12.06 hrs.

Title: Regarding influx of religious minorities from Bangladesh to India.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of influx of religious minorities from Bangladesh to India and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, elections to the Parliament in Bangladesh were held in October 2001. The Bangladesh National Party (BNP Alliance) led by Begum Khalida Zia was voted to office in these elections.

After the formation of the new Government in Bangladesh there have been reports (as available with the Ministry of External Affairs through the Indian High Commission in Dhaka, with the Cabinet Secretariat as well as reports in the media in Bangladesh) about incidents of harassment of members of the minority community in Bangladesh, particularly by the supporters/cadres of the BNP or the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI). Such incidents were in particular noticed during the Durga *Puja* festival when cases of physical assault on members of the minority community, damage to temples and *puja pandals*, disruption of festivities, vandalising of idols etc. were reported. These incidents, particularly those involving physical assault and molestation, bred a sense of insecurity amongst the minority community in that country. Subsequent reports of migration of members of the minority community from Bangladesh to India have been received through various sources.

While so far no large scale migration from Bangladesh on this account has been noticed, the State Governments of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam have reported that after the formation of the new Government in Bangladesh, about 1000 persons of the minority community have crossed over into India because of such persecution.

The Government of India would like to express its serious concern about these reports of violence against persons of the minority community in the last few months. The Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister of India who visited Dhaka on 26th/27th of October, 2001 raised this issue with the Bangladesh Government and also with the Bangladesh Prime Minister. The Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh has also raised this matter with his counterpart in Dhaka Government.

During such interaction, Government of Bangladesh has affirmed its commitment to the security and safety of all minorities and has categorically stated that firm action would be taken to protect them and to punish the perpetrators of violence against them. It attributed such incidents to the handiwork of criminal elements. The Bangladesh Prime Minister had instructed her Cabinet colleagues to participate in the Durga *Puja* festival, visit *puja pandals*, etc. to show the Government's support to the minority community. The Bangladesh Government has also set up a special committee headed by the Principal Secretary to their Prime Minister to inquire into these attacks.

The Government of India is constantly monitoring the situation. All efforts would be made through official diplomatic channels to ensure that Bangladesh carries out its assurances. As far as the persons of minority community who have crossed over to India are concerned, the Government of India, keeping in view the circumstances in which they have migrated, would deal with them with all the compassion and understanding they deserve.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, it is a very important issue that has been agitating the minds of the Members of the House, cutting across party lines, for the last few days. This matter has been widely reported in the media and concerns have also been expressed by the Chief Ministers of the States that are bordering Bangladesh.

Sir, we have a unique relation and bondage between these two nations – India and Bangladesh. Both these nations consider the two great poets, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam, as the idols of secularism. Fortunately enough, in the history of the world, our two nations sing the same National Anthem composed by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. In such a background, the over-whelming population of Bangladesh, who are wedded to secularism – through their liberation struggle, come what may – are looking forward to us, as we are looking forward to them, to have a stable neighbourhood relation.

Sir, it is unfortunate that such incidents have taken place on two occasions. Once in 1992 and again now. We have observed that whenever there has been a change of guard in Bangladesh, there has been a recurrence of such incidents. It is not a new thing. In the statement of the hon. Minister, the hon. Minister has stated that according to

the reports available in the Cabinet Secretariat, in the High Commission in Dhaka and other reports, the incidents of harassment of members of the minority community in Bangladesh has been done particularly by the supporters and cadres of the BNP and *Jamaat-e-Islami*. Whereas, during the interaction with the Bangladesh Government, it has been reported that it attributed that such incidents are the handiwork of criminal elements. I am not going to argue on this point now. But the Government of India should have reported to the Parliament today elaborately on the following point. If it was the act of the criminals, then did the Bangladesh Government take cognisance of that to prevent such incidents, to arrest them, to apprehend them and to try them? Why I am saying so is because the hon. Home Minister must be aware that a great Muslim intellect, Shahyar Kabir, who had defended the Hindu minorities in Bangladesh and also took part in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh, had raised this issue of harassment of the Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. The very next day he was imprisoned. In protest of that no less a person than the former Vice-Chancellor of the Vishwa Bharati, Dr. Amlan Dutta held a Press Conference and expressed concern saying that if a Human Rights activist like Shahyar Kabir – who had been supporting the cause of the minorities -- could be detained in the custody, then how could the relations between these two nations be strengthened?

Sir, I would like to put forward a few questions to the hon. Home Minister. It is not an issue of any party. The people of India demonstrated their will in 1971 when the Yahya Khan regime of Pakistan had been persecuting the fighters of the Bangladesh liberation movement. Be it Hindu or Muslim, not one, but ten million people became victims in the hands of Yahya Khan. When the late Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister, many people crossed over to India and people of all shades of opinion in India, cutting across party lines, stood by those people who came as victims of the Yahya Khan regime. A few of them went back to Bangladesh and a few of them settled in India. Our country was liberal enough to accommodate every one of them. Though, unfortunately, a few people here and there are still being persecuted in the name of being Bangladeshis, I would not like to bring that issue here today. My questions are straight and specific.

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask only one specific question.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, please do not confine this issue on technical grounds. You would appreciate that this issue has wider ramifications. The other day, during the `Zero Hour', our distinguished Chief Whip of the BJP and a Member of the Ruling Party, Prof. Rasa Singh Rawat narrated certain incidents. For various reasons I would not like to refer to those things now. The statement of the hon. Minister carried that only one thousand people crossed over and harassment has been reported. But he did not give the details about the kind of harassment. It appears that what has been reported by us in the House is not correct and that the version of the Government is correct. I take it that way. My question is very simple.

My question is very simple. Is the Minister aware that, after Shri Mishra's visit to Dhaka on 26-27 October, in Rajshahi bordering District Malda, Thakurgah bordering District Uttar Dinajpur, and Chittagong, seven temples have been ransacked in the day time and police could not register a single complaint? In spite of that, the Government is giving assurances! Will the Minister, therefore, -instead of leaving it in the hands of the Principal Advisor to Prime Minister Shri Mishra - assure the Parliament that none less than the Prime Minister of India will take up this issue with the head of Government of Bangladesh to see that no further incidents of this nature take place, that congenial atmosphere is built between the two nations; and that the tension caused at the border because of this is reduced?

Secondly, will the Home Minister brief the BSF jawans to act in restraint? In District Uttar Dinajpur, in a village called Gohore which borders my constituency, while a family consisting of a child, a mother, a father and a brother, was running away from the border at 9:30 in the night, without alerting them and without arresting them the BSF jawans shot them. One of them died on the spot and another one, whose condition was serious, died later. It created tension in the area. I am thankful to the State Government agencies. The Divisional Magistrate of the District, who is a Muslim, volunteered all his efforts to create a congenial atmosphere and bring calm there. I must say that it is the Muslim people of that village in India who looked after the people who crossed the border. Even now they are not reported to the hospital. This is a unique thing that can only happen in India. This is the strength of India's secularism. However, if things continue in this manner and if BSF jawans go on dealing with them in this rough manner, it will not be proper and appropriate. They need to be given a comprehensive briefing by the Government.

Therefore, will the Home Minister brief the BSF jawans properly in this regard and convey to the Prime Minister to take this issue up with Her Excellency Khaleda Zia in Bangladesh Government? He should ensure that till the people who have already come here do not feel protected, they are not compelled to go back. The Minister, in consultation with the State Government, see as to how they can be settled here in India.

I hope the Home Minister gives the highest importance to this issue not only in order to protect the minorities of Bangladesh but also to ensure that the secular fabric of our country is protected and no provocation is encouraged in this regard. Will the Home Minister also consider sending a goodwill delegation to Dhaka to, if not to pressurise,

to persuade the Government of Bangladesh to ensure that such things should not be tolerated. On the one hand you say Jamat-e-Islami ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, you are not allowing other Members to speak. What is this? You are a senior Member. You should follow the rules.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, therefore, I request the Home Minister to give the highest importance to this matter and answer my questions.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, the statement made by the hon. Home Minister clearly vindicates that he is under-playing the gravity of the situation. Everybody knows that the recently held elections in Bangladesh have brought about a sweeping change in the political spectrum of that country. Three salient features have emerged in the wake of elections. Firstly, the fundamentalist forces are gathering impetus and fresh stimulus in carrying out their persecution against Awami-leaque activists and religious minorities. Secondly, army, including BDR, has started assuming an assertive role. Thirdly, the North-Eastern insurgents are being encouraged to set up camps along the international border.

Jamat-e-Islami and Islamic Aikyo Jot, the two most notorious fanatic groups which happen to be the constituents of the BNP-led Government, have already communalised the political arena of that country as a result of which minority communities are bearing the brunt.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chowdhary, you have to seek clarifications.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: Wanton killings, violent attacks, depredation of all sorts, let alone rape, are being perpetrated.

Therefore, may I ask the Government of India whether those religious minorities who are entering into this country out of fear and desperation will be treated as infiltrators or refugees.

Sir, the number of refugees which has been stated here is at variance with the figures produced by the BSF officer Shri Katati. So, what is the exact number of refugees? A few days ago, in reply to a Question, the hon. Minister had stated that only 652 refugees had so far entered into. The State Government of West Bengal and the Central Government both are playing reticent as to what the exact number of refugees have already entered into.

Sir, it is regrettable to say that those hapless religious minorities who are forced to run away from their country are shuttling between devil and deep sea.

MR. SPEAKER: Please conclude now.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: Sir, they are shuttling between devil and deep sea.

On the one hand, they are being tormented by the fundamentalist elements and on the other hand along the Indo-Bangladesh border, BSF personnel have become a nightmare...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chowdhary, this is not a debate. Please ask the question.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: Sir, those refugees who have sneaked into India incognito are staying with their relatives and friends. May I ask the Government of India as to whether the Government of West Bengal has asked for any Central help as to how to provide the shelter and further rehabilitation to those refugees?

Further, whether the Government of India has so far asked for the refugees to disclose their identities...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This will not go on record. (Interruptions) *

MR. SPEAKER: What is this? You have to ask clarification only.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: Sir, please let me cut short.

I would like to know whether any diplomatic offensive is being considered by the Government of India?

These are my clarifications I sought for. I would request the Government of India to clarify them in detail.

MR. SPEAKER: Since the matter is importantâ€

श्री मोहन रावले (मुम्बई दक्षिण मध्य) : अध्यक्ष जी, मैं मंत्री जी से यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि वे यह बताएं कि बंगला देश में हिन्दू महिलाओं पर अत्याचार किया गया है, बलात्कार किया गया है जिसके बारे में वहां के कोर्ट ने भी वर्डिक्ट दी है… (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: This will not go on record. (Interruptions) *

MR. SPEAKER: Since the matter is important, though the rule does not permit, as a special case, I allow a few Members to ask clarification only on this.

Now. Dr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra.

डॉ.विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दक्षिण दिल्ली) : अध्यक्ष जी...(Interruptions)

श्री नागमणि (चतरा) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, जीरो आवर कब शुरू करेंगे ? हमारे बिहार का एक बहुत महत्वपूर्ण इश्यू है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : कालिंग अटेंशन के बाद जीरो आवर शुरू करेंगे।

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (LATUR): Sir, I have to make a very humble submission. This is a very specific device provided in the rules, and we would certainly like to hear Dr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra because he makes very good points. But if we use this device in a manner which is not allowed by the rules, then there would be other Members asking from this side and that side for that.

* Not Recorded

So, I would request that in future if anybody is wanting to ask an explanation, he has to sign the slip.

Now, Shri Somnath Chaterjee would also want to ask clarification.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shivraj V. Patil, I am allowing a few Members, that too, as a special case only. I had received the signature slips also....(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: A few Members have given the signature slips. That is why I told that only a few Members can ask clarification as a special case.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: Sir, may I make a humble submission? I would not like to contradict you, and you can allow anybody to speak.

MR. SPEAKER: I am allowing a few Members only that too as a special case....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Since the matter is important, as a special case, I am allowing a few Members to just ask for small clarifications.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: But only a person who has signed the slip can ask the clarification...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I have received two-three slips. That is why I am allowing them.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL: That is why I submit that only those should be allowed who have signed the slip. Otherwise, it gets diluted. Then Members do not get the opportunity...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: It is only as a special case that I am allowing a few Members. They had given the slips also. I am calling them only to ask for small clarifications.

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (HOOGLY): Sir, Calling Attention is a particular device...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I have already called Dr. Malhotra. Later on, you may also ask for clarification.

डॉ. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अध्यक्ष जी, बंगलादेश की सरकार ने जो कुछ कहा, गृह मंत्री जी ने उसका उल्लेख किया । मैं गृह मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या उनके पास अपनी इंटैलीजेंस एजेंसी से यह सूचना है कि वहां कितनी मिहलाओं के साथ बलात्कार हुआ है? वहां आठ वा से लेकर अस्सी वा तक की मिहलाओं के साथ बलात्कार किए गए, क्या उनके पास इस बात की सूचना है? उन्होंने कहा कि एक हजार व्यक्ति आए लेकिन लोग बता रहे हैं कि एक लाख से उपर शरणार्थी भारत में आए हैं। क्या उनके पास इसकी सूचना है? क्या शरणार्थीयों के आने के सही आंकड़े लोग इसिलए नहीं बता रहे हैं कि कहीं उनको वापिस न भेज दिया जाए? क्या वहां ट्रांज़िट कैम्प या रिफ्यूजी कैम्प खोलने के लिए भारत सरकार वैस्ट बंगाल सरकार को पूरी मदद देगी? वहां जो ऐनिमी एक्ट है, जिसके अन्तर्गत सब लोगों की प्रापर्टी जब्त कर ली गई है। क्या गृह मंत्री चाहेंगे कि बंगलादेश सरकार से कहा जाए कि एनिमी एक्ट को रिपील करे। क्या बार्डर सिक्युरिटी फोर्स को डायरैक्शन देंगे कि वहां आने वाले लोगों में इनिफलट्रेटर्स और शरणार्थी दोनों में भेद किया जाए और वहां शरणार्थियों को पूरी प्रोटैक्शन दी जाए? बंगलादेश में जो भयंकर अत्याचार हुए हैं, क्या सरकार इस मसले को इंटरनैशनल फोरम और ऐसी सभी जगह और बंगलादेश सरकार से उठाने का विचार कर रही है जिससे कि वहां ज्यादा सख्त कार्यवाही की जाए?

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri Somnath Chatterjee.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Sir, I have lost my voice. I am suffering from throat infection.

MR. SPEAKER: So, Shri Basu Deb Acharia, now.

It should be only clarification.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, we had a good relation with Bangladesh. A few days ago also we had raised this issue on the floor of the House. Some incidents have taken place after the Bangladesh National Party has come to power in Bangladesh. We had demanded that the Government of India should take the initiative to hold dialogue with the Government of Bangladesh so that the relation between the two countries do not get disturbed.

I would like to know from the Government of India as to what steps they have taken so that the good neighbourly relations between the two countries should not be disturbed. Has any initiative been taken by the Government of India to take up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh at the highest level?

Sir, I would also like to know whether the Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkatta has assured to take back those who have come.

These are the two points on which I would like to have the clarifications.

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY (CALCUTTA NORTH WEST): Sir, after the change of Government in Bangladesh, the minorities there are being compelled to leave Bangladesh. I would like to know whether they are being treated as refugees or as evacuees.

श्री मोहन रावले : वहां जिस तरह महिलाओं के साथ बलात्कार हुआ है, कोर्ट ने वर्डिक्ट भी दी है।â€! (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बैठ जाइए।

श्री मोहन रावले : हिन्दु महिलाओं के साथ बलात्कार हुए हैं, कहने के लिए उन्हें माइनौरिटीज़ कह रहे हैं।…(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record except the speech of the hon. Home Minister. (Interruptions)

श्री लाल कृण आडवाणी: अध्यक्ष जी, विगत महीनों में बंगलादेश में वहां के अल्पसंख्यक, अर्थात हिन्दुओं पर जिस प्रकार के अत्याचार हुए हैं, उनके जो भी समाचार मिले हैं, वे निश्चित रूप से मन में वेदना पैदा करते हैं और इसीलिए सरकार अपने को, जिन-जिन माननीय सदस्यों ने इस ध्यानार्काण प्रस्ताव पर अपने विवार रखे हैं. उनकी वेदना के साथ और देश की व्यथा के साथ अपने को सम्बद्ध करती है।

इसीलिए मैंने कहा कि it expresses serious concern over these reports. प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी जी ने जो स्पेसिफिक सवाल पूछे हैं, उसमें दो सुझाव हैं कि एक गुडविल डेलीगेशन ढाका भेजा जाये और दूसरा कि प्रधानमंत्री के प्रमुख सचिव ने जाकर बंगलादेश के प्रधानमंत्री से बात की, वे स्वयं भी अगर प्रधानमंत्री से बात करेंगे तो वह हाईएस्ट लेविल पर लिया जायेगा। इन सुझावों के बारे में सरकार विचार करेगी।

बी.एस.एफ. के जवानों के बारे में मैं विश्वास दिलाना चाहूंगा कि उनको समझना चाहिए कि आज की स्थिति, आज से छः महीने पहले की स्थिति और साल भर पहले की स्थिति अलग है। एक समय था, जब बी.एस.एफ. के जो जवान सीमा पर तैनात थे, उनका प्रमुख दायित्व था कि इल्लीगल माइग्रेशन को रोका जाये, जो इल्लीगल माइग्रेशन लगातार होता है, उसको न होने दिया जाये। लेकिन इन दिनों में, खासकर इन अत्याचारों के कारण जो लोग वहां से आ रहे हैं, उनके प्रति एक दूसरा खैया होना चाहिए। इसमें कभी-कभी जो दो। हुए हैं, उसके कारण ज्यादितयां भी हुई हैं, उसका कोई डिफेंस नहीं हो सकता। वहां पर कुछ स्थानों पर कार्रवाई भी की गई है। जहां पर गोली चली है, वह तो गलती से चली, रात के समय चली, जब वे पहचान नहीं पाये थे, लेकिन कुल मिलाकर जैसा मैंने कहा कि इस समय जो लोग वहां से आ रहे हैं, मैं उसकी टैक्नेकिलटी में नहीं जाता हूं कि माइग्रेंट्स हैं या रिफ्यूजीज हैं, लेकिन जैसा अपने वक्तव्य के अन्त में मैंने कहा है कि:

"The Government of India, keeping in view the circumstances in which they have migrated, will deal with them with all the compassion and understanding they deserve."

और यह सरकार के सभी अधिकारियों को एप्लाई करता है, बी.एस.एफ. को भी एप्लाई करता है।

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: I beg to differ with you. Still, the BSF is resorting to fire. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No. What is this?...(Interruptions)

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHARY: Even day before yesterday, in one of the districts, one person has been killed by the BSF....(Interruptions)

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: This is not a matter on which we have any differences. This is one matter on which the whole House is one. इतना आपको पहचानना चाहिए कि जब हम सरकार में बैठे हैं तो स्वामाविक रूप से यह चाहेंगे कि आखिर बंगलादेश वैसा देश नहीं है, वहां सरकारें बदली होने के बाद भी उनका रवैया वैसा नहीं है, जैसा रवैया हमारे पश्चिम के पड़ौसी का है। इसलिए हमें यह कोशिश करनी होगी कि इस प्रकार का अत्याचार खत्म हो,. बन्द हो। लेकिन साथ-साथ भारत और बंगलादेश के बीच में जो मैत्री सम्बन्ध हैं, वे भी बने रहें और यह जो दृटिकोण है, इस दृटिकोण के कारण में शायद सब बातें नहीं कह सकता हूं, जो आप कह सकते हैं, जो पत्रकार कह सकते हैं, जो देश की पोलिटिकल पार्टीज कह सकती हैं। मुझे कभी-कभी इस बात पर ताज्जुब होता है कि अगर कोई दूसरी बात होती तो शायद देश भर में बहुत सारे लोग बहुत कुछ लिखते, लेकिन मुझे बंगलादेश के पत्रकारों और पत्रिकाओं को देखकर लगता है कि शायद हमारे यहां वह बात भी नहीं कही जाती, जो वहां कही जाती है। ये जो बातें हैं, मैं इसीलिए कह रहा हूं कि हमको इस मामले में साम्प्रदायिक दृटि से बिल्कुल नहीं देखना चाहिए। यह सवाल हिन्दू और मुसलमान का सवाल नहीं है, अलबत्ता यह बात भी सही है कि जिस समय 1971 में भारत ने इस पड़ौसी का, वहां के रहने वाले सब नागरिकों का, जो उस समय ईस्ट पाकिस्तान कहलाता था, उनका सहयोग लिया और सहकार से बंगलादेश बना।

उस समय बंगलादेश ने अपने को एक सेक्यूलर राज्य घोति किया। फिर स्थिति में परिवर्तन आया। हरेक देश को अपना-अपना संविधान बनाने का अधिकार है और

उन्होंने भी बनाया। लेकिन उसके बनाने के पीछे जो कारण है, वह भी हमें समझना चाहिए। उस स्थिति के बाद भी थोड़ा बहुत परिवर्तन हुआ। पिछली सरकार थी, तब भी हमने मैत्री का सम्बन्ध रखें। आपने देखा होगा कि बंगलादेश सरकार ने भले हमें कहा हो कि यह क्रिमिनल लोगों का काम है, हमने अपने वक्तव्य में वह बात नहीं कही है। मैंने अपने वक्तव्य में पहले पैराग्राफ में, जो जानकारी थी, उसके आधार पर कहा है कि हमें लगता है कि सरकार में एलाइंस के जो प्रमुख पार्टनर्स हैं, उनका दोा है। इसिलए मैंने बी.एम.पी. और जमाएते इस्लामिक का नाम लिया है। भारत सरकार की ओर से छिपाने की इच्छा नहीं है। यह वक्तव्य देते हुए, वेदना और व्यथा व्यक्त करते हुए, हमारी इच्छा है कि जो लोग जबर्दस्ती के कारण और मजबूर होकर यहां आए हैं, वे सुरक्षा तथा सम्मान के साथ वापस बंगलादेश जाकर रह सकें, यह हम चाहेंगे। हम यह भी चाहेंगे कि भारत और बंगलादेश के बीच में जो ट्रैडिशनल सम्बन्ध मैत्री के रहे हैं, वे बने रहें।