

CORRECTION OF ANSWER TO
STARRED QUESTION NO. 147

The Deputy Minister of Defence (Sardar Surjit Singh Majithia): Sir, in the statement which I laid on the table of the House in answer to Starred Question No. 147 on the 23rd November, 1961, I had stated as follows:—

“According to the information available with us, no person was killed by food packets dropped from the air during the floods in Orissa. The State Government were asked for information on this point and their reply is awaited.”

2. The above reply was given on the basis of the information available in the Ministry of Defence on 23rd November, 1961.

3. We have since received a reply from the Government of Orissa on 29-11-1961 intimating that eight persons were killed in Cuttack District due to air dropping of food packets.

Mr. Speaker: Eight persons were killed?

Sardar Majithia: Yes.

Shri Chintamani Panigrahi (Puri): These operations were carried out under the direct supervision of the Army Command. How is it that even though this question was put pretty early, and sufficient time was given to Government to get the information, Government have first stated that no persons had died, and again they come and tell us that eight persons had died? The question was tabled as long ago as the 12th November, and sufficient time was given to Government to get the information.

Sardar Majithia: As I said, on that day, we had no information about any death having taken place. We had asked the Orissa Government, and they had not replied at that time; they only replied on the 29th November, 1961, and this is the first opportunity that I am taking to give the information to the House.

Shri Chintamani Panigrahi: May I again draw your attention to another matter? Five days after this statement was laid on the Table of the House in reply to this question, the hon. Minister of Irrigation and Power made another statement, but he had also stated that eight persons had died owing to air-dropping of food packets in Orissa. I do not know how these conflicting reports are received from a Government. I do not know how the Government of Orissa do not reply correctly to these questions from Parliament or from the Government of India.

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): This question was tabled only because there was an item in the newspapers that as a result of the air-dropping operations, some people were killed. That was why we wanted to know the correct position from Government.

Mr. Speaker: The Central Government can only function through the State Government of Orissa; there is no other source of information, except the newspapers. As the State Government did not furnish the information in time, the hon. Minister here said that according to the information available with the Ministry here, there were no deaths, and later on, he might have got the information.

Hereafter, in such cases, I would advise the hon. Minister to say that ‘We have written to the State Government, we have not yet received any information’. Instead of saying first that there were no deaths, and then making this kind of correction, they may adopt that course hereafter.

Shri Chintamani Panigrahi: Can they get some compensation from the Army?

Mr. Speaker: For making this incorrect statement or for death?

Shri Chintamani Panigrahi: For death.

Mr. Speaker: Now, legislative business.