

IRRIGATION.

Govt. of {1895} Madras.

PUBLIC WORKS.

No 2797 W of 4 November 1895

Dated October, 16th.

Recd.

Encl.

G.O. No. 845 I., 16th Oct. 1895.

Recorded with the
remark that no action
is required in the General
Branch.

(L2) C.A.B.B.
D.W.

OCTOBER.

The C.E. for I.

Floods in the Kistna District

Directing the attention of the Superintending Engineer to paragraph 15 of the Collector's letter reporting on the late — and calling for an early report as to the measures necessary to control floods in the Budameru.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

Irrigation.

READ—the following paper :—

From J. N. ATKINSON, Esq., Collector of the Kistna District, to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Bezwada, 20th September 1895, Dis. No. 234-Tour.

Referring to your telegram of 12th instant, inquiring whether any serious loss of life or much distress had been caused by the recent floods, and in continuation of my telegram of 13th instant, stating that up to that date three deaths had been reported, I have the honour to submit the following report.

2. Information as to the effect of the floods is very slow in coming in, though, in accordance with my instructions, Divisional officers and Tahsildars are touring through their respective charges and personally inquiring into the extent of damage and mortality caused. The following paragraphs summarise the information which I have received up to date.

3. In the Sub-Collector's division, in spite of the very heavy rain—upwards of 11 inches in twenty hours at one lock—no loss of life or immediate damage to property has been reported. A large area of wet crop has been completely submerged for several days, and it is likely that considerable remissions will be necessary at the next jamabandi. I have issued orders for a very careful inspection of these crops so soon as the floods have subsided. The Executive Engineer found it necessary to breach one or two channels to let off the floods; but there has not been any great damage to irrigation works. The unharvested cholam and sazza crops were much damaged. The Sub-Collector reports that there is no distress.

4. The Head Assistant Collector's division suffered more severely than any other part of the district. In the Nandigama taluk a few minor irrigation tanks, and in the Munagala zamindari (under the Court of Wards) almost all the estate tanks breached. Efforts are being made to save the crops. In Bezwada taluk three deaths by drowning are reported from Kondapalli village, but I think it most likely that other unreported deaths must have occurred, seeing that the Budameru river, the principal agent of destruction in this district, passes through the centre of the taluk. A large number of major and minor *Government* tanks are fed by the Budameru, and the Head Assistant Collector reports that *all* of these are breached. The Executive Engineer, Northern Division, is now engaged doing all he can to save the crops under these tanks.

5. Information from the Nuzvid taluk is especially scanty. The Head Assistant Collector and Tahsildar are touring through the affected parts, and I expect full reports from them any day now. Postal and, indeed, all other communication with these parts is however much retarded owing to breaches in the East Coast Railway, the Ellore canal and all the roads. I learn that in Mirjapuram village, belonging to M.R.Ry. Venkata Narasimha Apparow, Zamindar of the Mirjapuram portion of the

old Nuzvid estate, 17 men, 23 women and 19 children, as well as 400 cattle were drowned and 100 houses destroyed, the total loss of property in this village alone being estimated at Rs. 15,000. In the neighbouring village of Kottapalle one woman and 200 sheep and goats are said to have been drowned, and twenty houses destroyed. The Mirjapuram zamindar is said to have done all in his power to relieve immediate distress in his estate. I have little doubt that there must have been further loss of life and property as yet unreported in this taluk.

(Intld.) J. N. A.
6. An enormous amount of damage has been done in this taluk by the breaching of zamindari tanks. Government is aware that the question is now before it on what department the obligation should lie of preparing estimates for the repairs necessary to make these zamindari tanks safe. I respectfully submit that it would be advisable to appoint a special establishment at once for this purpose and get the tanks made safe without further delay. Some of them breach every year and it is quite possible that next month may bring a repetition of the present disasters.

7. In the head-quarter division the damage was confined to the Gudivada taluk and resulted solely from the Budameru flood, which broke its way right across the taluk, breaching all the canals in its way. No loss of life, either human or other, has been reported. There are not many sheep and goats in the taluk, and at this season most of the cattle have been sent to the upland taluks, so that though it is likely that some cattle have been drowned, the numbers will not be large. I hear of a good many houses subsiding in the floods and straw stacks being washed away or damaged. The flood in the Kolleru lake has, of course, been very high. I think when the water levels are reported it will be found to be the highest flood on record. An enormous extent of paddy crop has been submerged in depth from 2 to 6 feet, and as we must expect the normal north-east monsoon floods next month before the present floods have had time to run off, it is likely that there will be a total failure of this paddy crop over a large area, say, 15,000 to 20,000 acres.

8. In the General Deputy Collector's division it is reported that there has been no loss of life nor any distress. The rain in Narasaraopet and Vinukonda taluks was less than elsewhere, but in Dáchépalle (Palnad taluk) nearly 10 inches were gauged in 24 hours, and I apprehend there must have been some damage to houses, tanks and roads.

9. None of my Divisional officers or Tahsildars have said anything about loss or damage to the stores of food grain. These are generally kept in pits in the ground, only the wealthier ryots possessing water-tight granaries above ground. The grain pits are on elevated ground, tank bunds, old village-sites and the like, so they may have been above water level. In any case I do not think there is the remotest likelihood of any actual deficiency of food grain. It is only the poorest classes who are likely to have lost their stores and these can now get work at high rates of wage in repairing the railways, canals and roads.

10. The prospective failure of the wet crops over so large an area is a more serious calamity. It has come so early in the year that in some localities, where the land is comparatively high, so that the flood waters have already drained off, and where paddy seedlings can now be procured, it is possible for the ryots at once to replant their fields with the usual six months' paddy. But the larger part of the affected area is low-lying, and the storm waters are stagnating therein or slowly draining away. It is impossible to prepare such land for transplantation till the superfluous water has drained off. It would be equally impossible now to find seedlings for the large area on which the first crop will have been lost. Three courses are open to the ryots, either to grow a later dry crop, or a three months' paddy crop, or to leave the lands waste. As to the first it has been frequently pointed out that land which has been irrigated for a series of years is unfit for the cultivation of dry cereals, cholam and sazza, nor have the ryots the necessary apparatus for such cultivation. There is nothing to prevent them raising a crop of pulses. To the second

course there is the objection that three months' paddy is almost unknown in this delta and that seed-grain or seedlings thereof are not procurable. To leave the land waste will entail not only the diminution of food supply next year, but also the withdrawal of their accustomed means of livelihood from thousands of field labourers at the next harvest season.

11. It has therefore been suggested to me that Government should intervene and purchase seed-grain of three months' paddy from other districts for distribution to the ryots. But again it is pointed out that in the affected tracts the soil generally is and will continue to be too much saturated for the raising of seedlings. Therefore it has been urged that if Government purchases seed-grain, it must arrange also for its sowing and rearing and that no good can be effected except by the distribution of seedlings.

12. I do not think this is a case for Government interference. To begin with it would be almost impossible for the Government officials in the district to arrange for the raising of so large a quantity of paddy seedlings. There is no land available; Government has no apparatus nor labour at command and no one skilled to supervise such an undertaking. The proposal is altogether unpractical and impracticable.

13. But besides this I do not think there is any necessity for Government interference at all. This is no case of prospective famine, of risk of mortality from want of food. I do not for a moment believe that those whose crops are lost will thereby be reduced to a condition of destitution next year. The ryots in the district are well to do. They generally have some capital saved in the form of jewelry or money hoards. If there be any who live absolutely from hand to mouth, they can find work for the next few months in repairing the railways and canals. After that there is the harvest season with its handsome wages, and there will be the Bezwada-Madras Railway.

14. Finally, I may point out that if any ryot wants to grow three months' paddy he can without difficulty procure the seed for himself and arrange to raise it in any suitable locality. It is not a case of emergency. The three months' crop may be sown any time before December, and there are therefore two months for the ryots to make the necessary arrangements. I do not consider therefore that there is any need for Government interference. I may add that the loss of crop would not have been anything like so large had it not been for the ryots' delay in commencing wet cultivation this year consequent on the agitation against the enhancement of the water-rate. Transplantation has been at least three weeks later than usual, and six weeks later than it need have been had the ryots taken water when first it was offered them in May.

15. I would respectfully urge Government to direct that measures be taken once for all to bring the Budameru floods under control. This little stream, with a catchment area of some 400 square miles, has been allowed hitherto to work annual havoc with life and property, public and private. The flood which has just occurred is nothing new or specially out of the way. I doubt if a year ever passes without the Budameru breaching the Ellore canal, while every six or eight years there comes a more than usually destructive flood wherein public and private property is sacrificed wholesale. We are accustomed to it in this district and think nothing of it; and this year too I doubt if public attention would have been drawn to the matter had not the railways suffered so heavily. Various schemes have been suggested from time to time for curbing or diverting the Budameru, and the Department of Public Works I believe has considered each of these in turn and for one reason or another condemned them all. But I cannot believe that at this latter end of the nineteenth century it passes the collective wit of the whole Engineering department to devise a scheme for regulating so small a stream. If it be a mere matter of expense, I submit that a very large expenditure would be more than justified and on this point it would be interesting to ascertain how much these Budameru floods have cost the State alone in repairs during the last thirty years.

16. I would add that one scheme that has been suggested is to divert the Budameru to empty itself into the Kistna by an old, though still existing mouth,

some 8 miles above the Bezwada anicut. Such a diversion would have the secondary though also very important effect of reducing the flood level in the Kolleru lake. Questions have been asked in the Legislative Council about Kolleru floods, and Government has called for information on the subject (G.O., No. 1018 I., dated 15th December 1894). The subject is an admittedly difficult one, but since every year more and more drainage water is poured into the Kolleru, the question will obtrude itself more and more. If therefore the Budameru could be diverted from flowing into the Kolleru, a considerable step would have been made towards solving a problem which bids fair hereafter to cause Government much trouble and expense.

17. Lastly, I venture on my own responsibility, having had no opportunity of specially consulting the Department of Public Works, to ask Government to treat this delta a little more liberally in the matter of allotment of funds. Improvement of drainage works is a matter of urgent necessity, but so small is the annual grant for the whole delta that the sum available for drainage works is altogether insignificant. "Ten years hence" writes one of the Executive Engineers to me "something may have been done towards draining the delta." This is not a matter to be lightly dealt with. The annual loss to Government and to the ryots owing to bad drainage would amount probably to some lakhs of rupees.

Mis. No. 3940, Revenue.

Transferred with Honourable Members' notes in original to the Public Works Department (Irrigation Branch).

1st October 1895.

(Signed) W. B. AYLING,
Ag. Asst. Secy. to Government.

ORDER—No. 845 I., dated 16th October 1895.

The attention of the Superintending Engineer, II Circle, is drawn to paragraph 15 of the Collector's letter and he is requested to report at an early date what measures are necessary to control floods in the Budameru.

2. The question raised in paragraph 6 of the Collector's letter is being dealt with by the Secretary to Government, Public Works Department.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) R. R. E. DRAKE-BROCKMAN, Colonel, R.E.,
Joint Secy. to Govt., P.W.D.,
Irrigation Branch.

To the Superintending Engineer, II Circle.
" Chief Engineer for Irrigation.
" Consulting Engineer for Railways.
" Public Works Department (General Branch).
" Revenue Department.

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