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**Title:** Regarding death of inmates of a mental asylum in a fire accident in Yerawadi Town of Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu.

SHRI VAIKO (SIVAKASI): Mr. Speaker Sir, much again in anguish, I would like to bring to the notice of the House a terrible tragedy which took place in a Mental Asylum in a small town Yerwadi in Ramanthapuram District in the State of Tamil Nadu.

In the early morning hours on Monday, due to this fire accident, 26 inmates of that Mental Asylum were charred to death.

This is a very serious issue. The whole country was shocked. It is shudder to see the photographs in the newspapers and the scenario in the electronic media. When they were screaming and shouting because they were chained, nobody could go to their rescue and all were burnt to ashes.

### **12.30 hours**

(Mr. Deputy-Speaker *in the Chair*)

Sir, only after this painful tragedy, things have come to light that thousands and thousands of mentally affected people are subjected to such horrible conditions in most of the mental asylums.

Today, Sir, according to a report, throughout the country 50 million people are suffering from mental problem and are in 43 hospitals with a bed strength of 23,000. Already the Mental Health Act envisages setting up of mental health authorities in every State in the year 1987 itself, but in most of the States this has not been implemented. Inhuman conditions are prevailing there. Already the life for these people was doomed. Therefore, it is high time that the Apex Court of this country took cognisance of this matter. The Central Government should take up this issue very seriously. A fact-finding team from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should monitor the prevailing conditions of the mental hospitals throughout the country.

Due to lack of modernisation facilities and basic amenities, they are suffering worse than cattle in those mental asylums. Sir, our hearts go to this gruesome tragedy. I express my deep anguish and condolences to the bereaved families. Most of them have been abandoned in such asylums. The most sufferers are the women inmates in most of the mental asylums.

Therefore, Sir, this is a very grave issue. The Government should take up this issue seriously and in all earnestness at least to prevent such tragedies in future.

With these words, I conclude

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): Sir, I strongly support his view. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, Shri K. Malaisamy.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He has given a notice on this. That is why, I am allowing him to speak.

SHRI K. MALAISAMY (RAMANATHAPURAM): Sir, this incident has happened in my constituency. I am more competent to speak on this incident. I have also given a notice on this.

Sir, this is a very gruesome tragedy. As endorsed by our colleague, we are very much sorry that this has happened. The State Government was smart and quick enough to handle the tragedy and the Chief Minister, Madam Jayalalitha was able to send the Minister concerned and all the party functionaries to this place. The entire team of the District Administration was there. They were able to take immediate measures to see how the grant can be given. They have paid Rs. 50,000/- to the heirs each of victim, Rs. 15,000/- each to those who were seriously injured, and Rs. 6,000/- each to those who have got minor injuries. A probe has been ordered into this incident. The District Administration has taken enough measures to ban this kind of asylums immediately pending a detailed contingency plan, which is under operation.

In this regard, even the Supreme Court has issued a notice and has taken cognisance of this incident. We entirely agree that though the State Government has taken all-out effort to do something concrete on this matter, it is a matter of grave concern. The State Government will work on the one side at the micro level and even at the macro level, a national plan or policy can be thought of as to how the mentally ill, mentally deranged and the mentally

challenged people like them who have immense faith, belief and practice to go to such places like the ERWADI Dargha, can be handled and cured. They still believe that some cure can be possible there. But all these things should be taken into account and a comprehensive policy can be thought of at macro level....(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We have 42 Members who have given notice. I am calling one by one.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please co-operate. All of you will be getting your chance.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS: I would also like to associate with this matter.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Yes, you are allowed to associate.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: All of you are allowed to associate.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (: Sir, a Central team may be sent because it is a very serious matter.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Thomas, please do not disturb. I have allowed you to associate.

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM (THANJAVUR): Sir, I want two minutes to speak on this issue.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: No, you are allowed to associate.

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM :Sir, on behalf of my Party, I also associate myself with what Shri Vaiko has said.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I have allowed you to associate.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I have allowed them to associate.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI VAIKO : When there is a issue relating to UP or Bihar, Members hold the House to ransom.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Vaiko, Members from Tamil Nadu ought to have given notices. Only you and Shri Malaisamy had given notices.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Even then I have allowed them to associate.