

15.10 hrs.

SITUATION ARISING FROM CYCLONE IN
ANDHRA PRADESH - CONTD.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : Sir, I would like to make this supplementary statement on heavy rains and flood in Andhra Pradesh from the 17th to 21st October, 1996.

A low pressure area formed over South-West and adjoining West-Central Bay of Bengal on 15th October, 1996. The low pressure area became well marked on 16th October, 1996 and it persisted over the sea up to 18th October, 1996. On 19th October, 1996 it moved inland and lay over Rayalaseema and adjoining areas, moving in a westerly direction. The low pressure gradually weakened on 21st October, 1996. During the period from 17th October, 1996 to 21st October, 1996 the State received widespread and heavy to very heavy rainfall all over South coastal and Rayalaseema districts of Andhra Pradesh.

2. The torrential rains caused enormous loss of human life, loss of livestock and damages to both public and private properties in the 11 affected districts of Andhra Pradesh. The worst affected districts are Prakasam, Cuddapah, Nellore, Chittoor, Anantapur and urnool. The average rainfall recorded in most of these affected districts ranged from 100 mm. to 317 mm. in these six days. The heavy loss and flash floods inundated a large number of villages. A number of medium and minor irrigation sources were breached and damaged. This had a cascading effect and caused major breaches to the medium and minor irrigation projects like the Lower Sagileru Project in Cuddapah and Rallapadu and Mopadu reservoirs in Prakasam district. The rains also caused large scale damages to National Highway No. 5 between Nellore and Ongole and to the railway tracks between Nellore to Ongole and at some other points between Vijayawada and Madras. The State Government has reported that the District Administration has taken prompt action in evacuating 1,37,314 people living in low-lying areas to safer places and accommodating them in 174 relief camps. Medical and para-medical teams were deployed in the affected districts. Two IAF helicopters, 10 Army boats and a large number of country boats or crafts and motor boats were also deployed for rescue and relief including providing food packets and drinking water to the victims in the marooned villages. The State Government has reported a total of 338 deaths in the affected districts.

3. The Prime Minister made an aerial survey of the affected areas on 21st October, 1996 and reviewed the relief measures initiated by the State Administration. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh also accompanied the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister

announced the release of Rs. 50 crore for taking up immediate relief and restoration measures. Of this, Rs. 23,285 crore was on account of the fourth instalment of Central share of the Calamity Relief Fund due on 1.1.1997, but released in advance on 22.10.1996, and the balance of Rs. 26,715 crore was on account of ways and means advance.

4. I myself visited the worst affected areas on 30th October, 1996. I have seen the plight of the affected people and have assured all possible assistance to the State Government.

5. The State Government has submitted a Memorandum in the last week of October, 1996 seeking Central assistance of Rs. 550.63 crore. A Central team was immediately despatched to the State on 28-30 October, 1996. The report of the Central team has been received. The National Calamity Relief Committee meeting under my Chairmanship on 18th November, 1996 has considered the issue and decided that since funds have already been released to the State, the issue of additional assistance from the National Fund for Calamity Relief will be considered along with the package of assistance to be made available to the State following the subsequent cyclone of 6-7 November, 1996.

This is what I have to say.

[English]

RE: QUESTION OF REPEAL OF IMDT ACT

(Interruptions)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV (Silchar) : Sir, the Prime Minister is present here. As it is creating a law and order problem, let him say something since he is here. You may ask him if he is willing or not. If he is not willing, I cannot force him. It is upto him.

MR. CHAIRMAN : If the Prime Minister wants to speak, he is most welcome to speak but otherwise, with the permission of the House, we would resume our discussion under Rule 193.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, Prime Minister wants to speak.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA) : Sir, with your kind permission, I would like to clarify only one point as regards the IMDT Act of Assam. Your goodself knows and the whole House knows that I visited all the North-Eastern States for about six and a half days. During my visit, I tried to meet all the sections of the society including leaders of political parties, non-Governmental organisations, Governors, Chief Ministers, Ministers and student unions. Like that, I tried to meet all sections of the people during my visit to the North-Eastern States.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT (Dausa) : What about the farmers?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA : In Assam, one of the demands was to repeal this Act. Almost all political parties including the Government party want to repeal it. But the Jamait-e-Islam—one group—came in the last and requested me not to take any hasty decision particularly on this Act. I told them that in the present context, unless all political parties were going to cooperate, it was rather difficult for me to repeal any Act and that they also, knew the composition of the House and that the Government would consider the matter with the cooperation of all parties.

Sir, this issue was also raised by the Press in the Press Conference. A majority of the people wants to repeal this Act because the purpose is not served by this Act. This is one of the major contentions. Under this Act, a Tribunal has been constituted to identify the foreigners. I do not want to go into the details like the impact of this Act. Though they have identified about 3.78 lakh people as foreigners, ultimately, the Tribunal passed an order for about 1000 people to be sent back to Bangladesh. So, this is the net result.

I do not want to enter into the merits and demerits now but there is some controversy on this issue. Unless I take the entire House into confidence, the question of repealing this Act at this stage will not arise.

15.18 hrs.

SITUATION ARISING FROM CYCLONE IN ANDHRA PRADESH - CONTD.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Hon. Members, with the permission of the House, we would resume discussion under Rule 193. I believe Shri K.S.R. Murthy was on his feet and therefore, he may carry on with his speech.

SHRI K.S.R. MURTHY (Amalapuram) : Mr. Chairman Sir, we are grateful to the Prime Minister for having consented to be here while discussing this calamity which never happened in the history of our country. We are particularly happy because there are conflicting reports in the Press that the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister were not getting on well and the State of Andhra Pradesh is likely to suffer as a result of the misunderstandings that have arisen between these two dignitaries.

Sir, I belong to Amalapuram parliamentary constituency where six of the Assembly segments have been completely washed out, out of the seven Assembly segments. When the hon. Prime Minister visited Amalapuram, I had not been informed of told that the Prime Minister was landing. When the hon. Minister of Agriculture went on a visit, I had not been told. Courtesy demands that the Member of Parliament should be informed whenever a Minister or the Prime Minister visits that area.

Even if there is a last minute change, that change should be communicated to the hon. Member wherever he is.

Coming to the role played by the Meteorological Department, they had forecast a speed of 60 to 70 km. per hour whereas the actual speed was 220 km. per hour. If the speed of 220 km. per hour had been broadcast on the All India Radio and the Doordarshan and signalled the fact that several houses might fall, several trees might fall, people would have taken enough precautions to take their own shelter in places where they needed that shelter. This was not done.

The statement of hon. Minister of Agriculture mentioned that the technology was not available. The technology is very much available in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. We all know that in 1977 a similar disaster took place in Diviseema. About 10,000 people had died. The Americans and Indians living in America saw through the satellite what had happened there. It is very unfortunate that even today the Government of India does not possess the technology which could forecast the speed, the technology which could show on the Television the course of the cyclone and the hurricane. We do see in America how the tornado travels from minute to minute. When this was happening Amalapuram, our great Doordarshan was telecasting a one-day cricket match. This only shows the interest we have in protecting the lives of these people.

Having said that, I must say about the deaths. The Government has forecast 971 deaths and 925 missing. But the local people say that these may be far exceeding 2,000. There has been no effort to search the reserve forests all around the areas where the fishermen had lived. The fishermen say that several bodies must still be lying in the reserve forests to which the Government has no access. Even after 10 days, a fisherman landed at Madras swimming from Amalapuram. He was swimming in the sea for full eight days. And even the Naval aircraft or any other aircraft never noticed him.

The Coast Guard aircraft could have given a signal. If they had gone over the sea, they would have detected all the fishermen, who were there, without radio facility. They could have warned them and said: 'Go back to the shore because a cyclone is likely to come and destroy your lives'.

The scale of relief which had taken place was good. But there is a lot of politicisation. A number of people say that because they belong to a particular party, though their houses have been destroyed, these have not been enumerated. It is very fortunate. We should have formed village level all-party committees even before the relief had been started. This was not done. The district level committees, Mandal level committees and village level committees should be formed immediately before the relief operation is started. When we met the Prime Minister, he was kind enough to agree that all such Committees should be formed. I would like to suggest for your consideration that even for the reconstruction that even for the reconstruction programme, which is of a tremendous magnitude of 2,000 crore, there must be a committee headed by the