

Public Works (1897) Department.

G.O., No. 2033 W

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[Despatch Abstract.]

Lamine Relief Estimates, Lamine Tools etc:

Prod: Revenue Dept Recording with
Remarks Report from the Secretary to Govt
Prod. and the third member of the Board of
Revenue on — in the Nallae D^h Com to be
the S. E. T. Unit.

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G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.	G.O.	No.	Department.	Date.

Recording, with remarks, report from the Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, and the Third Member of the Board of Revenue on — in the Nellore district; stating that the Collector and the Sub-Collector must devote special attention to the relief of the people in the Darsi and Podili divisions of the Venkatagiri zemindari; and that steps for the improvement of the Maldivi drain will be taken in the Public Works Department.

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

READ—the following letter from the Hon'ble Colonel D. McNEIL CAMPBELL, R.E., Chief Engineer and Secretary to Government, Public Works Department, and H. M. WINTERBOTHAM, Esq., Third Member, Board of Revenue, to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, dated Camp, Bezwada, 14th June 1897, letter E. :—

In continuation of our letter D, dated 10th June 1897, we have the honour to submit the following report regarding the district of Nellore :

1. *General condition of the district.*—Mr. Scott has been officiating as Collector since May 1, 1897. He was in the district for about a year ending December 1896, and off and on, has had three years' service in it.

Rainfall.—The north-east monsoon in 1896 was late and ill-distributed. Rain did not set in till the middle of November and a great part of the wet and dry lands were cultivated after that date. The district rainfall in 1896 for both monsoons was 35.53 inches (average of 22 stations) against a twenty years' average of 35.60 inches. In the south-west monsoon 15.74 inches fell against an average of 12.67 inches. But although the total rainfall was not deficient, the lateness of the north-east monsoon and the unevenness of distribution were unfavourable to cultivation, and it is believed that the yield of both wet and dry crops was, on the whole, decidedly below the average. The following is the rainfall from April 1 to May 31, 1897 :—

Stations.	Rainfall from April 1 to May 31.	Average.	Remarks.
	INCHES.	INCHES.	INCHES.
Addanki	2.16	Not available.	
Darsi	2.91	2.12	+ 0.79
Podili	2.85	Not available.	
Kanigiri	4.64	1.75	+ 2.79
Udayagiri	0.79	2.23	+ 1.44
Kanuparti	1.00	Not available.	
Ongole	1.85	1.91	— 0.06
Pakala	1.04	1.38	— 0.34
Kandukur	0.78	1.60	— 0.82
Kavali	2.24	1.51	+ 0.72
Iskapalle	2.87	1.10	+ 1.77
Nellore	1.07	1.98	— 0.91
Kristnapatam	1.87	1.66	+ 0.01
Kota	0.57		
Dugarazpatam	0.71	Not available.	
Sulurpet	0.78		
Toda	1.02	2.27	— 1.25
Monapollem	0.68	1.58	— 0.90
Atmakur	0.23	2.06	— 1.83
Rapur	0.72	2.30	— 1.58
Gudur	0.88	1.49	— 0.61
Venkatagiri	0.08	2.35	— 2.27
District average	1.43	1.83	— 0.40

It will be seen that, on an average of 20 years, the pre-monsoon showers only give a district average of 1.83 inches, and that this has been largely exceeded in the northern parts of the district, where alone early crops are extensively cultivated.

Sowings in Nellore are usually very late. Up to about the middle of August, three-fourths of the "dry" cultivated area, and more than four-fifths of the "wet" remain unsown (*vide* Statistical Atlas, page 189).

So far there is nothing whatever to indicate that the ensuing south-west monsoon rains will be deficient, and in case this misfortune should occur, the local opinion is that it will not cause immediate widespread distress. If the next north-east monsoon rains prove favourable the population as a whole can subsist on its own resources till those rains bring in their crop. Possibly relief may be needed in certain parts in the north-west of the district, regarding which more will be said further on.

2. We are informed that there is at present no evidence of distress in any part of the district. The construction of the Madras-Bezwada State Railway can furnish employments for large numbers; and the officers in charge of the line inform us that they cannot obtain coolies in sufficient numbers for the earth-work in hand, even for the very liberal rates which are being offered.

3. *Prices.*—The following statement shows the average prices ruling in the district for the week ending June 5, 1897, as compared with the normal, warning and scarcity rates :—

Stations.	Prices in seers of 80-tolas of											
	Rice, second sort.				Ragi.				Cholam.			
	For week ending June 5.	Normal.	Warning rates.	Scarcity rates.	For week ending June 5.	Normal.	Warning rates.	Scarcity rates.	For week ending June 5.	Normal.	Warning rates.	Scarcity rates.
Nellore	10.6				15.4				14.4			
Allur	12.7				17.3							
Gudur	12.7											
Kota	10.6				17.3							
Venkatagiri	11.1				17.3				15.5			
Polur	11.7											
Rapur	11.3				20.4				14.4			
Atmakur	12.2				17.9				18.0			
Kavali	11.3	14.0	11.2	8.4	17.0	28.0	21.0	14.0	15.4	26.0	19.1	13.0
Udayagiri					17.4				14.5			
Kandukur	10.3								18.1			
Podili	8.5				17.0				12.7			
Darsi	7.5				15.3				14.5			
Ongole	9.4				18.7				15.3			
Addanki	8.9				16.6				16.2			
Kanigiri	9.4				17.0				14.5			
District average	10.6				17.3				15.3			

Rice.—Rice is cheaper than the warning rate over most of the area depending on wet cultivation. It is dearer than the scarcity rate in Darsi, and touches the scarcity rate in Podili and Addanki.

These three stations are in the extreme north of the district.

Ragi.—Ragi is dearer than the warning rate everywhere, and in Darsi, where it is the staple food, is only 1.30 seers per rupee cheaper than the scarcity rate.

Cholam.—Cholam is dearer than the scarcity rate in Podili, and on an average of the district is only $2\frac{1}{4}$ seers per rupee cheaper than the scarcity rate.

Cumbu.—Cumbu is dearer than the scarcity rate in Podili, and is only slightly below that rate in other places where its price is quoted.

4. *Exports and Imports.*—We have been unable to gather any useful information under this head. There have been no exports by sea. By the South Indian Railway 18,515 maunds of grain have been exported since the middle of March, against 2,031 maunds imported. We have no record of the grain exports, if any, by the Buckingham Canal, nor by the Bezwada-Guntakal Line, nor by road. At the end of 1896, large quantities of grain are said to have left the district by road into Cuddapah, through the passes in the Eastern Ghats.

5. The portions of the district which appear to us to furnish most ground for immediate anxiety are the Darsi and Podili divisions in the extreme north. These divisions form part of the Venkatagiri zemindari. Each has a Deputy Tahsildar in charge. The area and population is as follows:—

Divisions.	Area.	Population.
	SQ. MLS.	
Darsi	616	84,310
Podili	564	68,390

This tract is described as consisting of low rocky hills, and stony plains, much covered with scrub jungle.

The villages are small, poor and more or less buried in prickly-pear. Water is scarce and bad. There are but a few rain-fed tanks and none of these belong to Government.

In this tract the prices of all food-grains have been approaching scarcity rates since March last; the last north-east monsoon was seriously deficient; and we know of old that this is a region in which the scarcity is wont to cause distress in an acute form.

The Southern Mahratta Railway passes through both divisions, and we surmise that the railway may have tended to raise prices towards the same level as in the adjoining famine-stricken district of Kurnool.

Prices are, however, still below the rates of 1892, when relief-works were last opened in this tract, and the Acting Collector believes that the outside number likely to come upon relief-works before November next is 5,000.

In 1892 the maximum number was nearly 9,000 for a short period.

6. The provision of any suitable and useful relief-works in proprietary tracts, such as these, is a matter of extreme difficulty; and it is easier to find fault with the want of provision than to suggest how the programme should be amplified.

In 1894 the famine programme included the construction of 1,232 miles of new roads; but these were struck out in subsequent years, as the District Board reported that it would be beyond its resources to maintain any part of these roads from local funds.

The road would remain impassable from the first for want of masonry culverts and would impede instead of facilitating traffic.

Large expenditure is proposed in clearing prickly-pear from the village sites, but the groups of huts are so small and poor that the outlay is out of all proportion to the improvement, and the work is of a sort for which the rules of the Famine Code are not adapted.

It would seem not unreasonable to declare that, in times of want, the scanty population of such tracts as these should migrate to the nearest point where some suitable relief-work can be provided; but if this is held impolitic or impracticable, we can see no alternative but to employ relief-workers on breaking and stacking stores of metal which are not required, and which will almost certainly never be used.

7. With these general remarks we proceed to give the result of our examination of the famine programme.

Famine Programme.—The works entered in the famine programme are estimated to cost Rs. 23,93,761, which is sufficient to give employment to 319,168 persons or 21.7 per cent. of the population of 1½ millions for three months.

The estimates may be divided as follows:—

Sanctioned	Rs. 3,73,250
Stated to be ready	5,86,727
Proposed	14,33,784

Since the submission of the programme to the Board of Revenue more estimates have been sanctioned and the amount of estimates laid before us was Rs. 3,90,960. These are ready for immediate execution and would give employment to 52,128 persons or 3.4 per cent. of the population for three months. Deducting the amount

of the estimates since sanctioned, the amount of the estimates stated to be ready is Rs. 5,69,017. Of these, estimates to the amount of Rs. 2,37,288 only were available for inspection, the remainder being in the division or taluk offices. All the estimates stated to be ready should be submitted to the proper sanctioning authorities at once, so as to be available for immediate execution should necessity arise: this would bring the total work available to Rs. 3,90,960 + Rs. 5,69,017 or Rs. 9,59,977 sufficient for 8.5 per cent. of the population for three months. This, we believe, to be ample till November next. We do not think it necessary that estimates should be prepared for the proposed works amounting to Rs. 14,33,784 till the result of the south-west monsoon is known. Should it fail, they should at once be got ready and sanctioned in view of a possible failure of the north-east monsoon.

8. The sanctioned estimates amounting to Rs. 3,90,960 are divided as follows:—

	Rs.
Irrigation, Public Works Department	1,50,320
Irrigation, Revenue	14,410
Local Fund Road works	2,12,250
Municipal works	13,980
Total	3,90,960

Most of the estimates under Local Fund roads were prepared in 1892 and will probably have to be revised, though they are accurate enough to start work with.

9. As already stated the parts of the district most likely to be affected in the event of a failure of the south-west monsoon are the Podili and Darsi divisions. In the former division, the amount of sanctioned estimates is Rs. 42,000 which would give employment to 8.18 per cent. of the population of 68,390 persons for three months. There are, however, in addition works to the amount of Rs. 53,528 mostly for removing prickly-pear from village-sites, and for improving the drinking-water supply.

Each village ought to be visited by a trustworthy officer, and for such of the works as are found to be useful, and suitable for the employment of relief-workers, estimates should be prepared and sanctioned as soon as possible. There will then be sufficient work for 18.6 per cent. of the population for three months.

10. In the Darsi division, the amount of sanctioned estimates is Rs. 13,000 or only sufficient to give employment to 2.05 per cent. of the population of 84,310 for three months. This is not nearly sufficient and steps should be at once taken to examine all the proposed works entered in the programme (amounting to Rs. 63,300) and to bring under sanction all such as may be deemed suitable for relief purposes. This would perhaps make work available for 12 per cent. of the population which is still insufficient.

The Collector represents the difficulty of finding useful work in these divisions, and if such persons as require relief cannot be made to migrate to works in other parts of the district, and it becomes necessary to find more work than that already proposed, the only course open seems to be to employ relief labour on preparing road material at the quarries.

11. Of large works costing over one lakh of rupees on which labour could be massed, there is only one sanctioned, viz., supply channel from the Pennair river above Sangam anikat to Nellore, Rs. 1,26,000. This would be a most useful relief work. There is also another work of considerable magnitude estimated to cost Rs. 70,000, viz., "improvements to the Maldivi drain"; the estimate for this work has been returned for the purpose of having the levels checked, but the Executive Engineer is unable to do so at present owing to want of establishment, and we consider that in the event of the work being required for famine relief it might be sanctioned at once.

12. We are able to suggest only one other large work which in case of emergency might give employment to a large number of coolies, viz., clearing silt from the bed of the Nellore tank and connecting it, by a channel, with the Sangam anikat. If a small special establishment were sanctioned, an estimate could be prepared in

a very short time; and we incline to think that expenditure on this as a famine work would be at least as useful as on the collection of road material in excess of requirements.

13. *Tools.*—The tools in store were personally counted by the Executive Engineer on the 7th instant and were examined by us on 9th; the numbers agree with those in the printed list prepared in reference to G.O., No. 3116-W., dated 2nd December 1893, with the exception of 1,067 crowbars, 1,000 of which have been issued to Ganjam district and 67 to

Axes, pick	...	...	...	21	Cuddapah. The number of each description is shown in the margin. The tools
Crowbars	...	...	...	3,012	are all serviceable, though 20 per cent.
Stone-breaking hammers	...	...	...	4,960	of the stone-breaking hammers and crow-
Mamooties	...	...	...	3,033	bars are old and a good deal worn.

The number of tools in stock is far below what can be regarded as a safe provision.

Taking the population of the district at $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions in round numbers we are of opinion that the stock should be brought up to three-fourths of that which we recommended for Salem.

14. *Establishment.*—Out of a sanctioned strength of fourteen, six men have been transferred on famine duty and two men are warned to hold themselves in readiness.

In the event of an extension of the existing famine area to Nellore, the establishment difficulty will arise in full force; but, as we write, reports of heavy showers are coming in from many parts of the district, and there seems every reason to hope for a favourable south-west monsoon.

ORDER—No. 527, Revenue, dated 3rd July 1897.

Miscellaneous.

Recorded.

2. The Darsi and Podili divisions of the Venkatagiri zemindari are the portions of the district which furnish ground for immediate anxiety. These backward tracts are very difficult to deal with under the system prescribed in the Famine Code, and as it is impossible to find work there to meet any long continued famine it will be absolutely necessary, in the event of a famine, to induce a large proportion of the population go elsewhere to find subsistence; some work must, however, be provided near at hand, and the Collector and the Sub-Collector must devote special attention to the known difficulty of dealing with these tracts and get estimates ready immediately for all possible works.

3. The improvement of the Maldivi drain is a most suitable relief work and steps will be taken in the Public Works Department to have the necessary estimates for it prepared and sanctioned at a very early date. The clearing of silt from the Nellore tank may also be undertaken as a relief work in case of extreme necessity. The Government however understands that the capacity of the tank cannot be increased in this manner at a less cost than Rs. 200 per every acre of extra irrigation, and that further there is no place wherein to deposit the silt excavated; the work should not therefore be put in hand as long as more useful work is available.

4. With reference to the recommendation in paragraph 13 about tools, the Government awaits the report called for in G.O., No. 2655, dated 25th May 1897.

(True Extract.)

Comm. Secy
for Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Famine Commissioner.
„ the Public Works Department (W.).
„ the Public Works Department (I.).
„ the Local and Municipal Department.
„ the Collector of Nellore.

Exd. A. F. Eccleston.

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