

administrator. Every position which he held, he held with distinction. We have lost such a good and great friend. It is a void which cannot be easily filled, particularly in Andhra Pradesh. Dr. Chenna Reddy would be remembered for a long time to come and to get a substitute for him is difficult.

I join the House in expressing my sorrow and also praying for his soul to rest in peace.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : Sir, it is always a matter of sorrow to lose a leader like Dr. Reddy who was a Member of this House and was one of our colleagues. He occupied very high positions in life and distinguished himself as one of our able administrators and politicians.

Sir, I associate myself with what has been said in this House and I convey my sincere condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR (Mumbai North-West) : Sir, it is a shocking news that Dr. Chenna Reddy passed away. As a parliamentarian, an administrator and a freedom fighter, his contributions cannot be forgotten. Recently, Andhra Pradesh has faced a cyclone and suffered tremendous loss of life. In addition to that, today's news of the sad demise of Dr. Chenna Reddy is equally shocking. I pay, on behalf of my Party, homaige to Dr. Reddy, may his soul rest in place.

MR. SPEAKER : We deeply mourn the passing away of Dr. M. Chenna Reddy and convey our condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

The House may now stand in silence for a short while as a mark of respect to the deceased.

11.12 hrs.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow on 3rd December, 1996 at 11.00 a.m.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Thalassemia

*141. DR. VALLABH BHAI KATHIRIA : Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state :

(a) the total number of cases of thalassemia all over the country;

(b) whether the Government are aware of the recent increase in the price of injection 'Desferal' which is very important for the treatment of thalassemia patients;

(c) the steps taken by the Government for easy availability of this drug at cheaper rates;

(d) whether the Government have any proposal to include thalassemia in National control programmes; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI) : (a) There is no central registry for Thalassaemia patients. A limited study was conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research between 1986-1989 on a group of selected children in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta indicating the prevalence of Thalassaemia trait at an average of about 6% in the study population. This was extrapolated statistically to estimate that about 6000 to 8000 children are born every year with Thalassaemia major in India which represents 0.02% of the total births.

(b) A slight rise in the CIF price of Desferal had occurred during 1994-95. The price has since come down and is lower than the 1994 price.

(c) In order to facilitate easy availability, imports of Desferal are allowed without any restriction under the import policy as an item under OGL. Imports also enjoy concessional duty at zero percent for both bulk drugs as well as formulations. The formulations are also exempt from payment of excise duty. Besides, an oral iron chelator is available for use under strict medical supervision. This drug is indigenously manufactured, is less expensive and is reportedly having better levels of patient compliance.

(d) and (e). Government is in the process of seeking proposals from the States to establish State Illness Assistance Funds supported by partial funding from the Central Government. Such funds if set up, can be used to assist poor patients requiring expensive treatment like Thalassaemia.

The real answer to the problem is to prevent birth of afflicted children, for which facilities for counselling and pre-natal diagnosis are available at a few centres in the country. The ICMR, has initiated a multi-centric study for assessing the feasibility of introducing antenatal diagnosis in the National Family Welfare Programme.

[Translation]

Attack on High Commission Official in Pakistan

*142. DR. RAMESH CHAND TOMAR :
SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether an officer of Indian High Commission in Pakistan was kidnapped by Pak authorities during October, 1996 and later released, and his wife was beaten brutally;

(b) if so, the exact details thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) whether the Government have raised the matter with Pakistan and asked the reasons for the same;