

[Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava]

Twenty-fifth Report of the Business Advisory Committee.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

FLOODS IN ORISSA

Shri B. C. Das (Ganjam South): Under Rule 216, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Irrigation and Power to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Floods in the Orissa State resulting in colossal damage to life and property".

The Minister of Planning and Irrigation and Power (Shri Nanda): From the time the reports of extensive floods in Orissa reached me I have been keeping in close touch with the State Government. Orissa which was in the grip of drought for two years in succession was suddenly overtaken by floods in the first week of September. Unusually heavy precipitation in the catchments of the Mahanadi and Brahmani between 29th August to 4th September has caused high floods in these rivers. At Naraj the gauge rose two feet above the danger level. This kind of floods, though rare, has occurred in some earlier years also. Due to the very high water level in the Mahanadi the embankment got over-topped at several places and almost the entire embankment system below Cuttack failed. As the Brahmani and Mahanadi are inter-connected by several spill-channels the lower delta became almost one sheet of water. Though the levels in the rivers have fallen as rapidly as they rose, the drainage of accumulated spills, due to flat gradients near the sea and due to the tidal effects of the latter, has been slow. A number of villages have been isolated, and nearly six lakhs of people have been affected.

Heavy damage to crops and properties has been caused. Loss of human life has also been reported. Many heads of cattle have perished. We have, however, not yet got an exact appraisal of the damage. This will be possible when the floods have subsided.

The State Government took prompt measures to deal with the emergency which developed so suddenly. The Chief Minister of Orissa made an aerial survey of the flood affected areas. The Government of India have rendered all the help asked for by the State in rushing supplies of food and medicines, arranging air-dropping of food and clothing for the marooned population and despatching army personnel and boats for rescue operations.

In view of the serious situation, the Union Minister of Food and Agriculture also made an aerial inspection of the flooded areas on 11th September and had discussions with State Ministers and officials regarding relief measures and the assistance required from the Centre. He has arranged for additional supplies of foodgrains stocks of which are plenty in Calcutta. The Orissa Government have been informed that there will be absolutely no difficulty in supplying any quantity of raw rice required by them.

Engineers were rushed from the Hirakud Dam Project to assist in the rescue operations. Wireless apparatus has been set up at suitable places for sending messages of requirements of supplies of food and other necessary help. Gratuitous relief is being given.

The extensive flood damages this year have been, in the main, due to the simultaneous occurrence of floods in the Mahanadi and Brahmani. The House is already aware that the Hirakud Dam Project is being constructed for the control of floods in the Mahanadi. The Hirakud Project is in an advanced stage of construction

tion and will be built to the design level by June, 1956. Even with the present partial level of the dam, the incoming flood in the Mahanadi was reduced by about two lakh cusecs. But for this project the damages in the delta would have been far more extensive. The dam when completed would further reduce the flood by another two lakh cusecs, thus practically eliminating damages from floods of this order.

The Orissa Government have already in hand a number of small flood protection schemes for which financial assistance is being granted by the Centre to the extent of about Rs. 20 lakhs. The Orissa Government have also prepared three major flood protection schemes to be undertaken in the areas where breaches have occurred this year.

The Central Flood Control Board is meeting shortly to consider the programme for flood control for inclusion in the Second Plan. For planning flood control measures in Brahmani and other rivers of Orissa detailed investigations are necessary, and action will be initiated in this regard as soon as the floods subside.

PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE

STATEMENT ON FLOOD SITUATION IN ORISSA

The Minister of Planning and Irrigation and Power (Shri Nanda): In addition to the statement which I have just made, I beg to lay on the Table of the House a detailed statement on the flood situation in Orissa. [Placed in Library. See No. S-327/55]

Shri B. C. Das (Ganjam South): May I request that copies of the statement may be circulated?

Mr. Speaker: Copies may be circulated.

Shri Nanda: Yes, Sir.

and will be built to the design North-East): Would you permit me to take advantage of the presence of the hon. Minister of Planning and Irrigation and Power to ask him if he has any information to lay before us regarding the tragedy at Hirakud?

Mr. Speaker: I think he is going to make a statement on that.

Shri Nanda: Yes, Sir. I shall make a statement on that.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION BY A MEMBER

Dr. S. N. Sinha (Saran East): In the course of my speech on the 20th August on the Press Commission Report, I mentioned a Hindi word as if used by Shri Natesan. Subsequently I came to know that Shri Natesan had not used that word. I am sorry for having attributed use of that word to Shri Natesan.

STATEMENT RE ACCIDENT AT HIRAKUD DAM

The Minister of Planning and Irrigation and Power (Shri Nanda): I regret to inform the House that a tragic accident of serious proportions took place in Hirakud at 9-15 A.M. yesterday. Information regarding the accident was transmitted to us over the phone by the Chief Engineer, Hirakud. According to him, the staircase leading to the scaffolding which was used for carrying material on the right concrete dam collapsed. The injured persons were removed to the hospital within 20 minutes of the accident and received prompt medical aid. Out of 104 persons who received injuries, 13 died. Thirteen others who received minor injuries have been discharged from the hospital after treatment. Out of the 78 persons who are still in the hospital 5 or 6 have received serious injuries and it is expected that the rest will be discharged in a day or two.