

REFERENCE TO ARMY PARTICIPATION IN THE SALVAGE OPERATIONS IN THE CYCLONE-AFFECTED AREAS OF ANDHRA PRADESH

SHRI N. G. RANGA (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I would like to know the terms and the manner of the army participation in the salvaging operations in the cyclone-affected areas in co-operation with the local officials and the administration of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in regard to the work of reconstruction of houses, roads, bridges, government buildings, school and college buildings, telephone and telegraph lines and transformers, canal bunds and tanks, and also the reconstruction of houses for those who have been rendered homeless.

Sir, my object in raising this point is to warn the Government that when the army moves in, there should be harmonious co-operation between the Central Government forces, that is, the army, the navy and the air force, and the Andhra Pradesh Government. I would like to request the Government to prevent any overlapping or maladjustment in the relief and rehabilitation work now being carried on by Andhra Pradesh. Sir, it is interesting to learn that it is more than a week now and the army and the Central forces would be able to begin their work in an effective manner in this direction. But, Sir, many people have been complaining about the non-removal of the thousands and thousands of the corpses. My honourable friend, the Defence Minister, also happened to be there. Because of the lack of decision on the part of the Government in time, that Government as well as this Government, some of the Defence personnel who were requested by the local officials to help them and co-operate with them in removing the corpses were not sufficiently co-operative. And, Sir, when the local authorities, even the Chief Mi-

nister himself, asked them why they were not doing it, they said that it was not their duty.

Therefore, for two days they were allowed to go on rotting because the usual birds of prey were nowhere there and local scavengers were not available in the villages, and eventually by the 25th and 26th the Vijayawada Municipal administration and the Gudur Municipality, and also to some extent the Machhalipatnam Municipality, spared the services of their concerned workers who usually do this kind of unpleasant and painful scavenging work and with the help of these people thousands and thousands of corpses of human beings were buried. I myself, Dr. Karan Singh and Shri Shyam Lal Yadav, our colleague, were able to go there. That was on the 25th and 26th. We hope that all the human corpses would have been buried. This work should not have been delayed and the unpleasant could have been avoided if only the Defence Minister was invoked to help the local Government in this direction. Anyhow, I am not making this observation by way of any criticism. I am glad my friend, the Defence Minister, went there, rushed there as it were, and came back and gave the necessary advice to the Union Government, and eventually the Union Government has decided, Sir, to ask the Army to move immediately to supplement the Civil administration in the disposing of tons of thousands of decomposed bodies of human beings and corpses of cattle, inoculating millions of helpless survivors, removing water from water-logged areas and around villages, providing drinking water and medicines to the victims, clearing debris in the destroyed villages and restoring communications. Sir, as I have already mentioned, telegraphic and telephone services also have to be reconstructed, transformers have to be reconstructed, many of the tanks which have been breached have to be reconstructed, and so on. 'Khandsari' mills, cinema halls, etc.

have all gone. Almost the whole of the small-scale industries have gone. This is a stupendous task which is beyond the capacity of any Government, Central or State within a week of such a colossal disaster. But, at the same time, the Union Government has got to place not only its funds, but also its personnel, especially the Defence personnel, at the disposal of the State Government. What I am very anxious about just at present, in addition to the other points that I have made, is that when the Army moves in, my hon. friend the Defence Minister knows, they do not allow anyone else, any other administrative machinery, either of the Centre or of the State, to interfere with them or to appear to be interfering with them or even to give them suggestions or co-operate with them. Therefore, sufficient care has got to be taken, Sir, by the Central Government, and especially the Defence Ministry, to issue instructions to the Army and other personnel to go and work there in close harmony and with a spirit of co-operation and invite and welcome the co-operation of the local Government also... (*Time bell rings*).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You have said that already....

SHRI N. G. RANGA: ... in a comradely manner. Sir, I have said these things not with a spirit of criticism, but for co-operation. I want the co-operation from all political parties. No one party is interested in making capital out of the people's disaster. I can also assure the House that when so many of us went there, from this House as well as from the other House, the local MPs also joined us, local MLAs also joined us. We have taken the maximum possible care not to interfere with the local officials who have been doing relief work. We have tried, as far as it was possible for us, to provide for our own transport. We received the co-operation from local officials as well as the local public. And I hope, Sir, that my hon. friend the Defence Minister will not

only place the Defence Forces, but also his own wise counsel and vast administrative experience, at the disposal of the local Government, for providing succour to the helpless victims by the Government machinery.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (PROF. SHER SINGH): Sir, the Army authorities received warning of cyclonic storm in Andhra Pradesh on 17th November. The General Staff Officer of Andhra Sub Area passed the warning to the Chief Secretary and the Joint Secretary (Political) in Andhra Pradesh. Therefore, regular warnings as received by the Army authorities were flashed to the State Government. The Army authorities also informed the State Government of all the action taken by them by altering all its authorities to go into action, on two hours' notice. The storm lashed the coastal areas on the night of 19/20th November, 1977. On 21st November, 1977, at 7 o'clock in the morning, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh accompanied by his staff, the Commander, Andhra Sub Area, and the General Staff Officer made an aerial survey on an Air Force aircraft. But, at that time, the Chief Secretary told the Army authorities that the State Government was fully in control of the situation. It was on 21st November at 15.30 hours that the General Manager, South Central Railway requested Andhra Sub Area to provide 12 Radio Sets and 40 kilometer of Field Telephone Cable to the Railways for help in establishing communications and running of trains in Vijayawada. That was done on 21st November at 15.30 hours and the Radio Sets were in location on 22nd November, 1977, at 5 o'clock in the morning and the trains started at 6.30 hours on 22nd. Formal requisition of aid was given by the State Government only on the 23rd November, 1977. I am giving a summary of the equipment and the manpower deployed so far after that requisition of 23rd November. Now, we have in po-

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sition 27 Officers, 18 Junior Commissioned Officers, 487 other ranks, 5 civilians, 43 jeeps 29 one ten vehicles, 62 three ten vehicles, 2 break down, 5 water trailers, 3 boats for rescue, 4 out-board motors, 4 reconnaissance boats, 20 Radio Set AN/PRC 25, 19 boosters, 10 Radio Set C 11/R 210, 40 kilometers of cable for field telephones, 99 life jackets, 8 water containers, 2 pumping sets, 3 charging sets and 1 Radio Set Siemen 400 Watts. Sir, we have also established an Advanced Command Headquarters at Vijayawada with 6 Officers and about 40 other ranks to effectively command and control the army units engaged in rescue and relief operations and to carry out liaison with the State Government authorities. We are doing everything in co-operation with the State Government. In addition to that, when subsequently we received some more requisition from the State Government, the following additional manpower and equipment have been deployed within two hours of requisitioning:

20 Medical Teams headed by a Medical Officer, each capable of vaccinating inoculating 2000 people per day. Of course 17 Teams have been deployed in Avanigadda in the worst hit area. 18 Water Point Detachments. Of these 3 have been deployed, each capable of providing 25,000 gallons of chlorinated and purified drinking water per day. 10 more detachments are en route to Vijayawada and shall be deployed on arrival there.

Then, Sir, five water trailers and 8 canvas water containers have been handed over to the State Government for use in remote areas where the roads are not capable of even taking one tonne load. In addition to that, 250 jerricans have been handed over to the State Government for transporting drinking water by helicopter to islands in the Divi Taluk. In addition to this, Sir, the Indian Air Force has been carrying out rescue and relief operations with 3 Avros, one Dakota,

8 MIs—4 helicopters from 21st November, 1977 onwards. Then, Sir, we have some standing-by help also which we have offered in addition to what has already been deployed to provide assistance to the State Government and we informed the State Government. That is: 11 Engineer Regiment, one Signal Regiment, an EME Battalion to provide on site repair to army equipment deployed. Then, Sir, the following stores can be made available to the State Government: Tentage for 50,000 people; blankets—10,000 since received from the Ordinance Depot...

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Only 10,000?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM): If you require, we will give more. You ask the Chief Minister to request us.

PROF. SHER SINGH: And we have some more blankets also and about 46,000 are available. Then, Sir, durries—3,000; OG shirts—32,000; OG trousers—20,000; Mazri shirts—7,000, Mazri trousers—1,200; jersey pullovers—1,300. Sir, the Army authorities are capable of delivering these stores ex-Avadi by road in one day and ex-Talegaon Dabhade by road in 2 days. Then, Sir, the Army authorities are also collecting the following for the cyclone affected population: Foodstuff, clothing and other basic necessities. And we hope that we will be able to hand them over by today if they are asked for. All these arrangements have been made and we are in touch with the State Government. All these relief and rescue operations which are being done by the Army are done with the co-operation of the State Government.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: May I supplement, Sir? Well, Prof. Ranga is aware that the Army goes to the help of the State Government only when they are asked by the State Government to go there. If they go without the request of a State Gov-

ernment, it is likely to be misconstrued. As soon as the Army received the warning of the cyclone, they kept all preparations ready for rescue and relief operations. But, as the House is aware, Sir, the Chief Minister was reluctant to ask for the assistance from the Army. They were in readiness and it is only on the 23rd that good sense prevailed upon the Chief Minister to request the Army for assistance for rescue and relief operations.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: What about the removal of the corpses? That we have asked even earlier.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: They did not ask earlier.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Informally it was there. He has given it in writing also that we are not prepared to do it.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: What? They were not prepared to remove the human dead bodies.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Why?

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Why? Because, if the State Government employees are not prepared to do that, why the Army personnel are required to do that?

SHRI N. G. RANGA: They do in a war.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: In war, they do it. But here it was not a war. And if the constable is not prepared to do that, how do you expect a Jawan to do that work?

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Our municipal staff are doing it.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: That is the work of the municipal staff. That is not the work of the Armed Forces. I am quite clear about that. If the constable is not prepared to do that, exclusively to ask the Army jawan to do that is not a desirable request.

SHRI HAMID ALI SCHAMNAD (Kerala): Since the Andhra Government has failed to do its human duty, will the Government of India take up the administration? (*Interruptions*).

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, please.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Even today the Andhra Government and their municipal staff are doing it. Even the ordinary people, the *kisans* are helping them.

1 p.m.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Prof. Ranga is aware that that work is being done by contractors appointed by the State Government.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: But our *kisans* are also helping.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Why are you losing your patience when I am narrating the truth. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI HAMID ALI SCHAMNAD: Do not defend the Chief Minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please, order please.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I have nothing against the Chief Minister but the fact is that even at present the personnel of the State Government are not prepared to do that work and it is on the authority of the State Chief Minister that I learnt that they have appointed contractors to dispose of the dead bodies.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: Our *kisans* are also doing it.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I am stating the facts. Then, it was on my visit to the affected area that I found that the most primary requirement of the affected people had not been taken care of. One can remain without food for a few days but one cannot remain without water even

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for a day. Water there was completely contaminated by decomposing animal carcass and human dead bodies and I saw people taking water from those places for drinking purposes. I came and narrated this to the Chief Minister at Hyderabad. I told him that the first requirement was to rush potable drinking water to the affected areas and my Army was prepared with the units for drinking water supply, even in readiness to fan out to the affected areas but the Chief Minister had not requested for it. Again, the medical unit was ready because the people in that area had to be inoculated. Bleaching powder and other disinfectants had to be sprinkled in that area to ward off the outbreak of any epidemic. It was only at my insistence when I called the Chief Secretary, the Chief Minister and Shri Chokka Rao—in fact, I will give credit to Mr. Chokka Rao that he was very insistent—that the water supply units and the medical unit should be sent out to the affected area and I immediately issued orders that from the very next morning such units should go to those areas and they have already arrived there. It was no pleasure to me to have seen all that because human suffering is human suffering and there is no distinction whether the place is having a Janata Party Government or a Congress Government because it is the people who suffer. In a Congress-run State it is not only the Congress men who suffer and, therefore, politics has not to be brought in so far as the human suffering is concerned. In fact, I myself contributed to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund because it has to be used by the State Government. And, so far as the co-operation between the Army or the personnel of the Defence Forces and the State Government is concerned, as Professor Rangaji is aware, it is only at the instance of the State Government that the Armed Forces go to the assistance of the State Government and unless the State Government utilises them,

they cannot work. So far as the other works are concerned, the Army was the first to restore the communication system in those districts.

SHRI N. G. RANGA: The people also helped.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: Of course, Army were the first to establish the contacts from the headquarters to the districts. Otherwise, the communication lines would not have been restored. So far as the question of restoring the roads and constructing the houses is concerned, if the State Government requires the Army to do that work, I will be too glad to ask the M.E.S. personnel to assist the State Government. But, Sir, unless the State Government requests me in that behalf, how does Professor Ranga expect me to ask the Army to take over that work?

SHRI N. G. RANGA: But you have said that the Chief Minister has agreed

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: No, he has not agreed to it.

SHRI HAMID ALI SCHAMNAD: It has not come in the papers that the Chief Minister has agreed.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I do not require your assistance; I am competent to reply.

SHRI HAMID ALI SCHAMNAD: He is not the Chief Minister's spokesman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please.

SHRI JAGJIVAN RAM: I say, Sir, the Chief Minister reluctantly agreed to the water unit and the medical unit to be sent to that area. If Prof. Ranga can persuade the Chief Minister to require the assistance of the Army personnel for the work that he has suggested, as I have said, Sir, I would be too glad to ask the M.E.S. personnel to go there.