

>

Title : The Prime Minister made a statement regarding massive earthquake and Tsunami in Japan.

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Madam, Speaker, as hon. Members are aware, the north eastern part of Japan was hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami on the 11th of March.

Images of destruction and human misery are being flashed on Television channels. These are heart-rending and deeply disturbing sights. It is becoming evident that the scale of destruction and loss of human lives are likely to be far higher than initially expected. This is a moment of immense and grave tragedy for Japan.

I have already conveyed, on behalf of the Government and people of India, our deepest condolences to the Prime Minister of Japan. I have told him that India stands in full solidarity with the people of Japan and that our resources are at the disposal of Japan for any assistance they may require.

I am confident that this august House will join me in reiterating the heartfelt condolences of the people of India to the friendly people of Japan, and extending our prayers and thoughts to them during this most horrific disaster.

Madam, we can never forget that India has been the largest recipient of Japan's overseas development assistance. We have the best of relations with Japan. We are in touch with the Government of Japan to ascertain the kind of assistance they need. As an immediate step, we are airlifting 25,000 blankets to Japan. We are ready to send search and rescue teams and relief material. We stand ready to help in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase. Our Navy is on standby to send its ships to Japan as part of such an exercise.

We will spare no effort in assisting the Japanese authorities in dealing with the aftermath of this disaster.

There are about 25,000 Indian nationals in Japan. Most of them were not living in the areas affected by the tsunami. About 70 Indians are in the shelters established by Japanese authorities in the tsunami affected areas. We are monitoring their welfare. So far we do not have any reports of casualties.

The disaster has affected some of the nuclear power plants in Japan. The Government of India is in constant touch with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Japanese Atomic Industrial Forum, and the World Association of Nuclear Operators.

Madam, in India, we are currently operating 20 nuclear power reactors. 18 of these are the indigenous Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors. Two reactors at Tarapur, TAPS-1 and TAPS-2 are Boiling Water Reactors of the type being operated in Japan. A safety audit of these reactors has been completed recently. Indian nuclear plants have in the past met their safety standards. Following the earthquake in Bhuj on 26 January, 2002 the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station continued to operate safely without interruptions. Following the 2004 tsunami, the Madras Atomic Power Station was safely shut down without any radiological consequences. It was possible to restart the plant in a few days after regulatory review.

I would like to assure hon. Members of the House that the Government attaches the highest importance to nuclear safety. The Department of Atomic Energy and its agencies including the Nuclear Power Corporation of India have been instructed to undertake an immediate technical review of all safety systems of our nuclear power plants particularly with a view to ensuring that they would be able to withstand the impact of large natural disasters such as tsunamis and earthquakes.

I would also like to inform the House that work is underway in the Department of Atomic Energy towards further strengthening India's national nuclear safety regulatory authority.