163 DEAD: TWO LAKHS WORTH PROPERTY DESTROYED

Official Version of Tidal Wave Havoc Gives Grim Details

(From Our Staff Correspondent)

From enquiries made from official agencies upto December 16, it is gathered that 163 persons lost their lives and about 800 have been rendered homeless and property worth Rs. 214,000 has been destroyed as a result of the tidal-wave in the wake of the earthquake which occurred in the early hours of November 28.

An official spokesman said:

The disaster for those it affected has been a terrible one but fortunately the persons affected are not very large in number and Government has undertaken to meet all essential relief.

It is an unfortunate fact that two-thirds of the dead are children since those who survived were those who were strong enough to grasp their huts as they were carried away. Most children could not do this, the darkness and the suddenness of the onslaught prevented their parents from catching hold of them and they were carried out to sea.

Many bodies of both adults and minors dead have not been recovered for this reason and this makes the collection of names of the dead all the more difficult. There are no orphans as far as is known, and few women left husbandless.

DAMAGE

The damage was caused in small hamlets on the sea coast or at the mouth of the tidal creeks in Mirpur Sakro taluka, Ketibandar Mahal and Shahbandar taluka. About two-thirds of the inhabitants of these hamlets depended on fishing and they have lost their livelihood entirely due to loss of nets and one-third were maldars and cultivators. Their flocks are intact but they have lost the grain stored on their threshing floors.

COLLECTING DUST FROM EARTH HE WALKED

Touching Gandhiji Story

RAMPURHAT (Bengal), Dec. 22.

A touching scene was witnessed here when Gandhiji arrived. At one corner of the crowd, a little boy dressed in tatters was seen collecting eagerly some dust from the road over which Gandhiji had walked. A section among the crowd observed this strange conduct of the boy and asked why he was collecting the dust. For a moment the boy was dumb, and later with tears in his eyes and throat chocked, he murmurred: "My mother asked me to bring the sacred dust when touched by Gandhiji's feet. For want of clothes to cover their nakedness, my mother and sister could not come out to have Mahatmaji's 'darshan.' Accordingly, they sent me to see Gandhiji and describe to them how he looked".

Asked about his father, the boy said: "During the days of famine we all suffered from starvation. My father became sick and died for want of medicine".

When Gandhiji arrived in Ranpurhat men, women and children walking long distances from far and near villages came to have his *darshan*. Besides a number of labourers, a Santhal trecked 15 miles, with garlands for Gandhiji in his hands —U. P.

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