

RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 28th July, 1998/6 Shravana,
1920 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock.

Mr. Chairman in the chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Activities at Kandla Port

*581. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the time required for Kandla Port to become fully operational;

(b) whether any import/export activity has started in Kandla; and

(c) the tonnage of import/export handled at Kandla Port during 1997-98?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha.

Statement

(a) and (b) All berths in Kandla for handling the dry and liquid cargo are in operation with effect from July 10, 1998. Handling of crude at Vadarinar started from 15th June, 1998; Liquid Bulk handling is fully operational from 24th June, 1998.

In addition, following services have also been restored to normalcy:—

- (i) Storage tanks lying on Meter Gauge and Broad Gauge railway lines and causing obstruction have been removed and the lines are fully operational.
- (ii) Almost all the de-railed wharf cranes have been re-railed.
- (iii) Steps have been taken to repair all the damaged godowns and warehouses.
- (iv) Power supply and water supply has been restored fully both in port area and the port's colonies.

(v) Obstructions lying along the LPG pipeline have been removed.

(vi) Dredging has been carried out by DCI dredger at the Sogal Channel Bar to remove the siltation caused due to cyclone.

(vii) Communication facilities like telephone and FAX have been restored in the Port area.

(c) The Kandla Port handled an aggregate cargo of 38.90 million tonnes during 1997-98. This comprises 31.53 million tonnes of Imports; 3.88 million tonnes of exports and 3.49 million tonnes of Transhipment.

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the cyclone came on 9th June at Kandla Port in Gujarat and the devastation caused is known to everybody. Sir, 1250 bodies were cremated and 1750 persons are declared missing. Even now skeletons have been found in islands opposite Kandla Port four or five days before. I would like to know as to what was the first message sent to the Kandla Port from the Meteorological Department about the intensity of the cyclone. I would also like to know whether the Kandla Port Trust received the message from the Meteorological Department direct or whether it was given by the State Government. I would like to know as to what was the first message because the serious message was sent only on the 9th. I would like to know about this from the hon. Minister.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we received the information from the Meteorological Department. The first warning was based on the observations of the 8th June which was received at the Kandla Port at 11.00 hours. On the same day it indicated that storm signal No. 4 was to be hoisted. On the same day at 16.20 hours, within a matter of five hours, the Port was advised to upgrade its storm signal to No. 8. This upgradation of the warning was sudden and immediate. On receipt of this message, the Port directed the Shipping

Agents, other port users and ships to take precautionary measures as soon as possible within the short time available to protect the port from damage and also to protect the human life. The storm signals were displayed at specified locations as per the procedure of the Port. Unlike the usual practice this Port is not having any siren which can caution. There has not been any significant casualty in the port's operational area due to timely action which was taken by suspending the port operation and by evacuating the workers from the Customs bound area. Only five employees, including one doctor, were among the dead, identified so far in the port area. Sir, about the anxiety expressed by the hon. Members with regard to people who were living in the salt pan area surrounding the Kandla Port, it is a fact that many people died due to this cyclone. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, when you were presiding, the hon. Home Minister made a statement that the first warning was given on the 5th and after that it was given on 9th. But, the radio continued to broadcast it from 5th onwards. I believe that the hon. Minister is giving wrong information. I am afraid he is contradicting the statement given by the Home Minister. Sir, you can look into this matter. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: I know that the information was received. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I know, as a matter of fact, the hon. Minister along with the hon. Prime Minister had come for an aerial survey but they had not landed at the place to see the actual damage caused. They just had an aerial survey and they had gone without landing there. Part 'A' of my question is, whether it is a fact that the Meteorological Department wanted to hoist signal number 9 and not signal number 4 showing the worst severity of the cyclone which was to come with waves 18 meters high. That was the

warning and the Port Trust had failed to hoist that signal. The State Government has openly asked for a Commission of Enquiry. Let the truth prevail. The Chief Minister wanted that there should be an in-depth study of the whole thing. As you know, Mr. Minister, there was a controversy between Kandla Port Trust and the State Government. The blame was thrown on Kandla Port Trust i.e., on you. Then, there was a demand from the Chief Minister for a Commission of Enquiry. Why is it that the Government is not appointing a Commission of Enquiry? Let the truth prevail. We are writing here, "Satyameva Jayate." Let the truth come out. Sir, thousands of people were washed away during those four to five days. Only skeletons could be found. If this type of devastation had taken place, why is the Central Government not appointing a Commission of Enquiry? Is it to save their own Government in the State? Please reply to this.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, as far as the signal is concerned, we had received signal number 8 ...

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Was it hoisted?

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Yes, that had been hoisted.

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: When?

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: As soon as we received that signal. We received that at 1620 hrs. on 8th June. And, immediately, we hoisted signal number 8. First, we hoisted signal number 4 and after advice from the Meteorological Department, we also hoisted signal number 8.

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Sir, the district administration is with the Collector. But, it was totally absent. there was no co-ordination at all.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: As far as Kandla Port Trust is concerned, we have to function under the powers given to us. Regarding the district administration, they are authority who have to manage

the cyclone evacuation, etc. They have the authority. They had also a meeting on 8th June. they had conducted that meeting only at the level of Tahsildar. A representative from our side participated in that meeting. In that meeting, it was clearly stated as to what role we had to play. We are also having that information. In that meeting it was clearly stated that the police inspector was advised to be alert during the situation of cyclone and make necessary arrangements of vehicles for shifting cyclone-affected people to safer places and make all necessary arrangements in this regard. The assignment given to the Port Trust is—it reads—"The representative of Kandla Port Trust came late and hence, he was also informed regarding the serious terrific cyclone; Kandla Port should also take precautionary measures and inform the signal station to put the necessary signal and also inform the fishermen not to go into the sea. He was also advised to keep two boats ready and also give necessary intimation to cargo vessels". We had done whatever work was assigned to Kandla Port. As far as evacuation and other things are concerned, it is purely the responsibility of the district administration and the power rests with police officials. We are having only limited powers and according to that, we had done the work.

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Sir, he has not replied to my question. What about the Commission of Enquiry which was demanded by the Chief Minister? And, is it a fact that the State Government now does not want a Commission of Enquiry because the report is likely to go against them and therefore, you are not appointing a Commission of Enquiry? The hon. Minister may enlighten us whether it is a fact or not.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: We have received representations asking us to constitute a Commission of Enquiry. We have constituted a Fact Finding Committee. This Committee has already visited....(interruptions)...

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Let there be an open enquiry so that everybody can appear and the truth can prevail.

श्री अनन्तराय देवशंकर दवे: सभापति महोदय, आपसे मेरा नम्र निवेदन है कि माननीय सदस्य जो सवाल पूछ रहे हैं, जो वह सत्लीमेंट्री पूछ रहे हैं वह सवाल उन्होंने पूछा ही नहीं है, सवाल कुछ और है और सत्लीमेंट्री कुछ और कर रहे हैं।... (व्यवधान)

SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: You are from Kutch. Do not forget that.

SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: I hail from Gujarat. मैं आपकी बात पर भी आता हूँ।... (व्यवधान)

You hear me....(interruptions)....

I am also from Gujarat and from the same district, where this calamity has happened....(Interruptions)... That is why, I am saying this....(Interruptions)...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dave, you ask your question.

श्री अनन्तराय देवशंकर दवे: सर, मैं पूछ रहा हूँ।

श्री सभापति: पूछिए... (व्यवधान)... उनके सवाल पढ़ने दीजिए।

श्री अनन्तराय देवशंकर दवे: मैं सत्य बात कह रहा हूँ। सभापति महोदय, मैं यही पूछ रहा हूँ कि यहां स्टेट एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन का या सेंट्रल एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन का कोई झगड़ा ही नहीं है। दोनों ने मिल कर काम किया है, कोई झगड़ा नहीं है लेकिन मैं जो पूछने जा रहा हूँ वह यह है कि कांडला पोर्ट ने जितने स्टेप्स लिए हैं, उनमें मेरा सीधा सा सवाल यह है कि वहां कई लोग मर गए हैं, यह बात सही है। इसमें छिपाने की कोई बात नहीं है... (व्यवधान)... कोई बात नहीं छिपाई है उन्होंने, सब रिकॉर्ड पर है। जितने झुगी-झोपड़ी वाले लोग थे, वे कांडला पोर्ट के एरिया में, कांडला एक ऐसी पोर्ट ट्रस्ट है जिसकी सारी ज़मीन पोर्ट की है, सिर्फ गांधी धाम म्युनिसिपैलिटी को छोड़ कर सारी ज़मीन कांडला पोर्ट की है। वहां पर कई लोगों की मृत्यु हो गई। वहां कई लोग झुगी-झोपड़ी में रहते थे, कई लोग ट्रेसपासर्स थे उस ज़मीन पर तो वहां कांडला पोर्ट ने दूसरी ज़मीन उन्हें एलाट की है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि अच्छे काम आपने किए हैं तो उस ज़मीन पर आप एलाटमेंट कब तक करेंगे और जिन लोगों की मृत्यु हो गई है, उनके परिवार के लिए आपने क्या कदम उठाए हैं?

मौलाना अबुदुल्ला खान आज़मी: और कौन ज़िम्मेदार है इसकी बहस नहीं? ज़िम्मेदारी का कोई सवाल नहीं?

مولانا عبید اللہ خان اعظمی:
اور کون ذمہ دار ہے اس کی بحث
نہیں۔ ذمہ داری کا کوئی سوال نہیں ہے

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, the Kandla Port has constructed temporary sheds for accommodating 1,000 cyclone-affected families. With the help of the district administration, 953 sheds have been allotted to the cyclone-affected families. The identification of the cyclone-affected families was done by the administration. A section of people, residing in Sirwa, colony, sat on a *dharna* near the KPT office. About 23-30 people met the Chairman also, and the reason they gave for not shifting to the sheds was that the sheds were located too far away from their places. They felt that they cannot come there from a long distance. Therefore, they wanted to continue to stay at their places. During the relief operation the Kandla Port supplied food packets to the affected people and also provided medical facilities to them. We have also given 25 sq. metres of land to each effected family.

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is not only a case of great disaster, but also a case of serious failure of our disaster-management strategy. It is very important that we have to draw proper lessons as to what were the failures of various wings of the administration. Therefore, I feel that the hon. Minister should keep his mind open about the appointment of a commission of inquiry to go into the facts of the case and find out if there was any negligence

on the part of the port authorities or the State Government. It is very important for us to know all these things because in future we should know how to deal with such a disaster. Would the hon. Minister, therefore, reconsider the case of appointing a commission of inquiry?

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, I am also concerned about what has happened in the Kandla Port area. We have appointed a fact-finding team, under the chairmanship of the Central Relief Commissioner... (Interruptions)... Please listen to me. The terms of reference of the fact-finding team are given below: to find out as to how in the light of the sequence of event, such a high loss of life has taken place in Gujarat, particularly in the Kandla Port area; and to draw lessons for better preparedness, coordination, etc., in future and recommend suitable measures for coping with natural disasters. We are waiting for the report. After the report comes, if at all Members are not satisfied about certain things we will consider them in course of time.

SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: It was the worst of the worst calamities which brought about an end to many lives. I am concerned because a ship which was to come to Kandla Port from Jordan on the 9th or 10th was diverted to Karachi due to this cyclone. Since it has not come to Kandla Port and was diverted to Karachi, some people have been reported missing. The Gujarat Government has requested the Central Government to see that the Indians who were in that particular ship are handed over to India. I would like to know whether the Ministry has received this information and whether the Ministry has tried to get back those ten living persons as requested by the Gujarat Government.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Our Ministry has not received this information. I will pass on this message to the concerned Ministry, find out the facts and let you know.

डा० (श्रीमती) उर्मिला चिमनभाई पटेल: सर, मंत्री जी ने बताया कि करीब एक हजार लोगों के रहने की सुविधा—मैंने भी देखी है कि टिन शैड में की गयी है। वहां पर थोड़ी मैडिकल सर्विसिज की सुविधा भी है। लेकिन मेरा कहना है कि ऐसे हजार लोग नहीं हैं, हजारों लोग हैं। उनके बारे में क्या किया जाए। मैं हादसे की पिकर्स दिखा रही हूँ। सरकार कह रही है कि करीब दो हजार लोगों की मृत्यु हुई है जब कि न्यूजेपर की रिपोर्ट और हमारी रिपोर्ट है कि करीब 8-10 हजार लोग पानी में डूब गये हैं। अभी 23 तारीख को कांग्रेस के पी०सी०सी० प्रेजिडेंट बना और सरखेड़ा आईलैंड पर गये और उन्होंने खुद 32 लार्शे आईडेंटिफाई की। अभी मड में कई लार्शे

पड़ी हुई हैं और ऐसे कई टापू हैं जो निर्जन टापू हैं, वहां से जो 25 मच्छीमार अपनी जान बचाकर एक वीक के बाद कांडला आए, उन लोगों ने कहा कि इस टापू पर इतनी लार्शे सैकड़ों की संख्या में पड़ी हुई हैं। इस इसीडेस को डेढ़ मास हो गया है बार-बार जो टाइड आयी, उस टाइड में वह शाउट हो गयी। तो उनकी इन्कवरी करने के बजाय, वहां खबाड भेजने के बजाय, उनके रिलेटिव्स को मदद पहुंचाने के बजाय सरकार इसकी ओर अपना ध्यान नहीं दे रही है, उसे निगलैक्ट कर रही है। यह मानवता विरोधी व्यवहार है। मैं यह कहना चाहती हूँ कि अगर इन लोगों को टाइम पर मदद पहुंचाई गयी होती तो—आप पिचर्स देखें कि इसमें कई लार्शे ऐसी हैं जिनकी चमड़ी और मांस अभी भी है। इसका मतलब है कि यह लोग पहले नहीं मरे थे लेकिन भूख के कारण या पानी के बिना या बीमारी के कारण बाद में मरे हैं। अगर ऐसे लोगों को मदद पहुंचाई गयी होती तो उन लोगों को बचाया जा सकता था। यह सरकार का टोटल नैग्लिजेंस है इसलिए हम यह कहते हैं कि इसमें इंडीपेंडेंट ज्यूडीशियल, इन्कवारी हो या तत्काल कमीशन बनाया जाए। महोदय, इसमें डिपार्टमेंटल इन्कवारी से काम नहीं चलेगा। सरकार अपनी गलतियों छुपाना चाहती है। इसलिए हमारी मांग है कि ज्यूडीशियल इन्कवारी या कमीशन की रचना तत्काल हो। इसमें रिपोर्ट की कोई जरूरत नहीं है। ऑफिशियल जाते हैं, ऑफिस में बैठते हैं, कलैक्टर के साथ बात करके कापिस आ जाती हैं और अपनी रिपोर्ट दे देते हैं। ऐडमिनिस्ट्रेशन में कैसा व्यवहार चलाता है, यह हम जानते हैं। इसलिए यह तत्काल जरूरी है कि जो लार्शे अभी भी मड में गड़ी हुई हैं, अलग-अलग टापुओं में, इसकी जांच की जाए। यह लोग अकेले गुजरात के लोग नहीं थे। यह लोग बिहार से आए थे, उत्तर प्रदेश से आए थे, उड़ीसा से आए थे और यहाँ काम कर रहे थे।

मैं आपके माध्यम से इन्कवारी की मांग करती हूँ और मांग करती हूँ कि इसके बारे में सरकार को आप अपनी ओर से कहिए कि ज्यूडीशियल इन्कवारी करें। मेरा सवाल है कि सरकार ज्यूडीशियल इन्कवारी या कमीशन कब डिक्लेयर कर रहे है?

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, it was a very unfortunate thing which had happened at Kandla Port area. There was so much devastation because of nature's fury. We never expected that. Whatever prediction was made by the Meteorological Department was at variance with that actually had happened. This was because the cyclone changed its direction.

Now, I do not want to shirk the responsibility in this regard. The Kandla Port comes under us. I do not want to blame either the State Government or the Central Government or the port authorities. I do not want to go into that controversy. It is human tragedy where so many lives were lost because of this unprecedented natural calamity. It is the responsibility of not only the Central Government. It is the responsibility of the State Government also. Both of them have to come forward and take steps. We expect that.

In regard to the enquiry, as I have already mentioned, we have sent a Fact-Finding Team. After getting the information, I will place it before the House. If the Members feel then that we should go further deep into this, I will consider that.

SHRI MADHAVSINH SOLANKI: Mr. Chairman, Sir the justification for a commission of inquiry is fully recognised in view of the fact that the other day, the hon. Home Minister, who had visited Jamnagar, told the house that a number of people who were stranded and were reluctant to leave the place were forcibly evacuated by the police force. When we asked him as to why this was not done in the case of kandla, where thousand of salt workers were staying far away and nobody informed them, he said that fact was intriguing for him as well, as to why

the Kandla Port authorities did not do like this.

In such cases, therefore, depending merely on the meteorological report or some report of a Fact-Finding Team would not suffice. The demand for a commission of inquiry is fully justified and it should be accepted by the Government.

SHRI M. THAMBI DURAI: Sir, I have already informed my position.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 582. Shrimati urmilaben Patel. (Interruptions)

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Sir, why should not the Government accept the demand for setting up a commission of inquiry? (Interruptions)

डा० (श्रीमती) चिमनभाई पटेल: सर, मैं ये फोटोग्राफ सदन के फटल पर रखना चाहती हूँ।
...(व्यवधान)...

श्री सभापति: आप क्वेश्चन कीजिए। अगला सवाल आपका है... (व्यवधान)...

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Let us not politicise it. It is a question of the lives of thousands of people. (Interruptions) Next question, please. Shrimati Urmilaben Patel. (Interruptions)

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Why is the Government not appointing a commission of inquiry? (Interruptions) Sir, you are the custodian not only of this House. You have also got some responsibility. It is a human problem. So many people have died. We are seeing the skeletons. We are seeing it on the T.V. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question, please. (Interruptions)

SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY: Are we not serious, Sir? Poor people are dying. You are here to protect us. (Interruptions) Does it mean that we do not have any responsibility in this matter? Does it mean that none of us have any responsibility in this matter?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question. Question No. 582.

AIR service between Ahmedabad and Nairobi

*582. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that a large number of Gujaratis have settled in East and South Africa; and

(b) whether Government propose to start a direct air service to Nairobi (East Africa) and South Africa from Ahmedabad by Air India or any other International airlines during this year?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Though it is a fact that East and South Africa have ethnic Gujarati population, the operation of a direct air service between Ahmedabad to Nairobi and South Africa is presently not considered feasible by Air India because of insufficient traffic potential and capacity constraints. Moreover, Ahmedabad is at present not available as a point to call to foreign airlines.

डा० (श्रीमती) उर्मिला चिमनभाई पटेल: सर, उत्तर में बताया गया है कि नैरोबी और साउथ अफ्रीका में सफिसियेट ट्रेफिक नहीं है इसके कारण ये सुविधा अहमदाबाद एअरपोर्ट को नहीं दी जाती है। मेरा सवाल मंत्री जी से यह है कि गुजरात के लोग खासतौर पर साउथ अफ्रीका और ईस्ट अफ्रीका में बड़ी संख्या में रहते हैं और उनका आना-जाना अहमदाबाद एअरपोर्ट से ज्यादा सुविधाजनक होगा, लेकिन आज वह मुम्बई के एअरपोर्ट को यूटिलाइज कर रहे हैं। अगर आप जांच-पड़ताल करायेंगे तो पता चलेगा कि वह मुम्बई से जा रहे हैं, उन्हें वहीं से सुविधा प्राप्त है। यही रिपोर्ट आपको मिलेगी। बार-बार यह रिपोर्ट मिल रही है। अगर आप पापुलेशन देखें कि साउथ अफ्रीका और ईस्ट अफ्रीका में गुजराती कितने हैं और गुजरात से वहां जाने वाले लोग कितने हैं तो यह इन्फार्मेशन गलत है। मैं मंत्री जी से पूछना चाहती हूँ कि क्या आप इस इन्फार्मेशन की पुनः जांच-पड़ताल करवायेंगे? सर, इसके साथ मैं अपने प्रश्न के बी भाग को जोड़कर पूछना चाहती हूँ। गुजरात देश का एक ऐसा प्रदेश है जिसके लोग न केवल साउथ अफ्रीका, ईस्ट अफ्रीका में