme to rehabilitate these refugees who are now put over a scattered area? What is the final arrangement? Have the State Government some plan, or have the Central Government thought about that? May I know also whether a parliamentary delegation is likely to be sent there to see the arrangements made?

Shri Mehr Chand Khanna: As far as the parliamentary delegation is

concerned, I do not think that I have anything to do with it. If I as a Minister, am informed that some of the Members of Parliament would like to go there, I shall certainly take up the matter with the Government of Assam.

As far as the rehabilitation aspect is concerned, we are very anxious that these people should be provided with work and not kept idle in the camps, but that is going to take a little time, for the obvious reason that the areas to which they have come are the Garo Hills. This area will have to be developed. The economy of this area will have to be developed, and we shall also have to formulate separate schemes, like terracing, afforestation etc. Action in that regard is being taken. I have discussed these schemes myself with the Chief Minister of Assam and we are taking appropriate action in the matter.

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): My humble request to you, Sir, is that you also should visit these areas.

Mr. Speaker: Invitations are not extended inside the House.

12.17 hrs.

RE: CALLING-ATTENTION NOTICE

Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, the hon. Minister had made a statement and I had kept that pending for any questions or clarifications that might be needed. Would the hon. Minister be able to give those clarifications at 5 P.M. today?

The Minister of Works, Housing and Rehabilitation (Shri Mehr Chand Khanna): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: So, the hon. Members concerned may kindly remain here in the House at 5 P.M.

Shri U. M. Trivedi (Mandsaur): We had tabled some calling-attention notices about the Jammu explosion.