

>

Title: The Minister of External Affairs made a statement regarding recent cyclone and the devastation caused in Bangladesh.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, please take your seat. The Leader of the House wants to make a Statement on this issue.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, on this very issue, I would like to make a Statement.

I rise to inform the hon. House about the recent cyclone and the devastation

it has caused in neighbouring Bangladesh.

As the hon. Members would be aware, a severe cyclone hit Bangladesh, especially its coastal districts, on 15th November causing in its wake death and devastation. More than 2300 are reported dead as of now and several thousands rendered homeless. An estimated 2.7 million people have also been affected, thousands of livestock killed and standing crops and infrastructure severely damaged.

Rashtrapatiji and the Prime Minister have written to their counterparts in Bangladesh expressing our distress at this tragedy and conveying our deep condolence and our readiness to assist in the relief efforts. Yesterday, I have spoken to Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Foreign Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh and mentioned to him our readiness to send relief supplies to supplement the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh.

As Bangladesh struggles to come to terms with this devastation, in keeping with our close ties and our empathy with the friendly people of Bangladesh in this

* Placed in Library. See No. LT 7177/07

hour of need, the Government of India has decided to respond immediately with a comprehensive relief package. Our offer will consist of relief materials required urgently by those affected. This package will consist of medicine, food items, milk powder, tents and blankets, first-aid kits and other relief items.

The hon. Members will recollect that India has always responded readily to such requests from Bangladesh earlier, the most recent one being a few months ago when considerable devastation was caused by mudslides during the monsoons. We are already in the process of supplying essential food items to Bangladesh. We will continue to extend whatever assistance we can this time as well. Thank you, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: That is good. The Government has taken notice of this.

...(Interruptions)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (SOUTH DELHI): What about the Nandigram issue?

MR. SPEAKER: After the Papers are laid, I will allow you.

12.05 hrs.