

**INFORMATION TO THE HOUSE LATEST POSITION, RELATING TO THE SEVERE CYCLONE THAT STRUCK THE COSTAL DISTRICTS OF ORISSA AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY**

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO):** Sir, I am pained to inform the hon. Members that a very severe cyclone hit the coast of Orissa from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm today causing vast devastation. The eye of this cyclone—highest severity—hit the coast at Paradip. The diameter of the cyclone was very large and wind speed went upto 260 kms per hour. The State Government is busy in assessing the damage, which is likely to be very high in terms of loss of life and property.

On receipt of first information from the Indian Meteorological Department regarding formation of cyclonic storm on 26th October, 1999, the Chief Secretaries and Relief Commissioners of the States of Orissa, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, were requested to take all preparatory measures. The Cabinet Secretary, Secretary (Agriculture & Co-operation) and other senior officers of the Government of India have remained in touch with the State authorities.

The Cabinet Secretary reviewed the status of preparedness in a meeting with senior officers of the Government of India on 27th Oct., 1999 and in 2 subsequent meetings on 28th Oct., 1999.

The Departments of Defence, Home Affairs, Power, Telecommunications, Telecom Services, Shipping, Road Transport, Railways, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Information and Broadcasting and IMD, reviewed the preparatory action to be taken by them, in consultation with the States.

The Railways cancelled some services and diverted others to eliminate the loss of life. The defence forces were alerted to be available for the State for help as and when it needs. The armed forces helicopters have also been kept as a stand by. The Department of Health has sent its senior functionaries and teams to Orissa in advance so as to be of help to the State Government.

The State Authorities were regularly requested, at the highest level, to evacuate people from vulnerable areas to ensure that where evacuation is not possible, the people stay in safer pacca buildings. The Department of Power and Telecommunications are also in a state of readiness to restore the damaged services.

Rights from 26th October, 1999, the Doordarshan and the All India Radio have been informing about the latest position to the people in their news bulletins and special bulletins in vernacular languages. Sir, adequate kerosene and natural petroleum products have been arranged so as to make available

as per demands of the State authorities. The Department of Shipping took immediate action for safety of the ports.

We are maintaining a close contact with the State Government. I assure the august House that all necessary help will promptly be given to the State authorities in rescue, relief and rehabilitation. The Cabinet Secretary is again reviewing the situation today, in consultation with the State authorities. The Union Cabinet will also discuss this matter in its meeting on 30th Oct., 1999.

Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this is the latest position. Strong winds, at the rate of 130—150 kms per hour, are blowing at several places. All coastal districts are affected. Apart from these coastal districts, three more districts are also affected. The total districts affected, due to the cyclone, come to 15. Electricity, road, rail and communications are totally disrupted. According to the latest information, wind will take at least 24 hours to come down to normal. The Central Government is rushing for help, without waiting for any request from the State Government, to carry food, medicines, diesel sets and polythene sheets. The other point is, the Railways will carry the people, free of charge, wherever people are stranded. More than 55,000 people have been evacuated, as per the reports received till now. That is the position, Sir.

SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA (West Bengal): What is the condition of Paradeep Port?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): No; no further clarifications can be sought on this.

SHRI S.B.P.B.K. SATYANARAYANA RAO: Only when communications are established, we can give further information...(Interruptions)...

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): Tomorrow morning, the Home Minister and the Defence Minister are personally going to make an on-the-spot assessment. The Cabinet is also meeting tomorrow afternoon, especially on this subject. Communication has broken down and whatever information we are trying to gather is coming only through the defence mechanism. (Interruptions)

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): All sorts of help should be given...(Interruptions).

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: This is a human tragedy. There is no politics in it. We will definitely give all sorts of help.