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Title: Regarding fire cracker accident in a temple at Kollam, Kerala.

PROF. RICHARD HAY (NOMINATED): Hon. Speaker, I would like to bring an important and a heart rending matter before this august House and that is about the horrendous and most shocking fireworks accident that took place at Paravur in Kollam District of Kerala recently.

The cause of explosion is even now shrouded in mystery and 109 persons died in the incident, some on the spot, some on the way to hospital and some at the hospitals. I pray for their souls.

Due to the impact of the blasts, bodies and body parts were strewn all over the place. The inferno, in the shape of a huge fireball, engulfed the whole temple ground where several thousands had gathered.

The hon. Prime Minister, hon. Health Minister and hon. Minister of Skill Development were present at the hospital. The hon. Prime Minister soothed the feelings of the victims and it was a great healer.

The fire crackers used were potassium nitrate, a dangerous chemical which can cause heavy damage in any situation. The Government of India must conduct an investigation and find out the role of the State Government machinery who never took the decision to forbid the use of such toxic and dangerous chemicals even though they were warned from time to time about the devastating consequences of using such chemicals like potassium nitrate and 109 people died in which many more bodies have to be checked and identified by DNA test.

This incident has happened in Kerala and this can happen anywhere in the country also. In this connection, I would like to bring to the notice of this august House that the Home Secretary of the Government of Kerala was contradicting the stand taken by the State Government regarding the failure of field officers to implement DM's orders. This has come in newspapers. ...(*Interruptions*)

I would like to strongly urge the Central Government to pass appropriate laws to maintain safety restrictions in the use of fire crackers all over the country so that such accidents could be avoided. I would also request that proper compensation may be provided to the orphans of victims in this case.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Madam Speaker, the massive and terrific firework mishap happened in Puttingal Temple near Paravur in Kollam District of Kerala has put the entire nation in shock and grief. The unfortunate incident took the lives of more than 100 people and grievously injured hundreds of common people including children and women. The explosion was highly terrific which destroyed many houses and shelters near the temple.

The tragic incident shook people across the world and Heads of many States expressed their concern. The hon. Prime Minister and the Congress Vice President Rahul Gandhi visited the venue and made all efforts to coordinate the rescue operation and console the injured. The visit of the hon. Prime Minister and Shri Rahul Gandhi provided confidence to the State Government and the common people to cope up with the situation. It was a good sign of humanitarian care.

The Government of Kerala has taken all necessary measure to ensure emergency rescue operation and medical help for the injured. An immediate Cabinet Meeting was held and took all measures to cope up with the situation.

13.00 hours

The festival and firework competition at the temple was a traditional ritual. The administration of the temple is not under the State Government and it is managed by local individuals. Following complaints from local people, the District Administration had denied permission for firework competition, locally known as *kambam*. I am not going into the details of the incident as it is under investigation.

I would request the hon. Prime Minister to declare this tragic incident as a 'National Calamity' to ensure adequate compensation to the families of the deceased and speedy medical treatment for the injured. The incident has devastated the entire locality. Hundreds of houses and buildings in the area were damaged. Every family in the area has lost one or two of their beloved in this tragic incident. People living in the area are still in shock and mental agony. It is highly necessary to provide moral support to them. There are hundreds of common people critically injured going through critical stage. So, it is highly essential to provide adequate financial compensation to them.

To meet these urgent demands, the Government of Kerala has already requested the Central Government for financial assistance. So, I demand that this incident should be declared as a 'National Calamity'. I would request the Government to take an immediate decision in this regard.

SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE (GULBARGA): Madam Speaker, this matter is very serious. The Government should respond to this issue here.

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. VENKAI AH NAIDU): Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister himself has gone there immediately with relief and with medical team. Whatever could be done has been done also. We are all aware what a 'national calamity' is. That is not an issue for discussion now. That has to be discussed separately because rarest national calamity has been now differentiated from other calamities. That has to be studied. I cannot say anything on that as of now because both the State Government and the Central Government are seized of the matter and they are doing their best. So, let us not make it into a controversial issue.