

16.09 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. DROUGHT SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

[English]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (DR. G.S. DHILLON): Sir, I seek leave of the House to make a statement on the behaviour of the South-West monsoon and its impact on the kharif crop production. I am aware that Hon'ble Members are very much concerned about the abnormal behaviour of South-West monsoon.

Monsoon set over South Kerala in time and gradually advanced northward satisfactorily till the middle of June. Thereafter, its progress was slow; and only on 23rd June, it advanced to Bihar. It was inactive for the next 12 days. Only by 8th July, it advanced to Himachal Pradesh hills and Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir even though it should have covered almost the entire country except West Rajasthan by 1st July. Rains did not arrive in West Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi till 26th July, 1987. Delhi had the misfortune of breaking a 80 year old record on late arrival of monsoon.

The data available for the 35 Meteorological sub-divisions upto 22nd July, 1987 show that only 10 of the 35 sub-divisions had received normal or excess rainfall till the date. This is in contrast to 23 such sub-divisions in the corresponding period of 1986, 27 sub-divisions in 1985 and 26 sub-divisions in 1984. Thus, the progress of current monsoon has been unsatisfactory. Except Assam, Orissa and West Bengal and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Karnataka, the deficiency in rains in other parts of the country has been 20% or more compared to "normal" rainfall. With nearly 70% of our land cultivated under un-irrigated conditions, we are not strangers to the vagaries of monsoon. As you are aware, paddy, jowar, bajra, maize, pulses, groundnuts and Soyabean are our important kharif crops. Our farmers are indeed resourceful

in making the best use of available moisture.

The Central Government had held a Conference in April, 1987 with the State Governments on the preparation of contingency plans to meet aberrant weather conditions in drought prone and flood prone areas. When the normal crop cannot be grown under such conditions, a substitute crop with a shorter duration is often grown by our farmers with the seeds supplied by the State Governments. In April, 1987 itself, the Government of India had finalised plans with the State Governments for maintaining adequate buffer stocks of seeds to meet such contingencies.

My Ministry has requested the State Governments to give the highest priority to the provision of electricity and diesel to operate agricultural pumpsets so that the farmers can tap ground water in drought affected areas which have such ground water. In fact, the Governments of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana have reportedly cut down allocation of power to industries with a view to support irrigation by the farmers.

In this hour of difficulty, I am sure, the House will extend all cooperation to strengthen the hands of the farmer. While the State Governments have initiated appropriate action, a special Conference was held on 28th July by my Ministry in New Delhi to review the situation and to chart out further courses of action to make the best use of available moisture.

It was decided that the State Governments would apply their contingency plans for sowing alternative short duration crops in areas affected by delayed rains. Every possible step will be taken to husband the precious irrigation resources in the major and medium irrigation projects so that maximum possible water can be saved for the rabi season. During the month of August, joint plans of operation

[Dr. G.S. Dhillon]

for Rabi season will be drawn up by the Centre and the State for:—

- extending irrigation to the maximum possible cropped area,
- securing shifts from more water-intensive crops to less water-intensive crops in order to maximise production, keeping in view the national priorities; and
- undertaking an emergency seed production plan in order to make good the loss in seed production during kharif 1987, so that the seed requirement of 1988-89 will be fully met.

Special attention will be paid to expand minor irrigation through tubewells and filter points.

I am aware that the Hon'ble Members are also worried about fodder for our animals. The State Governments have been already requested to take action on the basis of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Agriculture to save livestock from the present drought. These measures include procurement of fodder from Forest Departments, establishment of Fodder Banks, procurement of foodgrains unfit for human consumption augmenting production of Urea molasses bricks to supplement animal feed etc.

Our past experience shows that in years of abnormal monsoon, scarcity of drinking water becomes a serious problem. The Department of Rural Development in my Ministry have activated an Action Plan for meeting the situation. This plan includes:

- priority allocation of funds for critical areas,
- re-orientation of State plans to complete schemes in worst affected areas by December 1987,

- reservation of water from irrigation reservoirs in drought affected areas for drinking,
- cutting down evaporation losses by spreading appropriate chemicals over such tanks,
- control of underground water withdrawal and other measures.

As stated earlier, my Ministry will work very closely with the State Governments to ensure that every possible step is taken to meet the abnormal monsoon and to render every possible assistance to the farmers and other sections of our population. We have tackled droughts and floods in the past and won the praise of our people. One of our biggest strengths is the large quantities of wheat and rice available in our foodstocks. With the cooperation of the Hon'ble Members and the State Governments, I am sure, the Government of India will meet the present contingency also successfully.

16.15 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

16.16 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: ACCIDENTS TO TRAINS NOS. 21, HYDERABAD-HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN EXPRESS NEAR MANCHIRYAL STATION OF SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY ON 9.7.87 AND 316 BARHARWA-RAMPURHAT PASSENGER ON 27.7.87 ON THE EASTERN RAILWAY.

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): I deeply regret to apprise the House of two unfortunate accidents, one involving Train No. 21 Hyderabad-Hazrat Nizamuddin Express on 9.7.87 on the South Central Railway, and the other to Train No. 316 Barharwa-Rampur Hat Passenger on 27.7.87 on the Eastern Railway.