

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE GOVERNOR
OF
BIHAR AND ORISSA.

Thursday, the 15th February 1934.

The Council met in the Council Chamber at Patna at 11 A.M.,
the Hon'ble the President in the Chair.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

NUMBER OF THANAS, INSPECTORS, SUB-INSPECTORS AND ASSISTANT
SUB-INSPECTORS OF POLICE WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF
JAMSHEDPUR SUBDIVISION, ETC.

13. MR. MUHAMMAD YUNUS*: Will Government be pleased to state—

(a) how many thanas are there within the jurisdiction of Jamshedpur subdivision ;

(b) how many inspectors, sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors of police are there in the subdivision of Jamshedpur ;

(c) what local allowances the inspectors, sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors of police are getting there ;

(d) the names of the inspectors, sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors of police in Jamshedpur subdivision ; and

(e) the population of the Jamshedpur subdivision giving details of the various denominations to which they belong ?

MR. P. C. TALLENTS: (a) There are eight police-stations.

(b) and (c) There is one divisional inspector who draws an allowance of Rs. 45.

* In the absence of the questioner, the answer was given at the request of Babu Radha Mohan Sinha.

[Hon. B. Nirsu Narayan Sinha]

The Hon'ble Babu NIRSU NARAYAN SINHA: Sir, I now move:

That the amendment to Standing Order 72 be passed.

The Hon'ble the PRESIDENT: The question is:

That the amendment to Standing Order 72 be passed.

The motion was adopted.

**MOTION UNDER RULE 24-A RE: SITUATION ARISING OUT
OF THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE—contd.**

Babu CHANDRESHVAR PRASHAD NARAYAN SINHA: Sir, you remember that I had stopped yesterday when I was speaking about the necessity of survey operations to be started as quickly as possible and finished as quickly as possible. I had quite a lot to say about the survey, but as I feel that Government have already taken action to start it, I do not think I should dwell upon it for a long time; but I would just mention a few things that seem necessary to me. While the survey party is doing its work, it should keep in mind if there are certain sites or areas, specially in the affected area of Sitamarhi and a part of Madhubani, where, if necessary, the work of rescue could be done. I want that such selection of site should be done quite early, so that sufficient amount of foodstuff could be stored for all emergency that may arise during floods. I think although the task seems to be very great, we have got no alternative but to face it. We may have to make arrangements for the food-supply of not only human beings but also cattle. We cannot neglect this latter class of living organism for the simple reason that the entire cultivation would depend on their existence.

Another important point which I would like to be noted is that we should from now arrange to have a flotilla of boats almost on all strategic points. In this connection, I might mention that we ourselves have gone in for a large number of boats in our own district board, and I hope similar thing should be done elsewhere. Here I cannot but mention what everyone of the members and you, Sir, yourself must have seen in the *Statesman* of to-day. We are all aware of the fact that only four days back a repetition of earthquake in Nepal has submerged one whole town known as Kirtipur. Sitamarhi itself felt the shock badly where water again gushed out from the fissures and the water geysers. I hop

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you will tolerate me for repeating the same facts for a couple of minutes, when I say that in Sitamarhi people live not only on nerves but worse than that. The land there is practically trembling all the time and whenever there is any noise or rumbling sound or a shock, you can understand what a panicky condition is created there. I mention this because while the survey is going on there, I would like that the information gathered by the people undertaking this survey should at once be conveyed to the District Officers, not when the report is complete but as they go on from day to day, and that should be made available if possible to the people through some agency.

Another important thing about Sitamarhi is that it has its own problem. The site of the town, as is well-known to Government, is for all practical purposes considered to be unfit for re-habitation, but at the same time I have seen myself that many people have started the work of repair. I do not say that if it is not necessary, they must evacuate the site, but if Government feel convinced after the report of the Geological Party and the people who would now be engaged in the survey work that the site is absolutely unfit for habitation, early steps should be taken to ensure that no more money is invested there.

I would now at once pass on to the second great problem of which mention was made by me yesterday, and that is the damage to fields. You know, Sir, that sand in enormous quantity got itself deposited on the arable lands. You are also aware that in this part of our province, the pressure of population on land has been quite great. That being so, it is not possible for us to say or imagine that it does not matter if one or two districts go desert. After all, we do not contemplate that we are going to neglect a very large number of people. The question surely then would be what to do and how to do.

I have myself been considering this point. Some people threw a suggestion that it is possible for the present that *ars* and *dhurs* could be raised with the help of the sand that has come out. You can see, Sir, that that is an erroneous idea; as soon as the floods come, as soon as the rainy season starts, all the labour would be lost. The sand will again flow to the fields and get deposited there. We cannot, therefore, think of raising *ars* and *dhurs*. The other suggestion thrown out has been that we can build up the roads or improve the flanks of the roads with the sand. That again is fraught with the same difficulty

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inasmuch as it will increase the difficulty of traffic enormously. The only practical solution which appears to me is one of tank filling. I think we have no other alternative but to excavate tanks and whatever *mutti* is taken out of the tanks should be spread over the fields from where the sand has been taken and the tanks filled. That is the only practical method by which we can dispose of the sand with any chance of permanency. It may be argued that this process will be difficult on account of the fact that Bihar and specially North Bihar has very small holdings. In a situation like this, I think Government will have to pass some enabling Act investing them with powers to have quick land acquisition proceedings or to declare—I should not say martial rule—but some sort of emergency under which they could operate upon the private lands. Of course, I do not forget that the people whose lands will be used for excavating tanks will have to be sufficiently compensated. This system has another merit, that it will employ a very large number of labour, which although is not a problem at present, may become a menacing problem a few months hence. This will also be beneficial to those that are feeling the difficulty and who have to depend on the land. Their condition will be restored and that restoration will naturally improve the condition of those that are directly or indirectly dependent on cultivation. Now, so far as funds are concerned, I would only attempt to give at this stage a rough idea of the requirements. It is very difficult to give any correct estimate at this stage. I should have left this task for the people who would be engaged on survey work but as I feel, our Government will have to go up to the India Government for some grants, they should have some rough idea of at least the extent of their requirements. My own impression is that, roughly speaking, the Sitamarhi subdivision would require something in the neighbourhood of a crore of rupees for this purpose and probably half a crore would be required for the part of Sadr and a small portion of Hajipur including Patepur thana. I have seen a part of the Darbhanga district and, of course, the whole of Muzaffarpur, and I think that those who come from Darbhanga will bear me out that although the requirements of Darbhanga will be equally great, it will be a little less in proportion and my own impression is, which I think, will be borne out by the local officials, that Darbhanga would require about a crore of rupees for this purpose and half a crore would see through the work of Champaran and Saran and probably a quarter for the

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rest of North Bihar. Taking all together, this gives us about 3 crores and a quarter. I have based my figure on the few experiments that were made by Mr. G. N. Basu of Pupri, Mr. Parr of Harsinghpur in the district of Darbhanga and by us on our estate. The average expenditure of the removal of sand is about Rs. 50 a bigha. The cost of digging tanks and lifting *mutti* would be another Rs. 50 or so. We can roughly, therefore, take it that about Rs. 100 a bigha would be required for this purpose.

Mr. A. C. DAVIES: To what depth of sand?

Babu CHANDRESHVAR PRASHAD NARAYAN SINHA: As I said yesterday that the depth of sand has been varying from something like 6 inches to 6 feet. The amount to be spent will also vary in the same way. The figure I am giving is only the average of what would be required. We have known that where the sand is only a few inches thick, the cost would be about Rs. 10 or so; where it is 4 or 5 feet or 6 feet, it is much more than Rs. 100. But on the average we take it that about Rs. 50 a bigha can be taken for calculation as the basis. The question is whether it is worthwhile to spend Rs. 100 per bigha on a work like this. I do not think that much argument is needed on that. Surely we do not mean to think that we will allow the people who have depended on those lands to die, nor can we think that we can arrange migration for such a large number of people. Then, again, we know that the lands that have been damaged were the best of lands that could yield something like 60 maunds of paddy per bigha and that they were worth more than Rs. 1,000. If we can reclaim them only by spending about Rs. 100 per bigha, we should consider it worthwhile to do.

The third problem to which I would come is what we have got to do for the housing and for advancing loans to those that are even now in a position to take loans and rebuild themselves. You know that mainly we can divide the class of people who have suffered under four heads—the ordinary labourer, the middleclass men (that would include big raiyats, the small zamindars and the small capitalists), then the bigger zamindars and planters, and the bigger capitalists. So far as labour is concerned, as I have just now mentioned, it has not suffered at present. On the other hand, there is a very great demand for labour now a days, and I consider that for the moment they are better off than what they were before. The middleclass men

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have been the hardest hit. On account of the depression they had not laid by anything either in the shape of money or in the shape of food stuffs. Whatever they themselves had earned before or their ancestors had left for them were invested in house property which, as I have already described, they have lost. They were the people who had not built their houses with concrete or cement. Theirs were the mud and brick built houses and they were the people who have lost their all—in life and property. But with all this, my own experience has been, when I went to those areas, that if we ask them if they would accept any gratuitous help—they would say 'no'. I have even come across cases where the whole family has starved for full two days and yet would not accept anything from the relief parties working there. This class of people have still left in them a sense of prestige which does not allow them to ask for anything gratis or accept any help free. For them we must start giving loans as soon as we can arrange them. No time should be lost on this. I want to lay as much emphasis as possibly I can command on this point, and urge the Government to take immediate steps to start loan for this class of people.

You will realize that now coming to the bigger people I mean the bigger zamindars and planters, I have only to say that exceptions have been found in other cases but exception in their case is almost nil. They have, one and all, suffered. You will hardly find any European planter with any house or any Indian zamindar with anything which they can live under. Now these people will again require, not all of them but surely some of them, some prop and I think it is fair that they should be helped to put themselves as far as practicable in such a position as will enable them to pull up by themselves. If we leave them at the lurch at present, they will be lost for ever. On the other hand, if whatever assistance is required is given to them now, I am sure, they will arrange the rest for themselves. Another advantage of advancing loans to these people is that they will be able to employ other class of workers and their problem will be automatically solved. If labour has not been a great problem in this province, it is only because that we had had a very large number of middle class and zamindars and planters who could employ a very large number of people who exist here.

If they do not get some assistance, the question would be whether they are to maintain the staff and workers they had

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employed so far. If they do not, for want of finance, they cannot also start the work of reconstruction. I hope the whole Council will give me their valuable support in this demand as it is only a question of financing loan and not spending money which will never return to either the provincial coffers or to the Imperial Government. So far as loan is concerned, I will say that it should not be on a high rate of interest. It was rightly pointed out by a friend of mine yesterday that the interest should be as low as possible, and I remember he suggested three per cent. I say that there is no reason why it should be three per cent. As far as I understand, the rate of interest on fixed deposit at many places these days is about 2 per cent. I should be glad to be corrected if that is incorrect. If that is so, it means that a very large amount of money is lying idle somewhere. Government should find that out and I would suggest that the rate of interest should be $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent and the loan advanced should be payable in the course of 20 years. As an alternative if this is considered too low a rate of interest, which I personally do not, then I would suggest that there should be a sliding scale introduced so far as the interest is concerned so that the amount could be increased towards later years. I have discussed these things in my own district, and when I say so I say with the authority of the people that if even a sliding scale is introduced, they will agree to that.

The fourth problem about which perhaps Government is already impressed is the problem of local bodies. The municipalities have got to rebuild themselves. The district boards have suffered terribly and sufficient funds have got to be found out for them to put them in their proper and the former position. Here again, I should like to give some idea of the requirements. We in Muzaffarpur in this short time have tried to gather figures about our loss and what we would require. Roughly speaking, what obtains in Muzaffarpur obtains more or less in Darbhanga and the same in a lesser degree obtains in Motihari, and of course much less in Saran. So, if we have some idea in one district possibly we could make a rough estimate of what would be required in other districts. The roads and bridges in Muzaffarpur would require something like 24.97 lakhs, roughly 25 lakhs. The building wherein I have included the buildings for schools, dispensaries, veterinary dispensaries and repairs to office buildings the cost of which is only Rs. 20,000 would require another 3 lakhs and a half. I had made a mention of water-supply and it

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requirements yesterday. On that score our requirements would be nearly Rs. 70,000. If we add all this up, it comes to about 29·17 lakhs, we can say in round figures Rs. 30 lakhs. Darbhanga would require another 20 or 25, Champaran and Saran presumably 10 and others about 5. We can roughly say that for about 60 or 70 lakhs we would be able to rebuild things so far as district boards were concerned. I cannot give any figures for the municipalities, for their problem is a problem of only town-planning and mending the roads and improving their water-supply if that has been found defective. I believe Government will have those figures earlier than I would attempt to do.

I have, therefore, Sir, given you my idea of the damage, the requirement as far as it comes to me and what funds would be required for them.

To sum up, I would require, in the first instance, (1) the survey to be finished as quickly as possible. (2) The sand must be removed without any loss of time so that the fields can be prepared for the next season. (3) The third thing is that the district boards and municipalities must be definitely told to start work and finance promised. (4) The fourth which is almost connected with the survey and of which I made a mention yesterday is that arrangements for the drainage of water should be done as quickly as possible. (5) The fifth is the most important item of requirement. The arrangement for advancing loans cannot be delayed. It must be started much ahead of rains.

It is not possible for me at this stage to point out where the funds could come from. This is a big problem and I am sure that Government is alive to that. We can only throw a suggestion that it must be partly in the shape of grant from the Government of India to whom it seems crores to this side or that side has never been material, and partly by raising loans. But raising of loans must take time and I think Government cannot wait for that. I also want to point out before I resume my seat that all our ideas are based on our incomplete information at this stage. But I hope that subsequent verification will not lead to very great variations. But granting that it did—though I am not prepared to admit for a moment that anything that has been placed before you has at all been exaggerated, but granting for a moment that it has been so if you arrange for

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more money than the actual needs, nobody will snatch that away. It will remain there. It may either be returned to the source from which it comes or spent on some other profitable scheme.

When I have said this, I feel that before I complete my requests, I should make a last appeal to Government as well as to the people of this province. I feel and I sincerely believe that this is a time of our national disaster. We are faced with a national calamity, and we have got to deal with this problem in that spirit. I would ask Government to take non-officials in the fullest of confidence and I would at the same time request all non-official agencies to co-operate with the work of reconstruction that has to be undertaken by Government. If this is not done, there is always the chance of over-lapping, or something left undone for want of information. If I had not felt that the work that is so far getting on does need this sort of spirit on the part of both, I should not have ventured to make this appeal. At the same time I realize that the task of Government and the non-officials engaged on this work is tremendous and they have their own difficulties, but no harm would be done by having complete co-operation so far as this matter is concerned without any distinction of political views or other considerations that ordinarily weigh with us.

Lastly, I am compelled to take notice of what has appeared in the press today about the statement which was signed and published by some of us including the leader of the opposition, Mr. Sachchidananda Sinha. Pandit Jawahir Lal Nehru who kindly visited our affected areas has criticised that 'chit' and in the course of his criticism has mentioned at one place "that the immediate steps and measures that could have been taken at the time when the havoc occurred or after that were not taken". He has mentioned at another place that even the District Officers who wanted to take quick action had no assistance from their Government. This is entirely a matter for Government to say whether they had that assistance or not. So far as we are concerned we again want to repeat what we had published before and what I mentioned yesterday that we had complete satisfaction that they were taking such actions as they could humanly take under those circumstances. Ever since then I have found myself that whenever I have gone with any demand or project to my Commissioner, I have found him readily pushing that on to the Government and doing things for

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me without any hesitation. He is the one man who has neither spared himself nor allowed others to spare themselves. We had had no difference so far and that the spirit in which we have worked is praiseworthy. But when we have said all this, I must also say that Government should not feel that that is all. The same spirit, the same efficiency has got to be maintained until the reconstruction has been completed.

The Hon'ble the PRESIDENT: I have just received a request from Babu Lalita Prashad Chaudhuri who is ill to allow him to have his speech read either by Mr. Sinha or Rai Bahadur Shyamnandan Sahay, and I ask Rai Bahadur Shyamnandan Sahay to read that speech.

Babu LALITA PRASHAD CHAUDHURI*: Sir, in speaking on this topic I being the only member present from the district of Champaran from the rural constituency Non-Muhammadian or Muhammadian shall plead for patience on the part of the House to give me an opportunity to place before you a correct picture of the devastation caused by the terrible earthquake of appalling misery and distress which the people have suffered in my part of the country. Here I propose to deal with the condition of my constituency, my district and the town in which I live.

Sir, I learn that there has been a tendency to minimise the magnitude of the losses suffered by us, and the miserable plight of the people of the place. I am afraid that the case of the people whom I represent has not been truly and correctly placed before the public and the Government up till now, and their real condition has not been brought home to the authorities.

Sir, the state of affairs of Monghyr and Muzaffarpur has naturally attracted foremost attention because of the large number of deaths in those towns. But, Sir, the tale of woe and misery of my part of the country has been none the less. Though the death roll has not been so high as elsewhere, but considering the size and population of the town of Motihari, I think it has suffered not less than any other place. One of the main reasons of smaller number of deaths in the town of Motihari has been the existence of very wide roads running across the town. These roads, although flooded with sprout water coming out of numerous fissures, at first afforded ample safety to the people who took their stand on the roadsides. But this was not the case in

*The speech was read out by Rai Bahadur Shyamnandan Sahay, with the permission of Hon'ble the President.

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Monghyr and Muzaffarpur; so in this respect the town of Motihari has been fortunate. But the loss to the buildings due to the total collapse and irreparable cracks has been as large as in any town in the province. Not minimising the loss sustained by Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Monghyr and Sitamarhi, I venture to say that the fate of Motihari is singular. No man can have any idea of the town and the villages and the havoc caused by the earthquake without visiting the town and the villages themselves. In fact more woeful are Motihari's tales than those recounted by Babu Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha. As a layman I can say that it is unsafe to rebuild the houses on the same land owing to the dangerous cracks of the houses with so many fissures created everywhere in the town.

But, Sir, whether the death roll is high or low, we are concerned more with the economic condition of the people and the remedy to deal with the appalling condition of misery and distress that has overtaken them.

Sir, our condition had already been rendered entirely bad before the terrible earthquake occurred. It has occurred at a time when the people were hard hit by the visitation of successive floods. You might be aware, Sir, that between July and October last year, i.e., 1933, people of the sadar subdivision and part of Bettiah subdivision had to suffer thrice from three successive floods causing great loss to their crops, *bhadai*, *agahani* and *rabi*. Twice they sowed their *bhadai* and *agahani* crops and twice they were destroyed by heavy floods. The *agahani* paddy crops which they cultivated very late in the season, and for the third time, yielded a return of 50 per cent only. Again towards the end of October 1933 the *rabi* crops very early suffered heavily on account of excessive rainfall. So, Sir, during the months immediately preceding the earthquake, as many as six times crops were washed away or damaged. The *rabi* crops which they again sowed after the floods have also been damaged as to the extent of 50 per cent and this almost on the eve of the season when the people were holding hopes of some recovery from their distressed conditions.

Sir, coming as it did at the top of series of visitations of floods that had already caused enormous loss and rendered the condition of the people entirely miserable, the earthquake has increased the suffering manifold not only of agriculturists but

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also of all classes of people. It has thrown them into the vortex of misery from which they see no hope of emergence for very many years to come. Sir, these are devastations of nature. But the appalling scenes of distress and devastation the earthquake has caused have staggered the whole population. High and low, all have suffered terribly. Houses of the rich and poor have been destroyed, clothings and other personal goods have been buried under the debris. Business has been disturbed and dislocated, 75 per cent of the agricultural holdings have been damaged owing to heavy deposits of sands, sugar mills have been destroyed or thrown out of order, causing loss to the mill as well as to the cane growers. River beds have risen above their level, new channels of water appear to have been formed with grave danger during the rainy season. In short, Sir, we have become homeless, clothless, foodless, workless and our whole economic outlooks have become entirely gloomy. People have become nervous and are possessed by constant anxieties of getting help and succour. Where to build their houses, either on the old site or new, how to build, where to find the money necessary for the purpose, how to pull down the damaged structure in order to reclaim the materials for any possible future use are the subjects occupying the mind of the people; and the business men are anxious to find money and stalls and shops to start their business now. The cultivator is at a loss as to what to do with the sugarcane on his land, where to find the money with which to clear the sand deposits on his holding, where to deposit it, and how to augment measures of his subsistence and again how to find fodder for his cattle.

The landlords, too, in their turn, particularly the small proprietors, are faced with a difficult situation in the collection of arrears as well as current rents. They are anxious whether they would be able to find any money from collection to pay the Government revenue or their estates would be sold up. Besides, they will find difficulty to make both ends meet. The vast bulk of the middle classes have been hit hard to an extent never before experienced particularly those who have no substantial amount of cash balance with themselves. All these, Sir, will require help and succour.

We, especially in Motihari and its suburbs, are wondering what would happen during the hot seasons when fires are likely to break out, or during the ensuing rains when the floods frequently occur in the locality. These are the problems that

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are exercising the public mind at the present moment. And Sir, in surmounting all these difficulties we all look up to the State for help. It is the State that is capable of dealing with such mighty problems through mighty efforts.

The Government has taken steps to give relief to stricken people. The Collector in the person of Mr. Marwood, who soon after the quake came upon the scene leaving his wife and children alone, with the help of the other officials and non-officials of the town organized relief measures and controlled the price of foodstuff, salt and kerosene oil so far as was possible at the time. He has been interested in securing relief measures on a large scale. He is still devoting days and nights to the task of relieving the distress of the people.

The Government has taken steps to give relief to the stricken people. But the measures which the Government will have to adopt without loss of time will be on a larger scale.

I shall add a word about immediate relief. The Marwari Relief Committee left on February 11, but there is still need of relief.

The relief measures which have so far been adopted will have to be augmented many times over and continued for many months to come.

Now, Sir, I seek the attention of the House, and to state the lines on which any relief should proceed. First of all the Government should take immediate steps to provide work to the landless labourers or peasants on payment of wages. The labour population may be employed in removing sand from the agricultural holdings, clearing the debris, and making water outlets for the rains, and demolishing the damaged houses.

(2) The raiyat should be granted remission of current rents, and the realization of all the cesses and taxes including income-tax, and canal water tax should be immediately postponed for sufficiently long periods to be determined by a committee of officials and non-officials.

With regard to the current and future rent, the raiyats are clearly entitled to remission and reduction of rent proportionate to the area of the holding that has become unfit for cultivation, and such lands should be declared as *deara* lands; and if in the enquiry such lands are found fit for cultivation, they may be

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assessed with rent. Loans should be advanced to raiyats at the minimum rate of Rs. 15 per acre for cultivation expenses without any interest.

(3) Sugarcane from the local areas be obtained and supplied to meet the shortage of fodder for cattle free of cost by Government. In case sugarcane be not had, fodder should be imported from outside.

(4) To avert the threatened loss, growers of sugarcane (on account of the breakdown of sugar mills and the raiyats having a large area of sugarcane) be supplied with power machine by Government, the price to be repaid to the Government without interest by instalment system.

(5) The landlord should also be granted remission of the land revenue in proportion to the fall in his rent collection. He should also receive a grant of loan for meeting the expenses of cultivation of his zirat land or bakasht, at the rate of Rs. 15 per acre as proposed in the case of the raiyats.

(6) In view of the extent of injuries done to the crops and the fields as a result of the recent earthquake, the period of civil certificate decrees in the more affected districts should be extended for a reasonably long period. This extension of the period should include cases of reinstitution of cases and limitation.

(7) Loans should be advanced to the persons for reconstruction of houses and buildings of permanent nature. But during the period of suspense when expert opinion is not decisively pronounced as to whether the present site is inhabitable, and the terror which agitates the public mind does not subside and the people normally restored, buildings of semi-permanent structure, namely, tin sheds are necessary, and that also requires a great amount of money to be advanced to the public of urban area as loans without interest. I suggest in this connection that a committee consisting of officials and non-officials be formed to enquire into the requirement of temporary or permanent buildings. The non-officials should include the chairman of Motihari and Mr. B. B. Varma, Bar-at-Law, and myself for the district of Champaran. A very large amount of such loan would be needed by a large body of persons who have their old homes destroyed, or so damaged as to be quite unfit for habitation. In such cases the amount of loans should not be less than half of the total amount of loss

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sustained over the damaged buildings and should be made a charge without interest on the building constructed. As such loans are needed by the large body of the middle classes inhabiting urban and suburban areas and rural areas the amount advanced to a particular individual should be made repayable within a period of 25 years, the payment of instalment to commence after the expiry of the fourth year.

(8) Loans be advanced to the business men for business purposes on the security of the landed property.

(9) Loans without interest should be given on personal security to professional men and private employees who have suffered much and have no reserve to fall back upon and find it difficult to make both ends meet. The amount of such loans should not be less than Rs. 60 per head of a family annually besides advances of loans for building their houses.

(10) I have made so far my humble suggestion of the lines on which relief measures should be proceeded in general. I shall now crave your indulgence to deal with the special condition of the houses and the people within the municipality of Motihari, that is within the area of over 2,450 buildings besides the 600 other holdings occupied by the Bettiah Raj, the railways, and the Government and the open holdings and the huts of the poor citizens of the population.

Out of the above 2,450 private buildings, all except three have been made deservable and are unfit for future habitation. The houses that have not completely collapsed cannot be said to be less damaged. For almost all such houses with rare exceptions have become wholly useless. Some of the buildings which do not bear any sign of serious damage outwardly have so much cracked and torn from inside that entrance into them would be risky. My own houses for instance, which to all appearance give the impression of having escaped damage, have in fact been so much damaged inside that I do not dare to stand inside for even a minute. Walls have leaned back and one fears when one treads inside it. Such buildings are many in number in the town of Motihari whose materials, if collected, can be utilized in the construction of new ones by the owners. Such premises can be pulled down by the labourer. He and I should sound a note of warning that we learn the dynamites are being employed for the demolishing of houses that have

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become uninhabitable, but I assert, Sir, that so far as Motihari is concerned there are very few houses which would deserve drastic treatment causing unnecessary loss to the materials.

In this connection I should like to suggest that a thorough geological survey of the locality should be immediately made in order to ascertain whether there are dangers ahead. People of Motihari and its suburbs have become panicky on account of so many alarming reports published in the columns of the press. It is urgently necessary that such state of affairs should be at once removed by an authoritative statement on behalf of Government. In this connection, I may be permitted to draw the attention of Government to a very persistent rumour that has been afloat for some time now that the headquarter of the district of Champaran will be transferred to Bettiah as the old sites of the town are likely to be condemned. Sir, this step on the part of Government will add insult to injury. It would mean loss to the public of Motihari and the Sadr Subdivision of Champaran, as there are still more than one suitable sites for the reconstruction of the town or the headquarters of the district if at all the present site is declared unfit for habitation. I have to refer to one or two more things before I come to a close, that is, I have not said anything about the funds which the local bodies will require for the construction of roads, canals, culverts and bridges, say, very important bridges joining Motihari to Muzaffarpur and Govindganj may easily be constructed out of a very small amount for fair weather. These are of primary importance for the public at large. In my humble opinion the Government instead of spending on large scale on Government buildings should devote great sums to the relief of the district people.

In meeting all the demands stated above, a huge sum shall have to be placed at the disposal of Government. For this amount the local Government should seek the help of the Imperial Government and urge that the Government should rise equal to the occasion when the wanted solicitude of the Government for the people of the country will be put to a severe test. Government can also earn the goodwill and contentment of the people by timely and adequate help in the matter which I am sure will go a long way in easing the political situation of the country. We all hope that the Government will not take the usual plea of the paucity of funds. This is a time that all should come in an unstinted measure. I need not recall the

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way in which the Japanese Government combated similar situation in their country very recently. It is fresh in our memory now that the Japanese Government, apart from relying on charitable contribution, spent a huge sum to the value of one *arab* of rupees, and that when only two districts had suffered from the earthquake.

A mightier empire of the British Government can easily do many times more than what a lesser power had done. In conclusion I want to make some more suggestions to relieve the distressed people both by way of providing work to the unemployed, and taking such projects in hand as are essential for the people of Champaran for their future welfare and safety. I may suggest that the Gandak embankment wherever it is damaged should be repaired at once. Some suitable canals connecting the Sikarohana river to those parts of the district which have the large deposit of sand should be constructed for irrigation work, if expert opinion supports them. As regards the settlement of lands to the people for the building purposes, care should be taken that permanent and old inhabitants be given preference in settlement. While taking measures for reconstruction of both rural and urban areas, the importance of certain measures of immediate relief should not be overlooked, I mean export of food grains and *ghee*. These things should not be allowed to be exported outside the affected area, utility of this measure is obvious and requires no special pleading.

One word more and I have done. I think that the number of deaths in my district is heavier than that ascertained by the Government up till now. A private enquiry in town, important bazars, and some five hundred villages goes to show that nearly five hundred people have lost their lives, and if fuller enquiry is made in the remaining affected villages of the district, the number must be fifteen hundred. I make bold to say that the number of deaths may go up to thousands. Loss of lives to the cattle is nowhere mentioned, their number is not negligible. My own knowledge based upon an enquiry only in three hundred villages put the number to eight hundred, so the whole district especially the area seriously affected might have suffered the loss of thousands of cattle.

It is very difficult to ascertain the whole loss which that district has suffered, but even a rough calculation puts the figure somewhere near 50 (fifty) crores of rupees. All these go to show that the work of immediate relief to the people and the work of

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reconstruction involves a large sum of money. From what has been desired above and the reports published in the press, it is no denying the fact that a serious famine is threatening the district in the near future. Government must be prepared to face the situation developing day by day. I again make a fervent appeal to the Government to rise to the occasion for justification of its existence in this critical period of the life, when people particularly of the middle classes preferred death by earthquake to death by starvation and untold miseries.

Mr. W. H. MEYRICK : Sir, I regret yesterday I was not in the House when the Hon'ble Mr. N. N. Sinha was speaking about Motihari, but I understand that he said that I would supplement what he had said, later on. I will endeavour to do so to the best of my ability, although much of what I had to say has been said by the last speaker, and I will be as brief as I can in what I have to say. I think there are many people here in this House and elsewhere who do not know much about Motihari or what the real position is there. The town itself is rather a scattered one, but the main part of the town is on the lake-side. There are two big lakes and everybody knows that the lake areas got the worst shock more than any other parts, and as a result practically the whole town has gone and no residences are left fit to live in, and the worst is that there is no possibility of our being able to build on that site again. But what I would like to emphasise is the prompt action taken by the officials straightaway, Indians and Europeans alike. They were at once on the scene of action, and I should like to say as briefly as possible what they did and how they set about this very difficult task. The position was aggravated in this way. Communications, telegraphic as well as roads and railway, were all broken. We did not know what had happened outside Motihari. From news we had it appeared that the whole of the railway from Paleza Ghat and from Semaria Ghat might have been completely ruined, and there was a possibility of our practically not being able to get our supplies for months, excepting possibly by road.

Naturally the first thing to think of was the injured and the housing of all these people—practically the whole population—and getting them temporary shelters. Everybody had to—practically everybody—spend that first night in the open, making the best arrangement he could under the very difficult circumstances. What the suffering was can well be imagined, but it was alleviated to a large extent by the arrangements made and getting

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assistance from outside in the way of grass, bamboos and other things needed to make temporary huts to house the people. The District Officer at once divided up the town into wards putting a captain in charge of each ward. That captain was told to enlist people as volunteers to work with him. His duties were, after rescuing the injured, to make arrangements for the removal of the dead, and to make arrangements for drinking water, and generally to divide up his party into guards for day and for night and to see that no property was looted. This work was very efficiently carried out, but at the same time I don't think that the result would have been so satisfactory, had it not been for the very prompt action taken by the police. I dare say you may have seen in today's paper about the looting in Nepal and what extreme measures they have had to take to stop it. Eighty-one looters have been shot. In Motihari, practically in the whole town, except for the very minor number of cases there has been no real looting. Certainly, in Motihari the police have worked so satisfactorily that we feel quite safe in regard to our property, and everybody had their property lying in the ruins or on the roadside where they were temporarily camping. In each ward in the party of volunteers there was a doctor or someone with medical knowledge who assisted in the work voluntarily for the relief, giving his services free.

One of our biggest anxieties naturally after the injured and the housing was the feeding, and not knowing what had happened to the railway it was very difficult, especially as the stock in the town was very low, to be able to cope with the situation for long. A food control department was at once started and prices were controlled, but our difficulty was how to give people confidence to bring in the foodstuffs. Roads were so broken and bridges were so damaged that carting of grain was impossible. What could be brought in had to be brought in by people on their heads. This work was done very satisfactorily, thanks to the staff of the Bettiah Raj and the Madhuban estate who by giving their assistance persuaded people to bring in their grain pointing out that there was no danger to their lives, and further the prices they would get would be adequate. As a result of the arrangements made we found that very soon we were able to remove all control and that there had been no profiteering on food except in minor cases where it was nipped in the bud at once.

Another anxiety was that of kerosene oil and salt—two very great necessities, and this was aggravated by the fact that Nepal

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as a rule takes all its supplies from our district Champaran. The railway being broken the supplies for Nepal were cut off, and the result of that was that Nepal was ready to pay any price for these commodities and prices went up, of salt to double, that is salt Rs. 12 to Rs. 14 a bag, and kerosene oil Rs. 6 to Rs. 7 a tin. With these attractive rates there was every prospect of what few supplies we had in Sadr Champaran being drained into Nepal. Therefore, very strict control had to be put over these two articles by serving notices on everybody with stocks not to sell without permits. Needless to say there were some people who did not disclose all their stocks, but the system of permits worked so satisfactorily that after some days they found that they could not dispose of these concealed stocks without permits and, therefore, they declared them and came under control. Why the permits worked so satisfactorily was that the scouts and others picketed the roads all round the town and when anybody taking out a bag of salt or a tin of kerosene oil had not a permit with him, they knew that this had come from concealed stock. This worked so satisfactorily, the result being they gave up the temporarily concealed stocks, and we were able to make arrangements for sufficient supplies not only for the town but for villages outside. We had to have a chain of guards in every village, along the border to prevent food from going through, and this was done by the help given to us by the Assistant Food Controllers whom we had in every thana. The Police gave considerable help in stopping any smuggling of that sort and controlling prices and assisting us in every way. Besides, many other gentlemen worked with us in the relief measures. I don't think there is any need for me to say anything about that. They have already been described and I think what is being done in every town has been done in Motihari, and there is a Central Relief Committee working with its branches in each thana; and not only that, there are others from outside coming into Motihari with money and foodstuff and clothing and so on, and they have co-operated wonderfully with the officials, so there should not be overlapping. The assistance given by these agencies has already been mentioned but they found that after working there for sometime their duties in the town were done. They asked to go out to the villages and help, and got the information they wanted and now are working outside. They are providing temporary houses free to those who cannot afford to put them up themselves. The difficulty of getting bamboos and grass for making

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temporary huts had to be faced, and the idea was to make two big yards to which these articles could be bought at reasonable rates. The idea of the yards, however, was given up and the cartloads of bamboos, grass, etc., were sent into the town and sold there.

All these arrangements worked satisfactorily. No profiteering in bamboos or *khar* or other grasses took place. The price of bamboo never exceeded Rs. 16 per hundred and now it has dropped as low as 10 and 13 per cent. You will thus realize how everybody has co-operated in the town of Motihari in working the arrangements and how satisfactory the result has been.

The losses in the villages have already been mentioned and I am quite sure that what has been suffered in Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga has been suffered equally in Motihari. Measures to meet these have been mentioned also, and there is no need for me to go over these again. But I do think that some practical demonstration is required of what the damage is to the *rabi* crop and to what extent the land has been covered with sand. The sand has made it impossible to cultivate these lands for the next crop. I propose as far as the estate I manage is concerned which covers 70 square miles in four thanas to have an estimate made of the crop damaged in each area, showing what percentage that *rabi* crop is to the total cultivable area. I also propose measuring up every bit of sand and cultivable land that has been covered by it and partially or totally ruined. Such a demonstration will give a very good idea of the position, if not for the whole of Bihar at any rate for South Champaran.

I thank Babu Chandreswar Prashad Narayan Sinha for what he has said about the planters and I agree with all that he has said that both zamindars and planters have been very badly hit indeed, and I think it is quite true to say that the more goods you had the more you have been hit. The man in the *tatti* house has not been hit so much as the man who lived in a pukka building, which is altogether gone. The zamindars and the planters, I do not think, will want in most cases any relief in the form of a gift, but what they will want is assistance of Government loans on easy terms and I think they are deserving of that help.

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I have nothing more to say, but I do think that the loss of property and money is not everything. The loss of those who lost their relations is a very great loss indeed but the loss of courage is worst of all. Government should give assistance not only to the raiyat, to the zamindar, to the planter and to the towns-people but to everybody who has suffered. With this help and courage I am quite certain that some years hence the shadow of this disaster will largely disappear.

Rai Bahadur LACHMI PRASHAD SINHA: Sir, coming as I do from that part of the province which has seen the worst of the earthquake and its aftermath, I should like to participate in the discussion initiated by the Government and make a few observations as to the situation created and the relief measures that are necessary.

There is no doubt that Bihar has suffered one of the greatest natural calamities of human history. In the words of Dr. Dunn of the Geological Survey of India, the Bihar earthquake has been one of the biggest and most extensive earthquakes in history. A true conception of its intensity and destruction that it has wrought both in the loss of human lives and property can be formed only by those who have either themselves been the unfortunate victims of this great tragedy or those who have visited the scenes of destruction. Being one of the victims myself, all my houses having been reduced to a mass of ruins, I must say that Monghyr, which was once a beautiful and flourishing city, is no more. Lofty palaces of big persons, beautiful structures, dwelling houses, shops and public buildings, have all been reduced to debris and dust. It is a scene of disastrous upheaval, stark desolation and ruin that spreads itself before one's eyes. Those fearful and deadly three minutes on the afternoon of the 15th of January 1934 still linger in our memory. Thousands of precious lives were lost in the twinkling of an eye. The collapsing roads and walls in congested parts of the town buried hundreds alive and for them there was nothing but the peace of death, while hundreds seized with fear and troubled with utter distress were out under the bare canopy of the sky shivering with the most piercing cold. The destruction was so complete that it was not possible for days to trace the lines of streets and roads. Pathetic and heart-rending were the scenes enacted before our eyes. People having lost their all on this earth—worldly riches and their dear ones—were hovering round their destroyed houses searching for the bodies of their

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relatives and their treasures hidden by piles of masonry and brickwork. It is a long tale of unprecedented woe and suffering which perhaps beggars description. Estimates may differ, but the fact remains that in Monghyr the earthquake has taken its toll in thousands of human lives and the financial loss that it has inflicted on the ill-fated town of Monghyr may well be computed at crores. The rural areas in my district have also suffered as the result of the earthquake and their needs must also be attended to.

I must here pay my tribute of admiration to the local officers, the Government and other independent relief organisations who have been prompt in the field to the succour of the stricken town of Monghyr. Perhaps they have done all that was possible to provide temporary relief to the afflicted and destitute. It seems to me rather inopportune that articles in the Press should be coming out repudiating the works done by the relief workers, officials or otherwise, and I consider that such things go more to injure than help the cause of the distressed.

After these preliminary observations, I should like to make a few suggestions to the Government as to how best permanent relief can be afforded to the sufferers. It is imperative to pool together all the resources available in this province and also the financial resources that may be available from the Government of India in the shape of a free grant or loan and other sources, to chalk out a comprehensive programme of permanent and substantial relief, apart from immediate measures of relief, for those who have suffered from the recent earthquake in the province by the adoption of the following means :—

- (1) By granting long-term credit, say for 20 to 25 years, to persons affected for reconstruction purpose at nominal rates of interest.
- (2) By making free grants for rebuilding purpose to those who have been rendered utterly helpless and who cannot afford to repay.
- (3) By granting remission in land revenue demands, road cess, water rates, municipal taxes and rates in proportion to the loss sustained by the areas affected by the earthquake.
- (4) By granting adequate charitable relief and *taccavi* loans to the agriculturists in those parts where the crops have suffered most.

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- (5) By providing, on co-operative basis, the sugarcane growers with bullock and power mills to crush cane locally and convert it into *gur* or *deshi* sugar, and making arrangements for finding a market for the same.
- (6) By making such arrangements that the standing sugarcane crop in the affected areas will be absorbed as much as possible by factories working in this province as well as outside, so that the growers may be saved from the disastrous loss with which they are threatened.
- (7) By adequate grants to municipalities and district boards to enable them to restore road communications both in towns and rural areas and carry out necessary earthwork repairs as early as possible.

The most stupendous and perplexing problem that now confronts us is that of rebuilding shattered towns and restoring the economic life of the community. The magnitude of the task can be gathered from the eloquent appeal of His Excellency Sir James Sifton, who says—

For the reconstruction of Tokyo and Yokohama ten years ago, the equivalent of eighty crores of rupees was spent and the need of Bihar is not to be measured in lakhs.

Charity alone will not make good such a big disaster and help up to pull the province out of the abyss. It is obvious that the Government of India should raise a loan of at least rupees thirty crores, and it should be charged not to the hapless province of Bihar alone, but to the whole of India, and to Great Britain, which should in this tragely stand by the stricken province. In Monghyr town itself there are about 9,000 holdings and 13,000 houses. If we deduct from these 600 houses which may either belong to rich people or may be the property of Government, 12,400 are those of the middle and poor classes of people, which have to be rebuilt by means of granting loans. If the average to rebuild each house will work out at Rs. 3,000, it will mean about three crores of rupees to rebuild the shattered town of Monghyr alone. When the Government of India have declared its intention of creating new provinces by promising subventions for a definite period, why cannot they take the responsibility of re-creating and re-building a province that has been devastated and wrecked through this great tragedy?

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We fully appreciate that the local Government are devoting all their energies to devising means to facilitate the reconstruction of the province, and that they have been prompt in publishing the provisions of the Bihar and Orissa Natural Calamities Loans Bill, 1934, which they propose to introduce in the present session of the Legislative Council to grant loans to the owners of buildings which have been damaged or destroyed by earthquakes or other natural calamities. The preliminary step has thus been taken by the local Government in the hope that they will get financial assistance from the Government of India for the purpose.

It is important that the financial assistance from the Government of India, in whatever form it may be, must be adequate to meet the needs of the situation. The whole of India has nobly responded to the heart-rending cry of Bihar and the collections, both in the Viceroy's Fund and Babu Rajendra Prasad's Fund, may perhaps be well employed to reduce the interest on loans, because even both put together will be just like a drop in the ocean and we cannot expect to start reconstruction through private benevolence alone.

The problem of reconstruction in urban areas is two-fold ; (1) the rebuilding of the houses of the middle class and the poor people ; (2) affording adequate finance to petty shopkeepers and businessmen with a view to enable them to make a fresh start.

So far as rural areas are concerned, houses will have to be rebuilt in many areas, entire villages may have to be replanned, roads repaired and reconstructed, wells re-excavated or new wells sunk, the lands covered with sand will have to be reclaimed and short term finance will have to be provided to keep the cultivators going till the next harvest.

So, what is needed is to chalk out a comprehensive programme of relief by means of a reconstruction loan. It may be necessary to give a part out of this loan by way of gratuitous relief to the poorer section of the people who have no means left to repay and the rest to be advanced at a low rate of interest to be repaid in easy instalments.

The loss to agricultural lands has also been heavy. Thousands of acres of soil, it is feared, has been permanently corrupted and turned into desert. Such is the fate of the most fertile lands in the country to which Bihar owed its

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agricultural prosperity. Here also the loss can be estimated at crores. It is high time, therefore, that Government should seriously consider the question of granting suitable remissions in land revenue, cess and water rates to those landlords whose lands have suffered.

Similarly, in the case of urban areas those whose houses have been destroyed or damaged should get a remission in municipal taxes. This tragedy coupled with the economic depression makes the lot of the people very hard indeed.

In most of the affected parts the crops have considerably suffered on account of the thick deposit of sand and mud and it will, therefore, be necessary to investigate the extent of the loss to the cultivators and give them adequate charitable relief and *taccavi* loans.

Our friend, the Hon'ble Mr. Syed Abdul Aziz, Minister of Education, deserves our thanks for the admirable manner in which he is devoting himself to the cause of relief in general, and also in devising means to save the cane-growers from the utter loss and ruin, in particular. The problem is how to absorb the 150 lakh maunds of surplus sugarcane crop valued at about 40 lakhs of rupees as a result of the destruction of seven sugar factories in North Bihar. It is gratifying that the Minister has taken steps to solve this problem to an appreciable extent. Government have already sanctioned Rs. 2,50,000 lakhs for the purchase of bullock-driven cane-crushers for the purpose of manufacturing *gur*, and Government are also making arrangements to let the factories in the province and outside absorb this surplus cane.

Stricken Bihar needs sympathy not only of the Empire, but of the whole world, in the great tragedy that has befallen her. In 1923, when Japan was struck by a similar disastrous earthquake, she received all possible help from different countries. Great Britain, the United States, France and Italy ordered their squadrons and vessels that were in Asiatic waters and the Pacific to proceed to the rescue of Japan and medical relief corps were sent to Japan by different countries. A national mourning day was observed in France and Italy for the sufferers in Japan. China gave 200,000 Yen from her national treasury and the League of Nations, 10,785 (Rs. 8,528). According to the report of the Emergency Relief Board the money and articles that were sent in aid of the Japanese from abroad up to the end of October, 1926 were as follows :

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Monetary contributions 22,123,492 Yen (Rs. 1,76,88,769)
contributions in kind (estimated value) 18,613,000 Yen
(Rs. 1,48,90,400).

The disaster of Japan will pale into insignificance as compared with the disaster that has befallen Bihar. The Bihar earthquake is known to have been one of the greatest of which human records exist. It is believed that the length of the epicentre extends right up from Motihari to Monghyr—a distance of about 135 miles. Epicentres of disastrous Japanese and New Zealand earthquakes in recent years were not more than about 25 miles long. According to His Excellency the Governor's estimate the area of the greatest destruction in Bihar is as large as the whole of Scotland and supports five times the population of Scotland and does not include those parts of Bihar lying south of the Ganges where the loss of life and damage to property was on a lesser scale.

In the great tragedy the like of which has not been seen in any part of the world in recent history, stricken Bihar expects that the world sympathy will be stirred, and widespread will be the response to her heart-rending cry for succour.

Khan Bahadur SAGHIRUL HAQ : Sir, the Hon'ble the Finance Member has given us a very detailed account of the havoc wrought by the disastrous earthquake of the 15th of January last. We have heard of the harrowing accounts of the districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Motihari and Monghyr from our friends, Babu Chandreshvar Prashad Narayan Sinha, Rai Bahadur Lachhmi Prashad Sinha, Mr. Meyrick and others. My district of Saran has also had its share of the misfortune. The town of Chapra was badly hit. A number of houses in mahalla Katra and Bhagwan Bazar have been completely destroyed. The houses of the Collector, the Judge and the Civil Surgeon have been badly damaged. The towns of Siwan and Gopalganj escaped with the collapse of a few houses, but most of the houses in these towns have also been badly damaged. In the interior of the district, Masrakh, Parsa, Sonapur, Dighwara, Basantpur, Barharia, Barauli, Gopalganj and Baikuntpur are badly hit. Suffice it to say that almost all the masonry houses in North Bihar have been badly damaged and a large number have been completely destroyed. Monghyr is in ruins. The normal life in the stricken area has been disorganized. No time was lost after the 15th by the officials of my district in taking prompt action and giving necessary relief to the sufferers. Blankets and money are being distributed even now. Temporary grass huts have been

[K. B. Saghirul Haq]

erected for those who have been rendered homeless and the prices of foodstuffs, building materials and other commodities, such as, salt, kerosine oil, etc., have been successfully controlled by the officials. Non-officials also did not and do not lag behind in their zeal in helping the sufferers. The stage of giving immediate relief is, in my opinion, almost past and we are now confronted with a more important and difficult problem of reconstruction. This may be considered under four heads: (1) restoration of water-supply, (2) restoration of communications, (3) reconstruction of buildings and (4) reclamation of land rendered unfit for cultivation by the deposit of sand. I am not going to offer detailed suggestions, because it would be the business of the Relief Commissioner assisted by an advisory committee of experts and non-officials to make out a programme and go into the details. I shall confine myself only to a few suggestions on the broad feature of the question. So far as the restoration of water-supply is concerned, my humble suggestion is that this work should be carried on through the local bodies, i.e., the district boards, the local boards and the municipalities, but with a better expert advice. What I mean to say by better advice is that their present engineering staff is not competent enough to handle this matter successfully. The restoration of communications will have to be done through the same agency. As chairman of a municipality I can say that Government without waiting for suggestions from any quarters are corresponding with the local bodies about their requirements and I am sure they will do the needful in this direction. Then comes the question of reconstruction of houses. For this also, Government have framed a Bill. We have got copies of the Bill. In this connection, I would like to suggest that the period for the repayment of loans for reconstruction of houses should be fairly long. It should be from 15 to 20 years. It was rightly said by my friend, Mr. Hasan Jan yesterday that most of the houses which would be reconstructed would be dwelling houses and no return could be expected from them. The owners of the houses would have to make repayments out of their savings from their earnings. I think if the period is not going to be fixed from 15 to 20 years, later on both Government and the debtors will find themselves in a difficult position. My next suggestion is that interest on such loans should in no case exceed 3 per cent. If Government find themselves in difficulty to raise a loan for this purpose at a slightly lower rate it is open to them to raise a loan even at a little higher rate of interest and pay the difference between

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the interest on their own loan and the interest they charge from the debtors, also the overhead charges, out of the Viceroy's Fund.

Sir, lastly I come to the question of reclamation of lands. This is a very very important question and it relates to the villages. The village population is not vocal like its brethren in the towns and they should in no case be neglected. I understand that it is proposed to advance loans to villagers to reclaim their lands under the Land Improvement Act. My submission is that construction problems cannot be solved by individual efforts. It would be much better for Government to help co-operative movement in securing long-term finance for this purpose and to advance loans through co-operative societies. To be more clear I prefer that land mortgage banks should be opened at once to meet the situation. But it may not be acceptable to Government, because I remember to have read their resolution on the recommendations of the Committee on Co-operation wherein they say that they do not agree with the recommendations of the Committee and are unable to favour the idea of establishing land mortgage banks. Well, Sir, I do not agree with Government, but in any case if they find themselves in real difficulty in opening land mortgage banks it would be better for Government, instead of advancing Takavi loans to individuals, to provide the existing co-operative movement with long-term finance for advancing loans to the existing rural societies and those which may be formed later on in the stricken area for the improvement of their lands. My idea is that societies as corporate bodies would be in touch with the Co-operative and Agriculture Departments and thus be able to reclaim their lands with joint effort and expert advice and assistance. This work, no doubt, will have to be conducted, to a great extent, on scientific lines with costly implements.

Khan Bahadur ABDUL WAHAB KHAN : The earthquake shocks of the 15th January in North Bihar were unprecedented and the suffering of the mankind due to destruction of life and property is really indescribable. What North Bihar was before the 15th January and what it is now can only be fully realized by those who are the citizens of this unfortunate area. Monghyr before the 15th January was considered to be the most beautiful spot in North Bihar and it is now a city of ruins. The *Statesman* rightly said when summing up the situation of Monghyr that the city no more exists. I have the honour of being

[K. B. Abdul Wahab Khan]

a citizen of this city and it was my misfortune to see this beautiful city destroyed so mercilessly by the elements of nature. I say, Sir, that never in the annals of history such gigantic destruction of life and property has occurred in such short time either at the hands of nature or mankind so well equipped with modern machines of destruction, and our calamity cannot be compared with the earthquakes of Tokio and California.

Sir, the shocks were so severe that it was impossible for us to keep our balance and it is no wonder that the cities of Monghyr, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga and other towns of North Bihar which took centuries to build were completely destroyed in about three minutes. I submit, Sir, that in the affected area the destruction of Monghyr town was more complete than any other urban area and the condition of the people who are left is more pitiable. People who were rolling in wealth are reduced to poverty and the conditions of middle class and poor people can be more imagined than described. We at Monghyr have now a very uphill task before us and in our struggle for existence we are heavily handicapped. I hope I will not tire the patience of the House by giving in a very few words the account of what took place at Monghyr. On the 15th January at 2-15 P.M., Sir, within the period of three minutes the entire buildings were razed to the ground. Houses which could stand the charge of dynamite crumpled as if they were made of mud. Mud huts and pucca buildings all fell and at Monghyr there is not one house except the Collector's bungalow which by minor repair can be made safe for people to live in. The area in which my house was situated was the most open area of the town. Sir, in this area between the hours of 2-30 and 4 P.M. on January 15th, we, a few persons of the locality, extracted as many as 80 persons—dead and alive—from the debris. From this I submit, Sir, the loss of life and injuries to people of such area of Monghyr town as Topekhana Bazar, Chowk Bazar and Bari Bazar can be well imagined. These areas were most congested with narrow roads and lanes. Here the loss of life has been the heaviest and in many cases the entire family has been wiped out. Sir, I can say this to the credit of Mr. Mainwaring and Mr. Dalziel that when I reached this area after 4 P.M. on the 15th January I found these officers there from before and making such arrangements as was then possible for the rescue of people in that locality. I met these officers again the same evening and then I learnt from them for the first time the cheerful news that they

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have got in touch with Bhagalpur and assistance from Bhagalpur will arrive before morning at Monghyr. I met these officers again on the 16th and Mr. Dain, our Divisional Commissioner as well, when the rescue and relief work was in full swing. The same day private relief parties also arrived from Bhagalpur. It is really surprising to all of us at Monghyr how so quickly the Government officers managed so well to control the state of affairs, specially when the District Officer was handicapped in his work by the complete disability of the Superintendent of Police, who was amongst those who were severely injured. One hardly realizes what a lot of people have been rescued from the debris, and it is a miracle how some of those who had been rescued were alive. I take this opportunity of expressing the gratitude of the people of Monghyr to Mr. Dain and Mr. Mainwaring for the admirable work done in the city of Monghyr immediately after the earthquake. These officers have rendered glorious services to mankind and to them a good few people owe their lives.

Sir, the rural conditions of North Monghyr are as bad as, or nearly as bad as, the rural conditions of Darbhanga. Though the losses of life are not so great in our rural areas, yet in many villages all the village houses have cracked and a good few have become irreparable. In the thanas Khagaria, Gogri, Chowthum and Bakhtiarpur the lands have cracked, fissures have been formed, wells have gone dry and at places the lands have become sandy. I also honestly suspect that on enquiry it will be found that land and river levels have also changed. Sir, these few words from me may give you the idea of our sufferings.

Sir, the Hon'ble the Finance Member in his speech to-day has given us the full information of the conditions of the affected area. The losses of mankind have been so great that this calamity is really an all-India affair and my suggestion to the Hon'ble Member is that 15th January should henceforth be recognized all over India as the day for national mourning alike by the Government and people. It is gratifying to us sufferers that organizations all over India have sprung up to help us out of our difficulties. All shades of opinion all over the country are anxious to mitigate our sufferings. Our Provincial Government are fully alive to their responsibilities. In view of the hugeness of the calamity it is very desirable that public organizations and the local Government should tackle the situation in the spirit of co-operation. I, therefore, appeal to such public opinion as

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may have differences with the Government to forget for our sake for the time being their differences, and I also appeal to the Government not to assume that any statement made by any particular person either in his personal or representative capacity is the statement made in the spirit of adding to the heavy burden of the Government. Sir, to restore normal condition in Bihar's affected area crores of rupees and gigantic human efforts are needed, and it remains to be seen what Bihar's so-called national organizations are ready to do to help the sufferers.

Before I submit my suggestions to the House about the measures necessary for giving relief to the people of North Bihar I beg to bring to the notice of the House the two immediate needs of Monghyr town. During summer and rains climatic conditions of Monghyr as a rule are not satisfactory and we have visitations of epidemics. This year's conditions being very much aggravated, I submit it is very necessary that the Government should remind the local officers concerned to take all steps to keep the drinking water free from possible contamination. The second immediate need is the improvement in the conservancy work of the town where, due to present circumstances, there is considerable room for improvement.

Now, Sir, I place before the House the following suggestions for the relief of the sufferers in North Bihar ;—

1. Considerable portion of the "Viceroy's Relief Fund" be utilised for giving gratuitous grants to the people for building permanent buildings who due to their poverty are unable to avail themselves of the opportunity of taking loan from the Government.
2. For Monghyr town, Government should have a town-planning scheme and the town should be laid out accordingly. If possible, the houses be built of such types as will suit best the local conditions.
3. The Government should take necessary steps to minimise all chances of profiteering by building contractors and merchants who sell building materials in the locality.
4. Free technical and expert advice be made available for all persons for building purposes, either temporary or permanent structures.
5. Complete survey of the rural area be made and levels be checked before rains.

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6. Necessary relief, either in the form of remission or sufficiency of extension in time, be allowed to all persons who pay cess and taxes to the Government for such payments.

7. Monghyr district board be superseded and its funds be placed at the disposal of District Committee of officials, non-officials or both, to be utilized for the entire district including urban area.

8. Necessary legislation be introduced to check high interest on the part of private people who lend money for building and agricultural purposes. Also, less expensive method be thought of for litigation of the type of small cause court and rent suits.

9. Government should have in view a scheme for providing work for such class of persons as due to the earthquake have lost their services or are about to lose their services and lastly, the Government should economise in all her expenditures of recurring and non-recurring types.

In order to restore the normal conditions huge sums of money are needed and such needs cannot be met from the provincial resources, equally one cannot hope that from the charities alone it is possible to restore North Bihar. Loan alone can solve the question of funds and the money being cheap it will be more than possible to get a successful floatation. This is all I have to submit.

Maulavi SHAIKH MUHAMMAD SHAFI: Sir, I do not wish to dilate upon the extent of the destruction which has been caused by the recent earthquake, because I believe that by this time the hon'ble members of the House fully know the nature of the severity of the destruction which has been caused by it. It would be enough to say that so far as Darbhanga, Madhubani and Samastipur towns are concerned, you will not find any house worth living in, and I believe that more than 90 per cent of the houses have been damaged and have fallen down. That is the situation in which we are placed in that district. I must say that after the earthquake officials as well as non-officials did their work with great sympathy and attempted to redress and give relief to those who were affected. In towns huts were built, blankets and grains were distributed to the poor people. I believe that, so far as relief work is concerned, the town people had a good deal of sympathy from the relief parties but the rural population was not so fortunate. So far as my district is concerned, you will be surprised to hear that up till now they have not been able to

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enlist the sympathy of officials in giving them relief. Since about 4 or 5 days the Central Relief Committee has been sending its workers to give some sort of relief to the villagers. The village people poured in the town and when they found that no relief is going to be given to them, they felt very sore and helpless. Through the district board only wells are now being cleaned in the rural areas, but no other relief has been given to these villagers in the Darbhanga district. That is the point which I wish to bring before the House and the Government. The prevailing idea is that the villagers have got merely huts and mud-wall buildings and therefore they have not lost much. In the local committee this sort of view was expressed, but it was perhaps not remembered that these villagers, who previous to this calamity were heavily indebted and whose produce were selling very cheap, were even before the quake financially in a very straitened condition and had to purchase their necessities of life such as kerosene oil, salt and cloth at a higher rate than what was prevailing in the towns. These people are really in such a bad state that a cry on their behalf was raised in the last Council that some attempt should be made for bettering that condition. They were already in a bad plight and it was on account of their poverty that they had mud-walls and very few brick walls. But all the same they have all suffered and their mud-walls were for them like brick-walls. I think their troubles were not fully realised and consequently their claims were brushed aside in giving them immediate relief. You can easily picture their helplessness when they saw that no immediate relief was coming to them, specially when a vast area of their land became sandy and extensive *rabi* crops were spoiled. I hope that when any scheme is made or any step is taken for giving relief to the people of the afflicted or affected area, the claims of these villagers would not be neglected. If these villagers are not helped and their financial condition is not bettered and no serious attempt is made to give them relief, then in what plight would our province be which is mainly an agricultural country. We live by their labours, we are fed by them and they are our backbone and strength. And if they suffer heavily, I am sure the House will realise that the whole province will suffer. Therefore, it should be our concern to see that if any relief is needed by them, it should be given to them ungrudgingly and on theoretical arguments their claims should not be brushed aside or belittled.

(Interval for lunch.)