

A number of amendments have been moved by hon. Members to the Motion of Thanks. Shall I put all the amendments to the vote of the House together or does any hon. Member want any particular amendment to be put separately?

I shall now put all the amendments together to the vote of the House.

The amendments were put and negatived.

MR. SPEAKER : I shall now put the Motion to the vote of the House.

The question is :

"That an Address be presented to the President in the following terms:—

"That the Members of Lok Sabha assembled in this Session are deeply grateful to the President for the Address which he has been pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on the 25th March, 1998."

The motion was adopted.

19.52 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Situation arising out of thunder-squall in Orissa and West Bengal and relief and rehabilitation measures taken

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Now, the Statement to be made by the hon. Minister, Shri Som Pal.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I seek the leave of the House to make a statement on the situation arising from a thunder-squall that hit the States of Orissa and West Bengal on 24th March, 1998 and the relief and rehabilitation measures taken by the Government.

The thunder-squall occurred over some coastal areas of Orissa and West Bengal in the afternoon of 24th March, 1998....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, please take your seats. Order please.

SHRI SOM PAL : According to the latest available reports from the Government of Orissa, three villages in Jaleswar Tehsil in the district of Balasore were hit by thunder-squall affecting about 5,000 people, 2,000 houses and four educational institutions besides causing loss of 22 human lives including 13 children. Ninety seven persons have been injured...(Interruptions)

SHRI AJIT JOGI (Raigarh) : Sir, he is talking about two States. We wanted a comprehensive Statement about the other States also...(Interruptions)

SHRI SOMPAL : Please bear with me. I think, I am covering both the States...(Interruptions)... Please, let me finish it. Clarifications, if any, are to be sought only after I finish it.

Sir, about 17 cattle heads have been killed and 396 injured. The Government of West Bengal have reported that the thunder squall has affected 18 villages in three blocks of Midnapore district in West Bengal. According to the State Government, about 30,000 persons, 5,702 houses and 2,569 hectares of cropped area have been affected, besides loss of 48 human lives and 1,583 cattle heads. About 1,200 persons have been injured.

India Meteorological Department is the concerned Department for forecasting and warning about such natural calamities. According to the IMD, during this part of the year, north-east India generally experiences thunder squalls which are severe local weather phenomena known as Nor'wester or "Kal Baisakhi" which are characterised by very strong winds that tend to reach 200 km. per hour sometimes, but for a very short duration hardly lasting about fifteen minutes and sometimes over a limited area, say, 20 kms. Here it may be explained that it is not a tornado. Tornados are very violent phenomena usually having a funnel shaped cloud which sucks objects on the ground resulting in severe damage. Tornados are very uncommon over India. According to the IMD, the situation over north-east India has been currently favourable for occurrence of thunder-squalls. Warnings were issued to AIR and Doordarshan and State Government officials by IMD offices at New Delhi, Calcutta and Bhubaneswar about the likelihood of occurrence of thunder-squalls over these areas on 23rd and 24th March, 1998. But, thunder-squalls, are very sudden developments which do not provide enough lead time for precise fore-warnings of their location and time of occurrences.

The hon. Prime Minister was informed in the evening of 24th March about this calamity. PM directed us to visit the affected areas in both the States to assess the extent of damage and ascertain the requirements of resources and other assistance that may be required to be provided to the State Governments by the Government of India. Shri Indrajit Gupta and Shri K. Swain, hon. Members of Parliament from Midnapore and Balasore constituencies respectively were requested to accompany me. Shri Indrajit Gupta was somehow unable to come...(Interruptions) Kumari Mamta Banerjee, hon. Member of Parliament accompanied me in the mission along with Shri K. Swain. Another high level delegation led by Shri Naveen Patnaik, hon. Minister for Steel and Mines had also visited the affected areas on 26th March, 1998.

We reached Kalaikunda airstrip at 12 noon on 25th March, 1998 and proceeded to the affected areas in Dantan Block of Midnapore district of West Bengal and Jaleswar Block of Balasore district of Orissa. During the course of our visit, we met the affected people and visited the injured persons in the hospitals. In West Bengal, the team was unable to obtain any comprehensive information about the extent of damage to houses crop, livestock, etc. The DM, Midnapore, however, presented a list on affected villages. In Sarta village of Dantan block, which is probably one of the worst affected, the team saw no evidence of any rescue and relief operations by the local administration till then...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. CHACKO (Idukki) : Why are you telling all these things? You should concentrate on the relief work being undertaken.

SHRI SOMPAL : Drinking water was also a serious constraint. Tarpauline were provided by the local administration to some of the effected families for temporary shelters.

In Orissa, the team visited Gobarghata village in Jaleswar block where collapse of the school wall and thatched roof of building of upper primary and middle school caused death of thirteen students on the spot and the teacher later in the hospital. The team saw food being cooked by some volunteers of NGO's ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record. Only the speech of the Minister will go on record.

...*(Interruptions)**

SHRI SOMPAL : The team found that relief and rescue operations were conducted with greater speed and efficiency; the report and documentation was also comparatively much more comprehensive and complete. Villagers told that policemen came to the villages to conduct rescue operations within two hours of the incident. Cremation of all the dead took place within a reasonable time after post-mortem...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : The hon. Minister is making a statement. Please listen to him first.

SHRI SOMPAL : The members of the public expressed their satisfaction with the relief efforts undertaken by the local administration in close cooperation with NGOs and village community. We also felt that this praise was well deserved ...*(Interruptions)*

20.00 hrs.

In three villages which were hardest hit by Kal-Baisakhi, according to the latest reports of the Government of Orissa, the total human casualties were

22, of which 13 were school children and there was a casualty of 17 livestock. Out of 2,000 houses, 200 were completely damaged and 1,500 were partially damaged; more than 1,000 coconut trees and 350 jackfruit trees were uprooted. The team also met the patients admitted in Jaleswar hospital. For treatment of serious injuries, 19 patients were admitted to Balasore hospital and three sent to Cuttack Medical College.

Hon. Members are aware that as per the existing system State Governments are responsible for undertaking relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural calamities out of the corpus of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF)...The Government of India and the State Governments contribute the CRF in the ratio 3:1. The Government of India releases its share in four equal quarterly instalments automatically. In case there is a shortage of fund in the corpus of the CRF, the concerned State Government can request for advance release of the Central share of the CRF or meet the expenditure from on-going Plan programmes.

An amount of Rs. 51.72 crore, consisting of Rs. 38.79 as Central share, to Orissa and an amount of Rs. 54.16 crore, consisting of Rs. 40.62 crore as Central share, to West Bengal have been allocated in the CRF for the year 1997-98. The entire Central share has been released...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : How much has been released?

SHRI SOMPAL : The entire Central share has been released.

According to reports received from the State Governments, an amount of Rs. 8.12 crore was available as 'unspent' with the Government of Orissa and an amount of Rs. 31.92 crore was available with the Government of West Bengal as 'unspent'. The Government of India have released in advance the Central share of the first quarterly instalment of 1998-99 of Rs. 10.19 crore to Orissa and Rs. 10.67 crore to West Bengal from the CRF to augment their resources for extending relief to the affected persons.

As I mentioned earlier, the primary responsibility for providing relief to the people affected by natural calamities is that of the State Governments concerned. The Government of India supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing additional resources in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commissions appointed from time to time.

During 1997-98, the States of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have reported losses on account of landslides, lightning, floods, cyclones, hailstorms, droughts, earthquakes and pest attacks. The Government

of India is seeking detailed reports from these States...*(Interruptions)*

Keeping in view the long term perspective, the State Governments are required to create in-built mitigation and preventive measures in their Plan schemes. At the Government of India level, different Ministries and Departments are implementing various programmes and schemes for long term mitigation and prevention of natural calamities. These include the Drought Prone Areas Programme, the Desert Development Programme, the Technology Mission on Drinking Water by the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment, the National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas, the Soil Conservation in Catchments of River Valleys Projects and the Catchments of Flood Prone Rivers Projects by the Ministry of Water Resources.

A National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR) has been constituted from 1995-96, based on the recommendations of the Tenth Finance Commission, for providing the assistance to the States in the wake of calamities of rare severity...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. CHACKO : He is not talking about the relevant issues.

SHRI SOMPAL : An additional amount of Rs. 120.00 crore has been allocated during the year 1997-98 in the NFCR...*(Interruptions)*

This Fund is managed by a National Calamity Relief Committee (NCRC), a Sub-Committee of the National Development Council, headed by Agriculture Minister and consisting of Dy. Chairman, Planning Commission, two Union Ministers and five Chief Ministers as members, to be nominated by the Prime Minister annually on rotation basis...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please listen to the hon. Minister.
...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record.
...*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER : You also know the position. The hon. Minister is making a statement. Please listen to him first.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMPAL : NCRC, based on the report of the Central Team and recommendations of Inter Ministerial Group thereon, decide whether calamity can be treated as a calamity of rare severity and approves the quantum of assistance from NFCR.

I can assure the Members of the House that no effort will be spared to assist the people of the affected areas in this time of suffering on account of this natural calamity...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, please listen to the hon. Minister.

20.07 hrs.

At this stage, Shri Sunil Khan and some other hon. Members came and stood on the floor near the Table

MR. SPEAKER : Please go to your seat. What is this?

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seat.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seat.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : I will allow you. The hon. Minister of Home Affairs is on his legs. Please listen to him.

...*(Interruptions)*

20.09 hrs.

At this stage, Shri Sunil Khan and some other hon. Members went back to their seats

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI) : Mr. Speaker. Sir, friends from the Opposition want to know the real position. In this case, two delegations have visited that area. One was led by the Minister of Agriculture whereas the other was led by Shri Naveen Patnaik. So, I would request you to allow Shri Patnaik to lay his Report on the Table of the House which is a unanimous Report of all the Members who have accompanied him.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT (Dausa) : Sir, if you may recollect, you may remember that when you were in the Chair, the hon. Prime Minister made a commitment on that day that he would talk to the States and get the information by Monday. But today's statement does not carry any information...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Pilot, you are a senior Member. Please understand that rules do not permit for a discussion.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : You may remember that the Prime Minister made a commitment that day that he would get the information by Monday. Today is Tuesday. This statement does not carry any information. That is not correct, Sir.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR (Baramati) : There was a specific commitment from the hon. Prime Minister that he would collect the information from the respective States and give the detailed information to the House. So, it was his responsibility to collect the information. I do not know whether he has collected it or not. If the information was collected, why is it not placed before the House?

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : That is all, Sir.

[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE):
Mr. Speaker, Sir, some information has been collected
...(Interruptions)

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR That is not
here...(Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : It contains other
statements also...(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : The Government must have
received information from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar
Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bihar...(Interruptions)

[English]

But there is no information about them: in this
statement...(Interruptions)

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR : That is about Orissa. But
you said that you would collect information from other
States like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh
...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : The hon. Minister is making a
statement.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER (Tenali) : Mr. Speaker, Sir,
it has never been the practice in this House that a
report is read out by a Minister who has visited the
place. It is the concerned Minister who makes a
statement. We expect the Minister of Agriculture to make
a comprehensive statement on the promise made by
the hon. Prime Minister...(Interruptions)... But what is it
that Shri Naveen Patnaik going to read? How can a
report be laid by him in this House? It has never been
done like this in this House. At no point of time had it
been done like this in this House. Why should he read
his statement now? It is the concerned Minister who
makes a statement always...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please hear me first.

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : He cannot read his report.
Only the concerned Minister should lay it on the Table
of the House...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, are you laying the
report on the Table?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI
NAVEEN PATNAIK) : Sir, I will take only two minutes
...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Are you going to take two minutes?
All right. Hon. Members, please hear him.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He will take only two minutes.
Please take your seats. He is not going to read.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, do you want to lay the
report on the Table?

...(Interruptions)

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : Sir, rather than his report
being read out here, the hon. Prime Minister may ask
his Minister to make a comprehensive statement
alongwith action taken, if not today, sometime later. But
this is not the way, Sir...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seats.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : This is of no avail. This
had not been done in the House at any point of time.
Sir, you are setting a wrong convention...(Interruptions)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Mavelikara) : Sir, I would like
to say something on this matter.

MR. SPEAKER : How is it possible? He is already
speaking from your party and again, you are asking for
an opportunity.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI KHARABELA SWAIN (Balasore) : Sir, I may
be allowed to make a statement as I am from the affected
constituency. I am from Balasore. You may kindly allow
me to speak.

MR. SPEAKER : No. Please take your seat first. No
further clarifications.

...(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI N. JANARDHANA REDDY (Bapatla) : Sir,
whenever a natural calamity takes place, it is the practice
that the Ministers will go to the place and report back
to Parliament immediately. No report is a prepared one.
After that, a Central team has to go and assess the
damage immediately and report it. Then the relief will
go there.

In the meanwhile, he is not able to inform the House
properly as to what is the seed money that is available
in each State. By March-end, that might have been
completed...(Interruptions) What is the amount that has
been given immediately by the Central Government?
He is giving an advance from the share of the next year.
That is not the Central help. The help from the Central
Government is different. The Central help can be
assessed only after the team goes there.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I may be allowed
to clarify the position...(Interruptions)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have to
bring a point to the notice of the Government. In order
to assess the actual damage after every calamity, a
Central team of experts, including officials, who can

* Not Recorded.

really assess the damage, used to go to the place to assess the damage and report. Then, the relief is to be released.

Firstly, what I want to know is whether the team sent out by the hon. Minister is the Central team which is meant to be so.

If it is not so, when will you send the Central team?...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Please conclude.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMPAL : Please allow me to clarify the position...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : No clarification. Prof. Kurien, please conclude now.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN : Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has said that a statement would be made on the floor of the House...*(Interruptions)* Please let me complete it...*(Interruptions)*. If the hon. Minister has made a statement on behalf of the Government, how can another Minister be allowed to make a statement on the same subject? That is what I want to know.

SHRI SOMPAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, here is a small clarification...*(Interruptions)* After the recommendations of the Tenth Finance Commission these have been accepted by the National Development Council and all the States — this has been made a responsibility of the States to tackle such problems...*(Interruptions)* There is a regular system and 3:1 ratio is sent to the States. In the case of calamities of extraordinary and rare severity, special teams are despatched after the demand is received from the States.

This information is being collected from all the States which I have mentioned in my main statement and the amounts which have been released for the natural calamity. I have got a statement. If you want me to read out, I can do so. It is a long statement for all the States...*(Interruptions)*

AN HON. MEMBER : How much amount was released for Maharashtra?

SHRI SOMPAL : Why Maharashtra and why not for all the States?...*(Interruptions)* In the case of Maharashtra, the amount released was '53.98'.

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, please conclude.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMPAL : It will go on unnecessarily.

MR. SPEAKER : No clarification please.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Acharia Basudeb, you are aware of the position about the rules. Please take your seat.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : A report was submitted by an all-party team...*(Interruptions)* We raised this issue

on the floor of the House...*(Interruptions)* That team was sent by the Government, that is by the Prime Minister. They visited the areas...*(Interruptions)* We want to know about that report...*(Interruptions)* That report should be laid on the Table of the House.

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, this is with regard to the conduct of one of the hon. Members of the House. It is very bad on the part of the Member to have done so. The hon. Member should behave well in the House. It was very bad on his part going to the hon. Ministers and to the Treasury Benches side. It is not good on the part of the Member to do so. I am going to name Shri Sunil Khan.

SHRI SUNIL KHAN (Durgapur) : Sir, I am sorry.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, he has expressed sorry for that and so the matter may be closed now.

MR. SPEAKER : Yes in view of his expressing sorry, the matter is closed.

20.21 hrs.

VALEDICTORY REFERENCE

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members you have transacted vital business since the 23rd of this month. Succession of the new Government to office has been confirmed by this House smoothly. The House also rose up to the expectations of the country in transacting and completing the financial business so as to enter the new financial year without any hassle.

Further, the House has adopted today the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address delivered by the hon. Rashtrapatiiji consistent with its traditions. I was immensely helped by all hon. Members of the House in my task. My sincere thanks to all of you. Let us now look forward to the full Budget Session.

Now, the tune of *Vande Mataram* will be played.

20.21½ hrs.

NATIONAL SONG

The National Song was played.

20.22 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned sine die.