

we are adding one Australia to our total population. Therefore, in this situation, perhaps it requires a much more serious thinking. Can we talk of a more powerful Gram Sabha than the Lok Sabha? We have come a long distance from this concept. Whatever institutional changes we have brought in, we have to assess whether we can make them more effective. Take the case of Panchayati Raj or Nagar Palikas. We have now amended the Constitution. We have introduced it. How do we make it effective? Perhaps, we could make it effective if Constitutionally we ensure that laws are not left to be made by the States themselves.

At some point of time, this House itself rejected the amending laws and I don't think that the Government should come out with any half-baked proposals or should try to impose something. But let there be a debate on whether we could convert India's 5,000 administrative blocks into block parliaments; whether we can think of having block republics and transferring the entire developmental works, including civil, judicial and local administration and education to them. Of course, it will call for making structural changes in the Constitution. The monumental judgment given by the Supreme Court in the *Keshavananda Bharati* case *Golaknath* case and all other incidental matters will stand in the way of that process. But after all, Constitution is a document meant for the betterment of the people and if that instrument is found ineffective, I don't think that there can be any controversy in having a rethinking on this and in making the changes. I do feel that a serious debate and discussion should take place for that purpose. Bringing a Lok Pal Bill or having some changes in the existing arrangements alone is not going to help us much. ...*(Interruptions)*... As I told you, Mr. Vice-Chairman, the Prime Minister is expected to make a statement. I am not finishing my speech. I will continue my speech. After the hon. Prime Minister made his statement, I think you would allow me to resume my observations.

(The Deputy Chairman in the Chair)

STATEMENT BY PRIME MINISTER

**Tragic death of devotees in a fire accident
at Bariapada in Orissa**

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA): Madam Deputy Chairman, I

would like to inform Hon'ble Members about my visit to Bariapada yesterday, February 24, to the site of the ghastly tragedy by fire which broke out on February 23, 1997.

The facts about the incident are as follows:

About 10,000 devotees had assembled at Madhuban in the Bariapada Municipality of Mayurbhanj District, for a religious gathering which began on February 21, 1997 and was to conclude on February 23. On the February 23 a devastating fire suddenly broke out at the site at 3.15 in the afternoon. It has been informed by the State Government that the fire brigade was immediately pressed into service, and while the women's camp-site could be protected, the fire spread through the men's camp site and 149 persons died on the spot. Another 175 persons were injured and were admitted to the local hospital and to nursing homes. Of the injured persons, 28 have succumbed to their injuries.

Immediately after the accident, the local administration deployed 43 doctors to attend to the injured. Local voluntary organisations, businessmen and political workers also joined the rescue efforts. A team of medical experts and para-medical staff from the Medical College, Cuttack have also reached Bariapada.

The process of identification of the deceased is on and their relatives and acquaintances are coming for identification.

I would like to inform the Hon'ble Members that the Central Government is going to release rupees 50,000 to the families of the deceased and to those persons who have been disabled permanently. For others who have been injured, the Central Government would provide Rs. 25,000.

The State Government has also announced financial relief of rupees 25,000 to the next of kin of the deceased and rupees 10,000 to each of those injured.

I have also requested the Chief Minister to make efforts to have the deceased identified precisely so that the assistance being given reaches the right persons. Given the difficult situation, the local authorities and the State Government are making the best possible efforts to deal with it.

I have been informed that the State Government has instituted an Enquiry into the

accident to be conducted by the Divisional Commissioner of the Central Revenue Division, Cuttack to ascertain the sequence of events leading to it and determine whether prompt steps were taken to control the fire and provide medical care to the victims.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all Hon'ble Members in expressing deep grief at this sad event, and in expressing condolences to the families of those who have died, and wish for the recovery of the injured.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Do you want to seek any clarification?

SYED SIBTEY RAZI : Madam, I want to say something.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I have some names. I will call the names. Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया (बिहार) : उपसभापति महोदय, यह दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण घटना जो घटी है इसके बारे में राज्य सरकार तो कुछ इन्क्वायरी करेगी और पता करेगी सारी बातों को। मेरी आपके माध्यम से प्रधान मंत्री महोदय से मांग यह है कि एक के बाद एक ऐसी घटना घटती जा रही है। इसके पहले डबवाली के इंसीडेंट में स्कूली बच्चे इसी तरह से जलकर मौत के घाट उतर गए थे। इसके लिए एक इन्क्वायरी कमीशन भी बैठाया गया था। उस मामले की इन्क्वायरी हुई और उसमें कुछ रिकमन्डेशंस हुई कि आईदा जब इस तरह से कोई टैंपेरी पंडाल बने तो इंडियन स्टैंडर्ड ब्यूरो के हिसाब से इन इन चीजों को वहां पर उपस्थित रखना पड़ेगा। तो क्या उन रिकमन्डेशंस को सख्ती से लागू किया जा रहा है या नहीं किया जा रहा है? इंडियन स्टैंडर्ड ब्यूरो के जो स्पेसिफिकेशंस हैं उस को ऐसी जगहों पर, ऐसे समावेशों में लागू किया जा रहा है या नहीं किया जा रहा है? अगर नहीं हो रहा है तो इस बारे में हमें कुछ करना पड़ेगा।

महोदय, आजकल देखने में यह आता है कि पहले तो राज नेताओं के यहां ज्यादा भीड़ हुआ करती है और जहां भी कोई वी.आई.पी. जाता है या मंत्री जाता है या कोई अधिकारी जाता है तो वहां पर भीड़ इकट्ठा हो जाती है तो सरकारी मशीनरी, सरकारी तंत्र उसका मुआइना करता है और यह निश्चित करता है कि उसको कैसे रोका जाएगा, उसका स्कूप रूट क्या होगा, रेस्क्यू ऑपरेशन किस तरह से होगा, फायर ब्रिगेड किधर खड़ी होगी, पानी की व्यवस्था क्या होगी, सेनीटेशन की व्यवस्था क्या होगी। इस तरह की सारी व्यवस्थायें की जाती हैं।

हमारा देश धर्म प्रधान देश है और धर्म भीरुओं का देश है। हमारे देश में धार्मिक सम्मेलनों, धार्मिक भीड़ों, धार्मिक समावेशों में ऐसे उपाय करने की जरूरत है। वहां केवल समाज सेवा संस्थायें जुड़ी रहती हैं। लेकिन वहां पर सरकारी तंत्र की कोई व्यवस्था नहीं है। वहां पर कोई सेप्टी आफिसर नहीं जाता, कोई सैनेटरी इंस्पेक्टर नहीं जाता, कोई फायर आफिसर नहीं जाता, जो जाकर देखें कि वहां पर व्यवस्था पूरी है या नहीं है। इसलिए केंद्र सरकार की ओर से राज्य सरकारों को यह अनुरोध करने की जरूरत है कि धार्मिक समागम हों—यह इसलिए भी कहना चाहता हूँ कि हमारे पटना साहिब गुरुद्वारे में इसी तरह से अचानक आग लग गई। मैं वहां का अध्यक्ष हूँ। मैंने पहले से ही बन्दोबस्त कर रखा था। मेरे कहने पर दमकल वहां पर थी। कुछ ही मिनटों में आग बुझा दी गई, नहीं तो वहां पर लगभग 10 हजार आदमी जल जाते। ऐसी घटनाएँ कई बार घट जाती हैं। बहुत बड़ी संख्या में बाहर से लोग आते हैं, दूर-दराज से सारा सामान लेकर आते हैं। शार्ट सर्किट हो जाता है। टेम्पेरी बिजली का कनेक्शन होता है और वहां पर हर प्रकार का डेकोरेशन होता है जिससे आग जल्दी फैल जाती है। इसलिए, इन चीजों को ध्यान में रखते हुए मैं चाहता हूँ कि जो कमीशन की रिकमन्डेशंस हैं उनको पूरी मजबूती से लागू किया जाए।

महोदय, यह भी देखने में आया है कि मयूर भंज और कटक में लोगों को भेजा गया है। लेकिन कितने ही बड़े हास्पिटलों में बर्न इंजुरी डाक्टर उपलब्ध नहीं होते। मेरा आपके माध्यम से प्रधानमंत्री जी से गुजारिश है कि डिफेंस हास्पिटल में बहुत सारे बर्न इंजुरी के डाक्टर हैं। जितने स्टील प्लान्ट्स हैं उनके हास्पिटल्स में भी बर्न इंजुरी के डाक्टर होते हैं। क्योंकि बर्न इंजुरी को ठीक करते वक्त बर्न कॉन्ट्रैक्टर रह जाए तो सारी उम्र वह ठीक नहीं होता, अगर उसको रिकन ग्राफिंग नहीं होती। यही टाइम होता है उसके ट्रीटमेंट के लिए। तो वहां पर ऐसे डाक्टरों को भेजने की जरूरत है जो इसमें मदद कर सकें और रिकन ग्राफिंग कर सकें और उनके घाव भर सकें।

महोदय, स्टेटमेंट में ऐसा लगता है कि राज्य सरकार ने अपनी आर्थिक अवस्था को मदद नजर रखते हुए मृतकों के निकटतम रिश्तेदारों को 25 हजार रुपये और घायल हुए लोगों को 10 हजार रुपये की आर्थिक मदद की घोषणा की है और केंद्रीय सरकार मृतकों के परिवारों तथा स्थायी रूप से विकलांग हो गए लोगों को 50 हजार रुपये और 25 हजार रुपये घायल हुए अन्य लोगों को मुहैया कराएगी। लेकिन जब कौमी दंगे हो जाएं, झगड़े, झपेट हो

तो मरने वाले के परिवार को एक लाख या दो लाख दिया जाता है। यह धार्मिक लोग हैं, धार्मिक समागम में गए थे और वहां मारे गए हैं। मेरा अनुरोध है कि केन्द्र सरकार कम से कम एक लाख रुपये जो मृतक हैं उनके परिवारों को देने पर विचार करे। धन्यवाद।

उपसभापति : श्री नगेन्द्र नाथ ओझा। इसमें कोई दो राय नहीं है कि यह घटना बहुत ही दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण है। अगर संक्षेप में आप अपने सजेसन देना चाहते हैं तो वह दे दीजिए क्योंकि बहुत लोगों को बोलना है। यह मेरे पास लिस्ट है। प्रेसीडेंट मोशन पर बोलना है। इसलिए संक्षेप में जो आपके सजेरेंस प्रधानमंत्री जी को देना चाहते हैं वह दे दीजिए।

श्री नरेन्द्र नाथ ओझा (बिहार) : उपसभापति महोदय, मुझे क्लेरीफिकेशंस के लिए इजाजत दी गई है और मैं वही चाहता हूँ। इतना बड़ा समारोह वहाँ हो रहा था, वहाँ दो दमकल थे जैसे कि अखबारों में भी बात आई है। इसके लिए प्रशासन की जवाबदेही बनती थी। प्रशासन के जो जवाबदेह लोग हैं उन पर क्या कार्यवाही की गई है, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ? इसमें यह कहा गया है कि महिलाओं के शिविर को बचा लिया गया लेकिन इस स्टेटमेंट से यह पता नहीं चलता है कि क्या उस शिविर में भी आग लगी थी। अखबारों में यह बात आई है कि सिर्फ 15 मिनट में सब कुछ स्वाह हो गया। घास और फूस की झोंपड़ियों में ठहरने की व्यवस्था की गई थी और दो या पांच दमकल ही वहाँ पर थे और यदि घास की झोंपड़ी में आग लग जाए तो 10-15 मिनट में सब स्वाह होना ही था। यह जो कहा गया है कि महिलाओं के शिविर को बचा लिया गया, मुझे तो सन्देह है कि महिलाओं के शिविर में आग लगी ही नहीं होगी और यह अपनी पीठ थप-थपा रहे हैं कि उसको बचा लिया गया तथा पुरुषों का शिविर जल कर राख हो गया। प्रधानमंत्री जी खुद वहाँ गये थे, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि इसमें सच्चाई क्या है? इतना ही मैं जानना चाहता हूँ।

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): Madam, my heart goes out to the people who lost their lives. Hon. Member, Shri Ahluwalia talked about a similar accident that took place in Haryana where school children were burnt alive. The Home Ministry had issued instructions about precautions to be taken where there was a large gathering of people. In Delhi also we find that various temporary sheds are erected whenever there is a function or a ceremony. Some regulations that need to be followed at such gatherings were also issued.

Unfortunately, these have not been strictly implemented. The Prime Minister was kind enough to visit the place and give solace to the people who are suffering. It is a national tragedy. The Government of India should issue strict guidelines to the State Government. Proper precautionary measures should be taken at such huge gatherings. I would also like to submit that the compensation announced by the Central Government is inadequate. These people come from rural areas and they have more number of dependents. Therefore, I request the Prime Minister to increase the compensation to be given to these people.

SHRI M.A. BABY (Kerala): Madam, I appreciate the gesture of the hon. Prime Minister in visiting the site of the tragedy at the earliest possible time.

Very disturbing questions arise in our minds in relation to this tragedy. Hon. Member, Shri Ojha referred to the fact that there were only two fire tenders. Newspapers have reported that both the fire tenders were unmanned at the time of the accident. This is what the *Times of India* has reported. I did not check it up with the other newspapers. This is the first point which needs to be clarified. Thousands of people had assembled there hoping that the Almighty would help in ameliorating their plight. They did not expect something diametrically opposite to happen. It is the responsibility of the administration to ensure that necessary safeguards and safety measures are taken.

Madam, the most disturbing information is that only two fire tenders were there and at the time of fire they were unmanned. The paper report also says that there was only one exit and it was due to that there was uncontrollable stampede which also added to the enormity of the calamity. I do not want to take much time. The devotees of Swami Nigamananda might have assembled there. One big problem is that in the top administration also there are devotees of this kind of swamis and rishis. Some would be genuine, some would be otherwise. I fear that due to the connection that these devotees have with the administration they get away without making sufficient arrangements. Whether it is a sports event or a religious event or a political event, the rules should be strictly followed and if it is a religious event and there

are devotees of such swamis in administration, they do whatever they want, they organise it in whichever fashion they want and an enquiry may also end up as a whatewash. Therefore, I want to know who were responsible in organising this entire thing, who were the convenors of this religious congregation which took place. Did they obtain the necessary permission from the administration? Who issued the permission? Did they examine the site? Hapless, innocent people have been killed. Now we can argue here, express our pangs and agony asking for more relief to be given and things like that. But this is not going to save the situation. Madam, finally, with your permission I want to say that there is an increase in the incidence of fire accidents, explosions and extremist activities. Therefore, we need to have an entire restructuring of the fire fighting administrative mechanism that exists in our country. Madam, I know that as per the Colombo Plan there is a National College of Fire Control situated in your home State, in Nagpur. This was considered to be an institute coming up very well. But at some point of time, due to strange reasons there required attention was not being paid to this particular institute where people used to come from many other countries for training. Now this institute is not being looked after well, brilliant people are not being attracted to the fire control services. I understand, Madam, and I have definite information that after coming into the office of the present Government, the Minister for Law and Justice has forwarded a particular file with a proposal to revamp this National College of Fire Control in Nagpur and also to restructure the entire administrative set-up at the national level as well as at the State level. But this has been sent to the Home Ministry. We want to know what has happened to it -- immediately, the Prime Minister may not be in a position to reply -- this would be a fitting tribute of Indian Parliament if we pay sufficient attention to this particular aspect. The entire fire fighting administration and *modus operandi* needs to be revamped. I hope this Government will and should pay sufficient attention towards this. Thank you very much.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI
(Uttar Pradesh): Madam Chairperson, there is

a grim tragedy and the country is in anguish and our hearts flow to the bereaved families and deceased persons. I wish a little bit more information than that is available from the newspapers, is now supplied. But, I must say it is gratifying to find that the Prime Minister did take the representatives of the other parties and the concerned States when he visited the site. My first query in this connection is about Swami Nigamananda's congregation. Swami Nigamananda is not here. There is only an ashram, as far as I understand. People have a lot of faith. There are a lot many books about the Swamy. Now this is not the first congregation. Congregations of this kind have been held occasionally and almost once every year. I would like to know what sort of arrangements were made by the district administration earlier. Was there any deviation from the kind of arrangements which used to be made earlier and which were considered to be adequate? This is my first question.

My second question relates to what Mr. Baby has rightly said. Of course, there are devotees of all kinds. There are devotees of gods and godless objects also. But the basic point remains: Did the district administration envisage or visualise that this kind of a tragedy could take place? This is pertinent because we have had many such accidents in the recent past. Recently there was a fire accident in the International Book Fair at Calcutta. I was scheduled to go to that place. I purchased my flight tickets to go that place early in the morning. The Dabwali fire accident was also mentioned here. Such things did happen in Delhi also. A lot of instructions have been issued to the State Governments from time to time. Is there any follow-up by the Ministry of Home Affairs in this regard? Did the district administration take any steps to see that this kind of a tragedy or any kind of tragedy did not take place? I would like to know whether there was only one single pandal or there were many pandals. I was told that there were only some simple hutments. I understand that eight minutes' time is sufficient for the fire to burn all the people. It is surprising that people could not escape. Who is responsible for this? Was it not the responsibility of the district administration, the State administration and the

State Government? No politics is involved in this. Is it not the responsibility of all those connected with this to ensure that sufficient number of exit points are provided, particularly when people congregate in such large numbers? This ordinary precaution ought to have been taken. How many exit points have been provided? Who is responsible for lack of sufficient number of exit points? The Prime Minister's statement does not make it clear as to how the fire really began at all. Probably he has left it to the Enquiry Committee to find this out. But what did the people say because newspapers were saying that the Prime Minister and all those who accompanied him could hardly meet the people. They were just surrounded by the people who wanted to narrate to them their woes. It is only natural and human. I don't know what factual information was conveyed to him. I am not sure about this. That is why I don't know whether there were separate hutments or whether there was only one pandal in which people in such large numbers congregated. I don't know what the actual position is. But the newspapers report even today that more and more corpses are coming out.

A point was made by Mr. Ahluwalia about treatment of those injured in the fire accident. A lot of things could be done and could have been done. I would like to know whether necessary facilities to treat the injured are available in the Baripada municipality. I am not sure whether hosepipes are available in sufficient number.

I join my colleagues who have said that the relief to be given to those injured and to kith and kin of those who lost their lives should be increased. The Government proposes to pay Rs. 50,000/- only. The statement uses the terms 'the Central Government' instead of 'the Union Government'. Normally, the term 'the Union Government' is used. It was pointed out that compensation to the tune of Rs. 2 lakhs and Rs.5 lakhs is given in the case of 'other accidents'. Then, why is it that these people are proposed to be given Rs. 50,000/- only? Can they be discriminated against just because they happened to be devotees who owe their allegiance to and have faith in a particular Swamy? I think the compensation should at

least be Rs. 5 lakhs. I, therefore, demand that a compensation of Rs.5 lakhs should be paid to the kith and kin of those killed in the accident, as is the case in other accidents. At least five lakhs of rupees must be given to each devotee. (Interruptions) No, I do not know. You can take an exception to this. But I think five lakhs of rupees must be given to the families of people who perished in the fire. This is a classic case of negligence, neglect and dereliction of duty on the part of the Government. It was known that such a big congregation was to assemble. It was not a sudden thing.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Why are you bringing in the State Government here? An inquiry is taking place. (Interruptions) You are using the word 'dereliction' of duty.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: I said 'no politics'. (Interruptions) I myself said 'no politics'. (Interruptions) All right, the administration.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Until and unless the report comes, you cannot say anything on this.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: I myself said earlier, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, that there is no question of politics.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: So you yourself said it correctly.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: The other thing that I want to say is that in such cases, an administrative inquiry by a Commissioner is not adequate. You must have a judicial inquiry in such a case. Here it is only a Commissioner who is one level above the DIG and the District Magistrate. He is going to hold the inquiry. It will only be a white-wash exercise. I do not think anything substantial will come out either for the present or even for the future as a precautionary measure. Thank you, Madam Deputy Chairperson.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I still have six names. I don't know how to make people speak very precisely.

SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI: You can pick and choose, Madam.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I don't want

to pick and choose. I only want to tell the people that the tragedy is already there, the remedy should also be there. That is all. What else could be done? We know what the tragedy is.

Yes, Shri Sibtey Razi.

SYED SIBTEY RAZI (Uttar Pradesh): Madam, it was very good of the Prime Minister that he visited the place of occurrence immediately without any loss of time. I don't want to go into the issue whether the amount declared by the Central Government as well as the State Government is adequate or not. But I would like to know from the hon. Prime Minister when this amount will be remitted to the State Government. If it has already been remitted, he may please inform us. Secondly, in such cases immediate relief is required to be given. So, had some ex-gratia payment been given to them or are you going to instruct the State Government to do this?

As it has already been expressed, it has become the order of the day that somewhere in the country something happens. We do not have any mechanism of disaster-management at the national level. May I request the hon. Prime Minister that the Home Minister should issue one more reminder to all the State Governments on the development of some sort of a disaster-management mechanism so that these eventualities could be met immediately and people's agony and suffering is reduced.

With these words, I share the grief and agony on behalf of my party. We hope that such occurrences are not repeated.

Attributing political motives to such human tragedies is also not fair. I think the State Government might be and is doing whatever is possible in its capacity either in giving ex-gratia payment or arranging immediate relief. We certainly want that better treatment should be given to the sufferers. But we should not make it a political issue, as my hon. friend has tried to do.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: I didn't make it. I didn't want to do that. I have myself withdrawn the word 'State Government'.

SHRI AJIT P.K. JOGI: That should have been avoided.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: If I said that, I withdrew it. I said 'administration'. Making it political was not my intention.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, may I ask Mr. Shastri to say whatever he has to say on this?

5-00 P.M.

श्री विष्णु कान्त शास्त्री (उत्तर प्रदेश): माननीय उपसभापति जी, जिस दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण घटना की ओर सभी माननीय सदस्यों ने अपनी संवेदना प्रकट की है, मैं भी अपनी संवेदना प्रकट करना चाहता हूँ।

महोदया, मैं समझता हूँ कि माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी ने बहुत ही सहृदयता का परिचय दिया है। जहाँ हमारी जनता पीड़ित हो, अगर वहाँ हमारे प्रधानमंत्री उपस्थित होते हैं तो यह उनकी सदाशयता है। इसके लिए मैं उनके प्रति अपना आभार प्रकट करता हूँ। मुझे इसमें जो बात कम समझ में आ रही है, वह यह है कि वहाँ उपस्थिति बहुत अधिक नहीं थी। जैसा बताया गया, वहाँ कुल जमा दस हजार लोग थे। अब दस हजार लोगों की भीड़, कम से कम हम कलकत्ता वासियों के लिए तो बहुत छोटी प्रतीत होती है।

श्री एसएस्ए अहलुवालिया: वह तो गांव है।

श्री विष्णु कान्त शास्त्री: मैं वहीं कह रहा हूँ। तो दस हजार लोगों की भीड़ थी और सवा तीन बजे का समय था, रात का समय नहीं था। मैं जानता हूँ कि किन परिस्थितियों में ऐसी आग लगी, जिससे कि दिन के सवा तीन बजे केवल दस हजार लोगों में से 149 तो वहीं मर गए और 28 जो घायल हुए थे वह भी मर गए? मैं इस बात को समझ नहीं पा रहा हूँ। दस हजार आदमी अगर आग लगने के बाद भागे होंगे, तो कहीं भागने की चेष्टा में, भगदड़ में तो लोग नहीं मरे या जलकर ही मरे? यह बात मेरी समझ में नहीं आती। मुझे बहुत बार ऐसी आशंका लगती है कि जलकर शायद कम मरे हों, भगदड़ में दबकर बहुत से लोग मरे हों। यह जो स्थिति है, इसके बारे में कुछ सावधानी बरतनी चाहिए थी। आखिर निकास के स्थान कितने थे, कैसे थे? यह बात भी साफ होनी चाहिए।

महोदया, जांच का बताया कि जांच हो रही है। जांच के संबंध में मैं माननीय चतुर्वेदी साहब से एकमत हूँ कि इसकी जुडिशियल न्यायिक जांच होनी चाहिए, एक उच्च न्यायालय के जज के द्वारा जांच होनी चाहिए क्योंकि जो प्रशासनिक लोग हैं वे अपनी गलती को जरूर ढाँकने की चेष्टा करेंगे। इसलिए मैं चाहूँगा कि प्रशासनिक लोगों के बाहर जाकर यह जांच हो। मैं इस बात से भी सहमत हूँ कि

सहायता की राशि जरूर बढ़ाई जानी चाहिए। किसी भी व्यक्ति की मृत्यु से जो क्षति उसके परिवार को होती है, उसकी सहायता राशि से पूर्ति नहीं की जा सकती। सहायता की राशि कम से कम इतनी अवश्य होनी चाहिए ताकि जिस परिवार का पुरुष अगर चला गया है, जो परिवार असहाय हो गया है, उसे प्रतीत होना चाहिए कि देश उनके साथ खड़ा है इस दुर्दिन में।

मुझे इतना ही कहना है। धन्यवाद।

श्री जलालुद्दीन अंसारी (बिहार): उपसभापति महोदय, सबसे पहले तो मैं प्रधानमंत्री जी को बधाई देना चाहता हूँ कि इस घटना के दूसरे ही दिन उन्होंने खुद घटना-स्थल पर जाकर घटना का निरीक्षण किया।

महोदय, इस संबंध में मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि हरियाणा के डबाली की घटना से सबक लिया जाना चाहिए था, लेकिन यह सबक वहां के प्रशासन ने नहीं लिया। यह घटना बहुत ही दुखद है। इस घटना को हम राष्ट्रीय आपदा के रूप में मानते हैं। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस संबंध में जो निर्देश गृह मंत्रालय ने दिए थे, क्या उन निर्देशों का पालन इस तरह के समारोह में किया गया या नहीं? इसकी जांच होनी चाहिए। प्रधानमंत्री जी के बयान में है कि इसकी जांच हो रही है। तो जांच में इन बिन्दुओं को भी देखा जाना चाहिए कि अगर कोई निर्देश सरकार द्वारा दिया जाता है तो देश के अंदर, चाहे जिस पार्टी की भी सरकार है पार्टीबाजी नहीं होनी चाहिए, वहां के प्रशासन ने उन निर्देशों का पालन किया या नहीं किया? मधुबन की इस घटना से पूर्व भी उसका पालन किया गया या नहीं किया गया?

महोदय, जैसा हमारे साथियों ने कहा, मान लीजिए इस कस्बे में दस हजार की भोड़ थी, तो वहां केवल दो ही फायर ब्रिगेड क्यों थे, दूसरी तरह की सुरक्षा के लिए सावधानी क्यों नहीं बरती गई कि वहां पर किसी भी तरह की दुर्घटना हो सकती है? इस मामले में अगर प्रशासन चुस्त होता, सक्रिय होता तो मैं समझता हूँ कि इस आपदा को टला जा सकता था। इसलिए इस पहलू पर भी हमको विचार करना चाहिए।

अन्त में, मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि प्रधानमंत्री जी ने 50,000/- रुपये जो मर गए या विकलांग हो गए उनके लिए केन्द्र से रिलीज किए हैं और जो घायल हैं उनके लिए 25,000/- रुपये मुहैया कराने की बात की है। जब कोई मर जाता है तो उसकी कोई कीमत रुपयों में नहीं आंकी जा सकती, लेकिन इसका उद्देश्य यही होता है कि उस परिवार को इस रूप में सहायता मिले ताकि जो बचे हुए लोग हैं, वे कुछ दिन अपना धरन-पोषण कर सकें, तो

मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि इस माननीय दृष्टिकोण से सहायता की राशि को बढ़ाया जाना चाहिए। हम माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी से यह अनुरोध करेंगे कि इस राशि को अवश्य बढ़ाया जाए ताकि इस तरह के जो परिवार हैं, जो मृतकों के परिवार हैं, उनको कुछ राहत मिल सके। साथ ही साथ हमारे मित्रों ने यह सवाल उठाया है कि जो घायल हैं, जले हुए हैं, सही मायनों में उनके इलाज की व्यवस्था हो रही है या नहीं, यह एक प्रमुख बात है, जो जले हुए हैं, अर्धजले हैं, उनको बचाने का प्रयास तभी सफल होगा जब उनका समुचित इलाज हो सके तो मैं प्रधानमंत्री जी से यह कहना चाहूंगा कि उनके समुचित इलाज की व्यवस्था होनी चाहिए। अगर उनके समुचित इलाज की व्यवस्था छोटे से कस्बे में हो रही है तो अभी हमारे देश के अस्पतालों की जो स्थिति है, उसमें यह संभव नहीं है। इसलिए मैं यह कहना चाहता हूँ कि उनके बेहतर इलाज के लिए समुचित उपाय यथाशीघ्र होने चाहिए।

इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं अपनी बात को समाप्त करता हूँ।

श्री नरेन्द्र मोहन (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभापति महोदय, मैं सबसे पहले प्रधानमंत्री जी को धन्यवाद देना चाहूंगा कि उन्होंने इस दुर्घटना के तत्काल बाद वहां जाना स्वीकार किया और एक बहुत ही उचित कार्य किया, अनुकरणीय कार्य किया, इसके लिए हम उनके अभारी हैं, राष्ट्र उनका अभारी है लेकिन मैं प्रधानमंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूँ कि भारत सरकार ने क्या कोई डॉक्टरों की टीम वहां भेजी? अगर अभी तक नहीं भेजी तो कब तक भेजी जाएगी? क्योंकि यही बताया गया है कि जलने के कारण जो घटनाएं होती हैं, उसमें अगर तत्काल इलाज की सही व्यवस्था नहीं होती है तो व्यक्ति आजीवन विकलांग हो जाता है। भारत सरकार को तत्काल वहां डॉक्टरों की एक विशेष टीम भेजनी चाहिए थी। समाचार पत्रों से ऐसा ज्ञात नहीं हुआ कि ऐसी कोई टीम वहां तत्काल भेजी गई। आपकी स्टेटमेंट से यह जानकारी मिली कि "मेडिकल कालेज के डॉक्टर वहां भेजे गए हैं। कटक के मेडिकल कालेज से चिकित्सा विशेषज्ञों का एक दल तथा पेरा-मेडिकल स्टाफ भी बारीपाड़ा पहुंच गया है"। केवल इतने मात्र से कुछ भी नहीं होगा, अतः प्रधानमंत्री जी से अनुरोध है कि यथाशीघ्र यहां से, भारत सरकार की ओर से एक डॉक्टरों की टीम वहां भेजी जानी चाहिए।

जहां तक मृतकों को आर्थिक सहायता देने की बात है, मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि दुर्भाग्य से हमारे देश में इस बारे में कोई स्पष्ट नीति नहीं है। हम भावुकता में आकर कभी किसी को दो लाख रुपये देने की बात करते हैं, कभी पांच

लाख देने की बात करते हैं तो कभी किसी को पचास हजार रुपये देने की बात करते हैं। क्या इस बारे में कोई एक राष्ट्रीय नीति या कानून बनाया जा सकता है कि इस प्रकार की दुर्घटना में जो व्यक्ति मारे जाएंगे या जिनके प्राण चले जाएंगे, हम उन्हें अमुक राशि देंगे। हमारे पास ऐसा एक कानून होना चाहिए। इसी प्रकार हमारे पास ऐसा भी एक कानून होना चाहिए जिससे कि हम इस प्रकार की जो ... (व्यवधान)...

श्री भुवनेश चतुर्वेदी: दुर्घटनाओं के लिए राष्ट्रीय नीति बनेगी तो कबाड़ा हो जाएगा।

श्री नरेन्द्र मोहन: इस प्रकार की दुर्घटनाओं में जो व्यक्ति मृतक हो जाते हैं, उनके परिवार के लाभार्थ आर्थिक सहायता की घोषणा के बारे में एक आर्थिक नीति होनी चाहिए। कोई न कोई नियम हमारा होना चाहिए, कोई न कोई कानून हमारा होना चाहिए, जिसके तहत हमारी घोषणाएँ हों, यह मेरा निवेदन है।

दूसरा निवेदन यह है कि सामान्यतः इस प्रकार के जो बड़े कार्यक्रम होते हैं, धर्म के बारे में, उनकी अनुमति जिलाधिकारी के द्वारा दी जाती है और जिलाधिकारी अनुमति देने के बाद इस बात की कोई परवाह नहीं करता, घटनास्थल पर भी नहीं जाता, न पता लगाने की चेष्टा करता है कि जो इतना बड़ा आयोजन होने जा रहा है, उसकी व्यवस्था सही हुई है या नहीं। कोई ऐसा कानून भी नहीं है हमारे देश में जिससे कि राज्य सरकारों को इस बात के लिए बाध्य किया जा सके। केन्द्र के पास अभी ऐसा कोई कानून नहीं है, न ही राज्य सरकार ने ऐसा कोई कानून बनाया है, किसी भी राज्य सरकार ने, कि जिसके द्वारा किसी भी जिलाधिकारी को बाध्य किया जा सके कि जहाँ पर आयोजन होते हैं, वहाँ जिलाधिकारी जाएँ और अमुक-अमुक व्यवस्था करेगा। जब देश में ऐसा कोई नियम और कानून है ही नहीं, तब बड़े आयोजनों में इस प्रकार की दुर्घटनाओं का हो जाना स्वाभाविक है।

एक और बात मैं प्रधानमंत्री जी से कहना चाहूँगा कि केवल बड़े आयोजन ही नहीं, हमारे धार्मिक स्थानों पर जो मेले होते हैं और धार्मिक-पर्वों पर जो मेले होते हैं, उनमें भी दुर्घटनाएँ होती हैं। उन दुर्घटनाओं को कैसे रोका जाए, इसके बारे में नियम और कानून बनाने की चर्चा इस सदन में कई बार हो चुकी है लेकिन अभी इस बारे में कोई स्पष्ट नियम और कानून नहीं बनाए गए हैं। हरिद्वार में कई बार दुर्घटनाएँ हुईं, इलाहाबाद में कई बार दुर्घटनाएँ हुईं लेकिन इन दुर्घटनाओं की रोकथाम के लिए कोई स्पष्ट नियम और कानून का न होना हमारे लिए एक बहुत बड़ी समस्या है। मैं प्रधानमंत्री जी से प्रार्थना चाहता हूँ कि क्या वह हम

बारे में विचार करेंगे?

SHRI SANATAN BISI (Orissa): Madam, thank you for giving me this opportunity. On behalf of the people of Orissa I express my deep sense of gratitude to our hon. Prime Minister for his noble gesture. At the same time, I request the hon. Prime Minister to enhance the grant to Rs. 1 lakh. Further, I would like to submit that since there were administrative lapses on the part of the Government of Orissa, they have appointed a Divisional Commissioner for the purpose of inquiry. There is a very popular maxim, "No man can be a judge of his own causes." When there are lapses on the part of the local administration, either of the ADM or of the Collector, if an inquiry is conducted by the RDC, no fruitful results would be there; so, there should be a judicial inquiry. Thank you.

उपसभापति : अब इसमें रह क्या गया है बोलने को?

Nobody wants to say any new point except repetition. I will put everybody's name on record that all of you have got the same feeling. Nobody has any difference of opinion.

श्री राधाकिशन मालवीय : अभी तक तो मैं बोल देता, मैडम।

उपसभापति : ठीक है, बोलिए।

I can assure you because it is the same problem... (Interruptions)...

श्री राधाकिशन मालवीय (मध्य प्रदेश) : उपसभापति महोदया, यह जो दुर्घटना हुई है, इसमें जो लोग मरे हैं, मैं उनके प्रति अपनी संवेदना व्यक्त करता हूँ। जब भी कोई शासकीय कार्यक्रम का आयोजन होता है तो सरकार उसके लिए समुचित व्यवस्था करती है। लेकिन जब इस प्रकार के धार्मिक कार्यक्रम होते हैं तो वहाँ कोई व्यवस्था नहीं होती है। उनके लिए भी समुचित व्यवस्था सरकार को करनी चाहिए। केन्द्रीय सरकार की तरफ से राज्य सरकारों को यह निर्देश देना चाहिए कि वहाँ पर फॉयर-ब्रिगेड की पूरी व्यवस्था हो और पानी के टैंकों की पूरी व्यवस्था हो। जब इस तरह से समारोहों में अधिक से अधिक लोग इकट्ठे हों तो वहाँ इस बात का ध्यान रखा जाना चाहिए कि कोई दुर्घटना न घटे। केन्द्रीय सरकार की ओर से राज्य सरकारों को इम प्रकार का निर्देश दिया जाना चाहिए। यह आरा आपसे अनुरोध है।

महोदया, मैं यह भी कहना चाहता हूँ कि यदि कोई ऐक्सीडेंट होता है या कोई और दुर्घटना होती है तो लाखों रुपए का मुआवजा दिया जाता है। यह जो धार्मिक समारोह में लोग इकट्ठे हुए थे, इनके लिए भी दिल खोलकर मुआवजा दिया जाए ताकि उनके आश्रितों का भरण-पोषण हो सके।

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA): Hon. Deputy Chairperson, I would like to thank the hon. Members for their concern. I would like to associate myself with them in their concern for the people who lost their lives in the tragic incident. Some of the issues raised by the hon. Members are whether the Central Government or the Union Government has issued any instructions or guidelines in this connection, whether the Government of India's instructions have been followed by the State Government and whether those instructions have been strictly monitored. I would like to make it clear: Though instructions are given by the Central Government or the Union Government, the implementing authority is the State Government so far as these issues are concerned. We can only advise them. We can give only guidelines but the implementing authority is the State Government. So, we will try to persuade the State Governments, in future, whenever such religious functions or any functions are going to take place in their respective States, precautions must be taken. We will try to reiterate and persuade the State Governments to take necessary action. That is all I could say.

How did this incident happen? Were adequate arrangements made or not? These are some of the issues which the hon. Members have raised.

Madam, I went there with seven-eight Members of the Lok Sabha. The MP from that area, Shrimati Sushila Tiria, was there. Then, there were Sharad Pawarji, Shri Munde from the BJP, Shri Biju Patnaik, Shri Srikanta Jena, Shri Panigrahi. Seven-eight Members were there, apart from the Chief Minister.

We went there. We saw the spot. There is a highway, a State Highway: not a National Highway. On the other side, the main pandal for this function was erected. Nothing has

happened there. On the left side of the road, arrangements were made for the stay of the devotees. There were two blocks; one block was for the men devotees and the other was for the women devotees. In between the blocks, dining facilities were provided. There were two fire-fighting engines. Water and power facilities were provided. Everything was provided by the State Government. I do not want to say that they had not done anything.

What happened was this. I do not know why such an elaborate arrangement was made. All sides were totally covered by wire-net.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Barbed wire.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Only one exist was provided; both for the men's block and the women's block. These were just huts, made of straw, etc. Naturally, when the fire broke out, it spread quickly. This is not an exaggeration. This is what the eye-witnesses said. Thousands of people were there. I enquired about it. Of course, each person has his own version. That is a different matter. Some persons said: 'eight minutes'. Some others said: 'ten minutes'. The whole men's block was reduced to ashes.

As for the cause of this fire, they say that it was due to the bursting of cooking gas cylinders. This is one reason given by the local people and the neighbours. The other reason given is, short-circuit.

These are the two versions. Anyway, this has to be confirmed by the enquiry. I do not know what conclusions the enquiry authority would come to. But these are the two kinds of versions given by the local people and the State Administration. The whole area was covered with iron-mesh. They were unable to go out. There was only one exist for them to come out. It was a small exit, eight-ten feet wide.

As I said a little earlier, these were just huts, made of straw and such other things. When the fire broke out, the whole thing caught fire. The people were unable to go out. One hundred and forty-nine people were charred to death. The bodies were burnt to ashes.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Charcoal.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: It was impossible to identify the bodies. They were

just charcoal. One could not see the face or anything. Only a small portion of the body remained. It was a very pathetic scene.

In all, 179 persons died; on the spot, 149, and after that, people with serious burns lost their lives in hospitals.

Now, about medical treatment, whether adequate facilities have been provided or not is a question that has been raised by the hon. Members. It is a District Hospital. I do agree that at the initial stage when nobody could expect that 200 persons were going to be admitted due to this type of major tragedy, the bed pans and all these things might not have been adequate when they were shifted to the Hospital. I think, within five, six hours, the State Government did its best to provide the bed pans and other things. Doctors and nurses were moved in from various District Hospitals. I went there the next day. The accident took place at 3-15 p.m. on the 23rd. I wanted to go on the 24th morning. As some arrangements had to be made, I could not go in the morning. I went at about 2.30 p.m. By that time, sufficient number of doctors were there. 28 or 29 persons who were serious, were shifted to the Cuttack Medical College Hospital, and some others were shifted to other neighbouring hospitals. Balasore and some other District Hospitals. The Health Minister of the State was monitoring all these things. I think, at the initial stage, there might have been some inadequacy because, all of a sudden, 170 or 180 cases were taken to the Hospital. They might have been able to provide something to them within two, three hours. Now all adequate arrangements have been made. There is no question of any lapses so far as treatment is concerned.

Some hon. Members have made suggestions about skin grafting. All these things come at a later stage because it has to heal.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: No.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Just one second.

When the wound is not dry, they are not going to do it. I asked them. They said, "We are not going to do skin-grafting here. We will send them to major hospitals, referral hospitals. All necessary action will be taken by the State

Government so far as providing free medical aid, including skin-grafting and everything else is concerned." This promise was made by the Chief Minister. I requested the Chief Minister, "You must give me information about the permanently physically handicapped. They cannot work. If they are not in a position to work, we should give Rs. 15,000/- even to them. This was the decision taken in consultation with all those people who were there with me. I discussed this matter separately with the Chief Minister. I accepted the suggestion.

So far as the adequacy or inadequacy of the compensation is concerned, I do agree with the suggestion of Narendra Mohanji. In some cases, the compensation is Rs. 2 lakhs, and in some other cases it is Rs. 5 lakhs. There should be some guidelines. The Government of India should evolve some guidelines on giving compensation in such cases. I agree with his valuable suggestion. That is necessary because it cannot be *at random*. We cannot go on like this.

I do associate myself with the feelings of the hon. Members. If it is necessary, I will consult the Chief Minister and my colleagues, and I will take a decision on the question of increasing it further. This matter will be considered by the Government.

So far as the question of the Union Government enforcing the guidelines is concerned, it may be difficult to do so.

I want to mention one more thing to the hon. Members. It is rather difficult in respect of religious functions. We must take the religious leaders into confidence in such matters. We cannot bind them on various issues. It is very difficult in this country. There are a lot of sentimental feelings.

This has been done by the devotees. The State Government has provided water, electricity and two fire-fighting engines and equipments. We must also call some of the religious leaders before we evolve certain guidelines and see that they are strictly enforced. Yesterday also some people asked me the same thing on this. Unless we talk to the religious leaders on such matters, we cannot evolve the guidelines. In this very House you

debated the tragedy that befell the Amarnath Yatra. I don't want to go back to the past, but on several occasions the religious leaders become angry and ask who we are to give them guidelines. I don't want to blame anybody, but this is the approach they adopt. Anyway, the suggestions given by the hon. Members will be borne in mind and the Government will evolve the guidelines. I don't say they will be fool-proof, but we will try to minimise such incidents in the future. With these words I thank the hon. Members for their suggestions.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think, Mr. Mukherjee, you can continue your speech

tomorrow.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: As you desire, Madam.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, because it is about 5.30 now. So, I adjourn the House till 11 o'clock tomorrow.

The House then adjourned at twentyseven minutes past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Wednesday, the 26th February, 1997.