

Demand to declare Lightning as a natural disaster

SHRI MANAS RANJAN MANGARAJ (Odisha): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, according to the Indian Meteorological Department, lightning strikes claim lives of around 2,500 people annually in India causing burns, muscle spasm, multi system dysfunction, cardiac arrest and instant death. The majority of victims, 96 per cent, are from rural areas, including farmers, cattle grazers, fishermen, jungle hunters and labourers working outdoors. Studies indicate that lightning strikes will increase by about 12 per cent for every degree rise in global average air temperature. Sir, as per the last Annual Lightning Report, Odisha records the highest number of lightning strikes. Odisha is specifically vulnerable to frequent strikes due to a complex combination of climatic factors such as cyclonic activities, pre-monsoon and monsoon periods and prevalence of high convective energy in the atmosphere. Despite this, the State has successfully reduced lightning related casualties from 207 in 2019-20 to 156 in 2020-21. Odisha declared lightning a State-specific disaster on 1st April, 2015, providing rupees four lakh *ex gratia* to the families of the deceased. Recently, Odisha proposed to the Centre to declare lightning as a natural disaster actively implementing mitigation measures. Following lightning-related deaths, the State Government directed the Forest and Agriculture Departments to undertake large-scale palm tree plantations as a preventive measure. Sir, countries like Thailand and Bangladesh have successfully employed palm trees plantations in order to mitigate lightning-related deaths. Through you, Sir, we urge the Central Government to declare lightning as a natural disaster. This declaration would enhance *ex gratia* support to the affected families offering much needed relief to thousands of Indians annually. This urgent step must be taken to address the high mortality rate associated with lightning strikes. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The following hon. Members associated themselves with the Zero Hour matter raised by the hon. Member, Shri Manas Ranjan Mangaraj: Shrimati Sulata Deo (Odisha), Shri Sujeet Kumar (Odisha), Shri Niranjan Bishi (Odisha), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri A.A. Rahim (Kerala), Dr. Santanu Sen (West Bengal), Shri Brijlal (Uttar Pradesh), Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra), Shrimati Mahua Maji (Jharkhand), Shrimati Priyanka Chaturvedi (Maharashtra), Shri Jawhar Sircar (West Bengal), Dr. V. Sivadasan (Kerala), Dr. Amar Patnaik (Odisha) and Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha).