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Government of India

Statement in Parliament by Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah regarding avalanche in the upper catchment of Rishiganga River in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand

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Following is the statement by the Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah in Parliament regarding avalanche in the upper catchment of Rishiganga River in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand: -

On 07.02.2021 at about 1000 hours an avalanche has occurred in the upper catchment of Rishiganga River, a tributary of Alaknanda River in Chamoli District of Uttarakhand, which led to sudden rise in the water level of Rishiganga River. Due to flash flood on account of rising of water levels in the river Rishiganga, a functional Rishiganga small hydro project of 13.2 MW was washed away. The flash flood also affected the under construction 520 MW NTPC Hydro Power Project downstream at Tapovan on the river Dhauri Ganga.

State Government of Uttarakhand has reported that there is no danger of downstream flooding and the rise in water level has been contained. Centre and the State Government have been keeping a strict vigil on the situation.

It is observed from the satellite data (Planet Lab) of 7thFebruary, 2021 in catchment of Rishi Ganga river at the terminus of the glacier at an altitude of 5600 m a landslide triggered a snow avalanche covering approximately 14 sq.km area and causing a flash flood in the downstream of Rishi Ganga River.

2. Initial Damage reported: -

As per information received from Government of Uttarakhand, 20 persons have died and 06 persons have been injured so far. As per information, a total of 197 persons are reported missing which includes 139 persons of under construction project of NTPC, 46 persons of the functional Rishi Ganga Project and 12 villagers. The State Government has gathered this information¹ from different sources and this may change. (¹The above information is as on 08.02.2021 at 1700 hrs.)

12 persons from NTPC project have been rescued, who were trapped in a tunnel. 15 persons from Rishiganga project have also been rescued. In another tunnel of NTPC project, approximately 25–35 persons are suspected to have been trapped. Rescue operation to evacuate these persons is going on war footing and all out efforts are simultaneously being made for searching missing persons.

State Government has announced an ex-gratia of Rs. 4 lakh each for the next of kin of those who have lost their lives due to the incident.

Due to washing away of one bridge, 13 villages around the place of incident have been cut off. In these villages necessary supplies and medical assistance is being provided through helicopters.

3. Steps taken by Central Government:

- i. Situation is being monitored 24x7 by Central Government at the highest level. Hon'ble Prime Minister himself is monitoring the situation closely.
- ii. Both Control Rooms of Ministry of Home Affairs are monitoring the situation 24X7 and all possible help is being provided to the State.
- iii. Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Power has visited the incident site and supervised the rescue and relief work.
- iv. ITBP has set up their Control Room and 450 personnel of ITBP with all necessary equipment are engaged in rescue and relief operation.
- v. 05 NDRF teams have reached at the place of incident and are engaged in rescue and relief operation.
- vi. 08 teams of Indian Army, including one Engineer Task Force (ETF), are carrying rescue operation at incident site. One Medical column with two ambulances are also deployed. One diving team of Indian Navy has also reached at incident site for rescue operation. 5 helicopters of Indian Air Force have also been engaged in rescue operation. A Control Room has been established at Joshimath.
- vii. In spite of adverse conditions at incident site, search and rescue operation is continuously being carried out. After continuous and tireless efforts since night, Army has cleared debris at opening of the tunnel to rescue the persons trapped in it.
- viii. All the staff of the Central Water Commission deployed in Alaknanda and Ganga Basin up to Haridwar are on alert.

- ix. One team of Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) is also deployed at incident site.
- x. Team of Snow & Avalanche Study Establishment (SASE) /DRDO has also reached at the site for surveillance and reconnaissance.
- xi. CMD, NTPC has reached at the place of incident.

4. Meeting of National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

On 07.02.2021 at 1630 hours a meeting of NCMC under the chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary was held, wherein all the concerned agencies were directed to work in close coordination and to extend all requisite assistance to the State administration.

5. Steps taken by State Government: -

The district administration, police and disaster management departments of State Government along with all central agencies have been working for rescue and relief work. 02 teams of SDRF have been deployed. 07 Medical teams with 08 ambulances of State Health Department along with Chief Medical Officer have been deployed. In addition to this, 05 Helicopters have also been deployed for rescue and relief works. Electricity has been restored in almost all the affected areas. Restoration work of 05 completely damaged Bridges has been initiated by PWD and BRO.

6. Status of State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF): -

I would also like to mention here that in the financial year 2020-21, Rs 1041.00 crore has been allocated to the State of Uttarakhand under the State Disaster Risk Management Fund (SDRMF). The first installment of the Central share amounting to Rs 468.50 crore has been released to the State Government.

❖ I assure the House that the Centre is extending all possible assistance for relief and rescue work to the State Government.

The Central Government is working in close coordination with the State and all the necessary steps, which are considered appropriate, are being taken.

NW/RK/PK/AD/DDD