

Title: Made a statement on the controversy over religious Shrine near Chikmagalur (Karnataka).

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): There is a religious shrine atop a hill, 30 kms from Chikmagalur in Karnataka. This is under the control of the Religious and Charitable Endowment Department, Government Karnataka. Both the Hindus and the Muslims regard the shrine as sacred and it is a unique example of Hindu-Muslim harmony.

The Muslims visit the shrine dedicated to the Saint Baba Budhan throughout the year. They also celebrate Urs at the site three days every year in the month of Rabi-ul-Avval, the third month of the Islamic Calendar. For the Hindus, this is the shrine of Guru Dattatreya and they accordingly call it Dattatreya Peetha. A large number of Hindus observe Dattatreya Jayanti every year at the site during Kartik Poornima celebrations and also during other festivals.

An attempt was made sometime back to have it declared as Waqf property but the Supreme Court ruled in 1991 that the shrine did not belong to the Waqf Board.

The Government of India and the State Government of Karnataka have been keen that nothing should be done to disturb the present character of this religious shrine, which is a part of our rich cultural heritage in the country. This year, the Dattatreya Jayanti was scheduled to be observed from December 1st to 3rd. To maintain peace in the region, the State Government have made elaborate arrangements. Prohibitory orders also have been imposed by the District Magistrate, Chikmagalur from 1st to 7th December, 1998 in the town within a radius of five kilometres and around the shrine within a radius of 10 kilometres. All precautionary measures including deployment of State Reserve Platoons and also the Central Police Force have been taken.

The observance of Guru Dattatreya Jayanti has started peacefully on December 1st. It has passed off smoothly on December 2nd. Today also, which is the last day of the festival no untoward incident has been reported from Chikmagalur and it is expected to remain so throughout the day.

... (Interruptions)

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (MAVELIKARA): The hon. Minister has not answered.. (Interruptions) Is it true that the Bajrang Dal has announced that there will be a speech at the shrine? Are you aware of that?. . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Discussion under rule 193. Shri Rajesh Pilot.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No clarification please.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the procedure. Please take your seats.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Let us take up discussion under rule 193. Shri Rajesh Pilot.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the proper way. Please understand.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Basu Deb Acharia, you are a senior Member. What is this?

श्री विजय गोयल (चांदनी चौक): क्या प्रॉब्लम है?

... (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats. This is not proper.

SHRI AJIT JOGI (RAIGARH): The most important question has not been answered.

MR. SPEAKER: Now I have called Shri Rajesh Pilot. Shri Ajit Jogi, please understand this is an important discussion.

SHRI AJIT JOGI : There is a slogan given by Bajrang Dal.

MR. SPEAKER: Do you not think that price rise is an important matter?

... (Interruptions)

SHRI AJIT JOGI : That is the most important aspect. That is most worrying the nation.

MR. SPEAKER: As per the desire of the hon. Members only, I have asked the Minister to make a statement. He has made a statement. Please sit down.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Basu Deb Acharia, please take your seat.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat. Price rise is an important subject that we have to discuss. Please take your seats.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Do not create a new precedent.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Prof. Kurien, please do not create a new precedent. I have called Shri Rajesh Pilot.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : He has not mentioned anything about... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Prof. Kurien, the hon. Minister is going to reply.

श्री रामदास अठावले (मुम्बई उत्तर-मध्य) : बजरंग दल और विश्व हिन्दू परिषद के बारे में क्या एक्शन हो रहा है, यह हम जानना चाहते हैं।

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: Sir, in the other House, because of the tradition and practice of that House, I replied to all the questions that were raised yesterday evening. But I have no objection, I would have no difficulty in clarifying the points. It is the question of the Chair and the tradition of this House. I would only like to emphasize that this is a matter otherwise exclusively belonging to the domain of the State Government. But we are concerned about it. The Central Government is concerned firstly that this is an example of communal harmony and it is a unique example. So, no attempt should be made by anyone to alter the character of the place. Further because of certain other reasons - whether it is Waqf property or not - the matter has gone to the Court also. The court had also given certain pronouncements. We are very keen to see that the Court's pronouncements are honoured by everyone including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or the Bajrang Dal or anyone else. The moment we came to know about it, I immediately spoke to the M.P. concerned. I was more concerned because there was a statement in the name of an M.P. belonging to our House and belonging to our party. Therefore, I spoke to him personally and he said that the report in the Press was not correct and that he had not said anything of that kind. Further, I ensured the State Government that whatever assistance they wanted from us, we would be willing to provide. And not only was this communicated to the State Government but two senior officials of the Home Ministry were deputed yesterday morning to go to Karnataka themselves, to go to the spot and do whatever was necessary to be done. Today I would like only to assure the House that the whole thing has passed off very peacefully. The State Government also has done its bit by talking to the people

concerned and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad also has issued a statement that they want perfect peace and harmony and the present tradition to continue. All these things have been done and, therefore, this brief statement I have made before the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri Rajesh Pilot to initiate the debate on price rise.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR : Sir, he has not mentioned anything about the Rath Yatra.

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Member, please take your seat. I have called Shri Rajesh Pilot.