

11.37 hrs.

OBITUARY REFERENCE  
AND  
CONDOLENCE REFERENCES TO LOSS OF  
LIVES OF HAJ PILGRIMS

*[English]*

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I have to inform the House of the sad demise of one of our esteemed friends, Shri Biju Patnaik.

Bijayananda Patnaik was a sitting member of the Lok Sabha representing Aska Parliamentary Constituency of Orissa. Affectionately known to the common people as Biju Patnaik, he hailed from a family of freedom fighters, ideologues and patriots in Cuttack, State of Orissa.

During his formative years, he came under the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and the great nationalist sons of Orissa, Gopabandhu Das and Madhusudhan Das.

He joined the freedom struggle and actively participated in the Quit India movement in close association with Aruna Asaf Ali and her underground activities against the British. He underwent imprisonment from 1943 to 1946 in the Red Fort, New Delhi, Ferozepur, Lahore and Cuttack.

He dared the Dutch and with the support of Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, threw his lot, at considerable personal risk, with the freedom fighters of Indonesia in their struggle for independence. He was associated with the Nepalese democratic movement as well.

The services he rendered to the nation, at the call of Panditji in the area of diplomacy at the time of Chinese aggression in 1962 are part of our history.

His great contribution to the country's democracy was the role he played tenaciously and repeatedly in Orissa, and at the national level, for forging opposition unity through times of factional politics. Indeed, he proved that the delight of political life is as well in the Opposition.

Like Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Madison, the framers of the American Constitution, Biju Patnaik believed that national unity should be preserved through Federalism. For him, Federalism was an economic doctrine, not a political slogan. He even called for a United States of India in which the financial resources would equitably flow to the States consistent with their exploitable natural resources.

He was a socialist at heart and, Acharya Narendra Dev, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Minoo Masani were his role-models.

One with Prime Minister Chowdhary Charan Singh, he believed that the backbone of the country was a strong peasantry and wanted modernisation of agriculture. At the same time the natural entrepreneur and founder of Kalinga Airlines and Orissa Textile Mill as he was, he wanted agrarian feudalism to be dismantled and Industrial Revolution to take place. In the sixties, when he was Chief Minister of Orissa for the first time, along with Governor Ayodhyanath Khosla, he launched a "Decade of Destiny" and ushered in an era of industrialisation in the State. Later in the Nineties, again when he was Chief Minister of Orissa, industrialisation continued to be his obsession and, in keeping with the dynamic world and national economic scenario, wanted the Public Sector Enterprises to gain strength through exposure to market forces.

He was nostalgic and acstatic about the Oriya maritime traditions and the Paradip Port was in no small measure due to his initiatives.

Strongly believing in a lean and lively bureaucracy, he fearlessly advocated economy in expenditure as a steady style of governance rather than as an off-on formula of austerity to be applied during times of financial strain.

A true believer in the empowerment of women, he practised it by establishing one-third reservation for women not merely in local bodies, but in Government jobs.

The Kalinga Foundation and Prize set up by him is an ever-lasting testimony of his ideal of modernisation of society through dissemination of science. Shri Biju Patnaik had a colourful political career. Starting off as a member of the Royal Air Force, he romanced between aviation, entrepreneurship and politics and settled down for a political life which lasted for four decades. With his heart in Orissa and mind in New Delhi, he shared his public life between the State and the Centre.

He was a Member of the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Lok Sabhas representing Kendrapara Parliamentary Constituency during 1977-79, 1980-84 and 1984-85. He was the Union Minister of Steel, Mines and Coal during 1977-80. He had been a Member of the Rajya Sabha in 1971. He had also been a Member of the Orissa Legislative Assembly for seven terms and was the Chief Minister of the State during 1961-63 and 1992-96. During 1996-97, he was the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance in Parliament.

Shri Biju Patnaik passed away on 17th April, 1997 at New Delhi at the age of 81 after a brief illness.

We deeply mourn the loss of this great son of our country and, I am sure, the House will join me in conveying our condolence to the bereaved family.

Hon. Member, this year the Haj pilgrimage which is the traditional sacred voyage for Muslims all over the world, was overtaken by a tragedy in which, because of the huge fire in Mina near Mecca, a considerable

number of pilgrims died while many others sustained grievous injury.

The House expresses its shock and grief at the tragedy which has befallen on the Haj pilgrims. I, on behalf of myself and on behalf of the whole House, extend the heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and wish speedy recovery to the injured.

PRIME MINISTER (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a saddening and a cruel irony that I have to rise in this House and make my first utterance with a heavy heart to pay my respectful homage to the late Shri Biju Patnaik, a Member of Parliament and an outstanding leader of the people who passed away on the 17th April, 1997 at New Delhi. He was a patriot to the core, a great son of India, a towering personality, the warrior of freedom struggle who strode the country like a colossus for over five decades.

At 81 years of age, Shri Biju Patnaik died as he had lived, a man ever young. And Shri Jawaharlal Nehru affectionately called him 'India's buccaneer'. For his versatility and dare devilry of his own kind, Biju Dada became a living legend in his young life.

Shri Biju Patnaik was a beloved of all - the young and the old alike - and was admired by all. Shri Biju Patnaik was inspired at the age of 13 years during Gandhiji's call for national struggle and played an active role in the freedom struggle. He held a prominent place in the national struggle by virtue of his distinguished and active service to the national and also due to his qualities of heart and head. He was an esteemed leader, a guide, philosopher and a friend to countless number of men in public life.

In his death, I have suffered a personal loss. The country has lost a great son, the Messiah of the people. He was a prominent and dynamic industrialist. He was a formerly head of the Air Command during the war years 1940-42. He was closely associated with the building of the fortunes of the country and he shared the vicissitudes with stalwarts like Jai Prakash Narayan, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and others.

He underwent imprisonment during 1943-46. He fully utilized his flying skills. He landed the first platoon of the troops in Srinagar which engaged the Pakistani radars in 1948.

He was the international activist who was associated also with the Indonesian Freedom Movement for which he was honoured by the Indonesian Government to the title of 'Bhumi Putra' or the 'Son of the Soil'. He was also closely associated with the Nepalese Democratic Movement since 1953. For flying across to the embattled Soviet troops during the Second World War, a grateful Russia conferred honour upon Shri Biju Patnaik for the overtime services to the country, 50 years ago in 1945.

He rendered an outstanding service to Orissa. He changed the face of that State. He held the position of Chief Minister, Orissa on more than one occasion. The

founder of the Kalinga Airlines, he established Kalinga Tubes, textile mills and several other industries. He gave Rourkela Steel Plant and the Paradeep Port to Orissa. He will continue to act as a guiding star for millions of devotees to the service of the nation and Orissa, in particular.

His role in the Lok Sabha, in the Rajya Sabha and in the Central Government had been constructive and always aiming for the betterment of the lot of the poor and the downtrodden and prosperity of the nation as a whole.

In his demise, a great freedom fighter has departed and the nation has suffered an irreparable loss. His services to the nation and to the State of Orissa would be remembered by all for all times to come. He was a man of rare gift, vision, imagination and action. We pray that the departed soul may rest in everlasting peace and I take this opportunity to convey sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (Calcutta South) :  
What about Haj pilgrims tragedy?...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : I have expressed it already.

SHRI INDER KUMAR GUJRAL : Sir, I had thought that I would mention about the Haj tragedy after the first round but since my colleague feels, I should do it.

May I associate myself with your sentiments? It was my misfortune that on the Sunday last when I had gone to my office, I got this tragic news where many people have suffered. We have not been able to get the exact number as yet but we have got some list last night about the people and the persons who have been injured and are in the hospitals.

On behalf of the Government, we have made all the arrangements to bring home all those who have been injured and for those unfortunate ones who are not in a position to travel, the Government on its own expense will send their family members to be with them. We are trying to ascertain their names and also their present state of health. At the same time, I might say that to those who have died, I bow my head in my homage to them. It is such a tragedy that bequeathed us and gave a shock to all of us. I can assure you, Sir, that the Government will do its utmost to see that we are able to bring home their bodies with due honour. The Government will also see to it that all the relief is provided to those who have suffered either in body or in death or in their property.

[*Translation*]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE (Lucknow) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, if a post falls vacant, it is filled but the loss suffered by the nation because of the sad demise of Shri Biju Patnaik, will probably never be compensated. Till recent past, he used to come here and sit with us but today we are paying homage to him. He had a towering personality was a magnanimous person. He

[Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee]

liked playing with fire and flying high in the sky. yet he was a responsible person. He had a jovial nature and it was his habit to call a spade a yet he never allowed bitween to take root in his mind.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, just now yourself and hon'ble Prime Minister have sketched the multi-dimensional personality of Shri Biju Patnaik in your speeches, hence I do not wish to repeat it. I also got the opportunity to work with him for a brief time-period however I shall always carry this regret that I did not get the opportunity of being in his company at the time when he was put in Rohtak Jail during the Emergency. Those who were with him in prison relate how he bore all the hardships in the prison stoically and as a good companion helped the other inmates to pass that crucial time.

A prison is such a place where the true personality of a person comes to the fore and his real nature comes out. Shri Pilu Modi was also in the same prison as Biju Babu. Both were from rich families and were used to high standard of life but when they were imprisoned, they did not air any grievances or make any complaints. Probably this was the result of the qualities he had developed as a pilot during the Freedom Struggle.

He was the store-keeper in the prison. All the provisions received in jail, were entrusted to the custody of Shri Biju Patnaik so as to ensure its fair and suitable distribution. He never gave anyone any cause for complaint.

He was the founder of modern Orissa and the motivating force behind industrialisation. The progress made by Orissa in the field of industrialisation is the result of forightedness and efforts put in by Biju Babu.

With the sad demise of Shri Biju Patnaik, an important link with the past has been served. It is no exaggeration when I say that virtuelly an era has come to an end.

I join Mr. Speaker and Hon'ble Prime Minister in conveying my condolences and pray to god to give strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss. He never pushed his family members into politics and also did not try to take under advantage of his position. There are several untouched aspects of his personality which will come to the fore. Today we find ourselves destitute because of his devise.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the number of Haj pilgrims is rising but we are not being able to make sufficient arrangements in the same proportion. Those who had travelled abroad to undertake this pious journey have fallen victim to this tragedy. It is very distressing indeed. The Saudi Arabian Government will definitely look into this matter. But the family members could not contact officials in Delhi or in Mumbai for several hours and several days together which shows that there is a lack of arrangements here also.

Right now we should be content with the assurances given by Prime Minister but there is a need to make arrangements is such a way so that this tragedy does not occur again in future. I pay my homage to all the pilgrims who have passed away.

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR (Baramati) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, With the passing away of Shri Biju Patnaik, India has lost a unique person, a freedom fighter, an efficient administrator, a skilled aviator, a nowned industrialist and a magnanimous person.

I still remember that after the emergency was lifted and he was released from Rohtak prison, he went to a certain place to take rest for a few days alongwith two-three youngmen. I was fortunate to have got the opportunity to spend 8-10 days with him. In these 8-10 days, he related several miraculous incidents that had occurred in his life.

He led a courageous life. When he was in school, he went to attend a public meeting of Mahatamaji being held in Cuttack Police stopped him at a certain point and even beat him up still he tried to get as close to Mahatamaji as he could. He was a very good athlete in school and college. He was a good Cricketer and football player. He could not complete his college education and joined the Royal Airforce. He was very much interested in this profession. Flying aircrafts and facing the risks involved was a part of his nature.

He had taken on this responsibility during the regime of Britishers but the spirit of attaining freedom for the country always remained alive in his heart. The House might be aware that even while serving the Royal Airforce, he made use of the aircraft to carry the nationalist leaders to their destination. He also distributed the handbills of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and that is why he was court - martialled and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. At that time he met Panditji and thereafter he remained a confident of Panditji upto his last days.

12.00 hrs.

After Independence, he entered politics. On one hand, he was motivated by the idea of doing some concrete work in the field of industry in Orissa and he himself made a begiming in this regard. He set up a factory by the name of Kalinga Tribes which was the largest factory in Asia manufacturing pipes. Kalinga Airways, Kalinga Steel were his dream projects. He won the Orissa Assembly elections and became the Chief Minister of Orissa in 1960. He strived for the upliftment of his area and just as you had described him as 'a leading light' a shortwhile ago. Later on, at the time of setting up a large factory for Migs, and in setting up of steel unit in Rourkela, Biju ji made immense contribution.

I remember that when Congress session was held in Bhubaneshwar, Shri Biju Patnaik took on the entire

responsibility of making arrangements for the same. Lakhs of Congress men came from throughout the country to attend it. He handled the task of making arrangement very efficiently. He played a crucial role during Indo-China war. In order to make up for the loss suffered by different forces of the nation, he went to Russia for certain negotiations and signed an agreement also.

He always paid utmost attention to his home state. Though he joined Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha for a few years but he always remained concerned about the progress of Orissa. Once again he become the Chief Minister of the State and in his five year term, he was keenly interested in finding out the ways to remove backwardness, ensuring progress of Orissa, launching more irrigation projects and setting up the industries etc. When some villages and Panchayat Samitis showed good performance he decided to honour them in a unique manner. An industry at the cost of one crore rupees was proposed to be set up in the area where the Panchayat Samiti has shown good performance. He took a decision to set up cottage industry at the cost of one lakh rupees in case of a Gram Panchayat doing commendable work. His focus was on wearing the new generation from the field of agriculture and inducting them in field of industry so that they may earn valuable assets for the nation. This was his firm opinion.

He used to sit very close to us in this House. He in spoke out his mind freely. As a chairman of the Standing Committee on Finance, he did a very commendable job. Whenever he felt the need to guide and instruct certain officers, he spoke very politely and he was ever vigilant to uphold the honour of Members of Parliament. He is no more. We have lost an able and wise parliamentarian, freedom fighter, aviator, industrialist and a great son of India. He is not amidst us but he will always be remembered. I pay homage in his remembrance on my own behalf and on the behalf of the party.

Secondly, the tragedy that has struck the Haj pilgrims has also been mentioned here. This is probably the second time because such an incident has occurred there earlier also. Lakhs of people from throughout the world go there. Proper arrangements are also made there but this time, probably it was the weather or some other problem of which such a high price had to be paid. I pay my homage to the Haj pilgrims who lost their lives in this tragedy.

[English]

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur).: Mr. Speaker Sir, on behalf of my party and myself, I deeply mourn the passing away of one of our tallest leaders, tallest in all sense of the term. Today, the Indian political life is poorer as a stalwart and a great son of India has passed away and is no longer with us.

Sir, I had the privilege of sitting next to him in this House. I used to call him *Dada* and he really treated us as his own younger brothers. I could understand the great concern he was having for the somewhat uncertain political situation in this country. His commitment to parliamentary democracy, his commitment to the development and progress of the country through industrialisation, his concern for the development of the States and his belief in true federalism gave us not only food for thought but also plan for action.

Indeed, he was the maker of modern Orissa and the architect of industrialisation in Orissa. He was himself a successful industrialist and brought Orissa into the map of industrial India.

Sir, I know and he said that he believed that unless the States become strong, India can never be a strong nation and that is why, when he fought for Orissa's development, it was not by reason of any narrow consideration but to make India stronger as a whole. He realised that true federalism will result in strengthening India's unity in diversity and that will hasten the pace of progress of our nation as a whole.

He was a very successful Minister. I had the privilege of seeing him here as a Minister of Steel and Mines in the Central Cabinet. He was a very very successful Chief Minister and a very effective Member of Parliament. He inspired the younger generation of his time. A freedom fighter and a nationalist to the core, his life was an example of how commitment to certain principles and dedication towards the nation's development can be the guiding force of our people.

We have lost not only a colourful leader, a colourful personality, but also a good guide, a good philosopher and a good friend. One of the outstanding leaders of our country is no longer with us. We sincerely and deeply mourn his loss. I wish to convey through you to the members of family our deepest sense of condolence. I convey my deepest respect to his memory. I also associate with what has been said by you and the hon. Prime Minister and other leaders. Probably, a void created by his passing away will not be filled up soon.

We are also mourning another tragedy when a large number of our citizens have lost their lives and a large number of people have suffered injury in a country where they had gone for pilgrimage. I associate with what has been said here. I must express my thanks to the hon. Prime Minister for assuring the Government's all-out efforts to render all possible help in the matter.

I also convey our deep sense of loss and condolence to the members of the families of those who have lost their lives. We wish a speedy and a complete recovery of those who have suffered injury there.

SHRI MADHUKAR SARPOTDAR (Mumbai North-West) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we came into this House just 11 months back. When I met the late Shri Biju Patnaik

[Shri Madhukar Sarpotdar]

for the first time, it was a wonderful experience. Thereafter, I was having very good opportunities to meet him and have dialogues with him. I tried to understand his mind as well. I remember that Late Patnaik very often used to say, "Shri Sarpotdar, we must strive hard to form a national Government. You also speak to the people." He being a very senior politician in this country, it was rather his ambition to see that the national Government was formed in this country. I was having some association with him for a very short duration, But what I could read from his mind was that our country should be strong enough to face all eventualities. In the political scenario that we used to have in the past, there was no possibility that, in future, any single party would get a brute majority and that party will rule. But this will be an unavoidable situation in future that a large number of parties will get elected and they are to form the coalition Government. That was his faith and belief. He said that he would take an initiative. But perhaps because of his ill health, he could not make further progress about his suggestions and proposals. Subsequently, I got an opportunity to go through his career. Then, I came to know that he was a great fighter.

He was a very good pilot having a number of ventures to his credit. He was a tall personality in politics, physically and also in his deeds.

When I got the news of the passing away of Shri Biju Patnaik, I was in Mumbai. It was a shock to me. He was 81 years old. He knew that the day was likely to come. Going by the contributions he has made to the country, it will be very difficult for the future generations to see a man of his stature.

On behalf of my Party and on my own behalf I pay my deep condolences to the bereaved family.

Likewise, there was a sad incident in Saudi Arabia. A number of people who had gone there for pilgrimage have died and a number of others have been injured in this incident. The people who had gone there to pray for the betterment of life met with such an accident. Last year we also had the same experience when a number of people died in Amarnath pilgrimage. I sincerely pay my homage to those who have lost their lives. Our new Prime Minister has today given us an assurance that he would leave no stone unturned to help the families of the affected persons. I, on behalf of my Party and on my own behalf pay my deep condolences to the families of the dead.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Sir, I associate myself with the observations which have been made by you, the Prime Minister and other colleagues about Shri Biju Patnaik. I have a very long connection with Orissa as I was going there quite often. I really was thrilled to see a person having multifarious set of ideas. Apart from other things which have been stated here, and which I do not want to repeat, one most important

thing about him was, he did what he said. He never adopted double speak. This is one of the things which is very essential in the life of a politician and we should all learn it.

His another quality, which I would like to point out here, was that he did not give any special facility to his family but while going to Indonesia for such a risky performance, he did not forget to take his wife along with him. Very few such instances can be seen. He was a person of such a high personality. Through his genius he built modern Orissa and made our country richer in many respects. I pay sincere condolences to his family members and also to those who died in Mecca. I hope the Prime Minister's assurance will be fully appreciated. On behalf of my Party, I pay my deep condolences to them and associate myself with whatever has been said in the House.

[Translation]

SARDAR SURJEET SINGH BARNALA (Sangrur) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Biju Patnaik was one of our good friends. On behalf of my party and myself, I express my deep sorrow on his death. I met him in 1967 for the first time. At that time he visited Punjab on the occasion of formation of the first Akali Dal Government in the State. Sardar Gurnam Singh was the Chief Minister of State. Biju Patnaikji offered a proposal for installation of a steel plant in Punjab. He was famous throughout the country and several feasts were hosted in his honour. I was not known to him earlier but heard a lot of stories about him as he had served the country to a great extent. He served Royal Indian Air Force where he was court martialled and arrested in Red Fort. He also heard that during the freedom struggle he had brought some freedom fighters from Indonesia by his plane bravely. I got an opportunity to work with him during his tenure as Minister of Steel and Mines during the Janata Dal regime. He was considered as an influential minister of the cabinet. He was considered a person who did not indulge in vulgar or useless discussions and used to say his points in apt and appropriate manner. The then Prime Minister Morarji Bhai used to pay a great attention to his words.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, even while working at centre he used to pay due attention for progress of Orissa. Once he taken me to Orissa for three days and introduced several projects there. During those days the 'Food for Work' was launched on a large scale by Agricultural Ministry. We visited various parts of Orissa with Chief Minister and Cabinet Minister of the State and Several projects were started in Orissa which revealed his zeal for progress of the State. He wanted to enhance Orissa in the field of agriculture. He proposed that 400-500 persons should be brought from Punjab so that new techniques could be taught for agricultural development of Orissa. In the same way he took interest in all over development of the state by installing industry, developing chilka lake and setting up new forces there.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have another special relations with him. He had been married to a girl from Punjab. He was a cheerful person. People will remember him for a long time for his contribution to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha and especially for his contribution in progress of Orissa. We pay our condolences to the bereaved family and associate ourselves with the resolution moved here. Secondly I would like to mention huge loss of property and lives in Saudi Arabia due to incident of fire. There may be some lacunae in arrangements made for the pilgrims gathered there in a large number. Around 90,000 to 1 lakh people have gone there from India and we are concerned over their safe return after performing Haj at Mecca-Sharif. So far we are unable to know about the loss incurred in this tragedy. The relatives of the persons, who have gone there, are worried about their safety. They are running from pillar to post to know the whereabouts and safety of their relatives. As the hon. Prime Minister has stated just now, the government is trying its best for safe return of the pilgrims.

Proper arrangements should be made for the persons who suffered losses, got injury and burns. I request the House to take care of those families whose members have been killed in this incident.

[English]

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to join, you, the Prime Minister and other esteemed colleagues of mine in the House to express my deep sense of grief, shock and condolences at the sad demise of Shri Biju Patnaik recently and also to pay tribute to the memory of this great patriot, great fighter for Independence and a model of life based on sacrifice, sufferings and other qualities. As you know, he was imprisoned on several occasions and particularly I mention about his imprisonment in the Red Fort. The imprisonment at the Red Fort was because of the fact that he was disseminating information in this country of the armed campaign of the Indian National Army under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose; he was dropping leaflets and other propaganda materials to the people of India in order to educate the people as to what kind of freedom struggle Netaji was conducting beyond the borders of our country.

He was an able administrator, both as a Central Minister and also as the Chief Minister of Orissa. He represented an era of value based politics and with his passing away, it appears to me that era has ended. I had the privilege of working with him in this house and he treated me with affection and love. He was a very harsh speaking leader. He could say anything he likes in order to rectify our mistakes and to make us realise that we could see the path of horizon, Shri Biju Patnaik is a household name. If you ever had been to any village of Orissa and mentioned his name to any persons, young or old, they would have said, Biju Patnaikji was the son of Orissa. He dreamt about the

new Orissa, new Utkal which is industrialised, based on modernised agriculture, and based on a new spirit.

Wherever he had been, he was very much interested to see that the backward State of Orissa attained the glory of being a modern, industrial and prosperous State. On this occasion, I once again, on behalf of my Party and on my behalf, express my deep condolences and pay tributes to the fond memory of this great leader.

Before I end, I also want to add a few words about the tragedy which fell upon the Haj pilgrims recently in Saudi Arabia. We are assured by the Prime Minister that all attempts are being made to bring them back and also to provide for necessary relief for their comfort etc.

I wish that the Government of India takes interest and energetic steps to do whatever is possible.

We also, on my behalf and on behalf of my party, express our condolences for those who have been the victims of that unfortunate tragedy in Mecca.

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (Ballia) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the sad demise of Biju Patnaikji has created a vacuum in Indian Polity. As the leader of the opposition has also stated, his competence, bravery, sentiments of sacrifice, patriotism and his vision of a new India will be a source of inspiration for all of us. I was closely associated with him during emergency. His capability to encourage people and sense of attachment to people was worth emulating. He was senior to me in terms of age but he always treated me like his colleague and equal. During the last 20 years whenever we met he called me 'Bolo Ballia' and I used to reply to it by saying 'Kaho Oriya'. This continued for a long time. When he was admitted to hospital for illness, I visited there. The doctor requested me for persuading him to stay in the hospital because he was not ready to do so. When I told him to abide by the opinion of the doctor, he said that doctors cannot treat my ailing lungs then what is the use of staying in the hospital. After persuasion for 20 minutes he became ready to stay in the hospital. On the second day when, I took leave from him he said :-

[English]

With one condition, 'come tomorrow positively'

[Translation]

Next day when I visited hospital, he suffered a severe attack and doctors advised me not to see him. Two days before his death some improvement was noticed in his health and he breathed his last when I visited him. I remember the scene of Puri. Atalji and Deve Gowdaji were also with me. It seemed that whole of Orissa had gathered on the sea shore to pay homage. A large number of political leaders were also present there. I cannot describe his courage enthusiasm. Just

[Shri Chandra Shekhar]

now Atalji and other leaders mentioned his contribution in the progress of the country. He actively took part in revolutionary movement of 1942, democratic movement of Indonesia and Nepal. He was associated with Lohiaji, Arunaji, Jai Prakashji and Narendra Devji. I am remembering a line of poetry written by some poet about Acharyaji. Perhaps, it will be able to express our sentiments :-

"Jilaye to rahoon, bas kahan hamara hai,  
yu hi to Aadi se, ab 'ak manushya hara hai.  
Sivay maut ke koi tuihe jhuka na saka.  
Tera marna bhi bas jeene ka ek sahara hai.

This is my homage to Biju Patnaikji.

We also have a deep sense of sorrow for the Haj pilgrims, who have been killed in the fire accident which took place in Saudi Arabia. They had gone there to pray but were killed on their way. The whole country is grieved on this incident. I express my condolences to the bereaved families.

SHRI ILIYAS AZMI (Shahabad) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, while associating my party and myself with the views expressed by you, the hon'ble Prime Minister and the hon'ble leader of opposition on the sad demise of Biju Patnaikji, I would like to say that I got an opportunity to work with him and we had several discussions. In this era when the world is being divided in the name of humanity, language and religion, Biju Patnaikji was a person who struggled for the whole humanity without caring for political limitations. He was a warrior of humanity and freedom fighter who landed his aircraft at Jakarta and brought Shri Abdoul Ranim Sukarno and Dr. Mohammed to Delhi at State of his like. This made their freedom struggle successful. He also took active part in democratic struggle of Nepal. This severs that he was not confined to the limits of country and other things which have overpowered humanity today. It has been my experience that he was an out-spoken and straight forward person. People often feel that he could speak contrary to the ideology of his own party. He used to say what seems correct to him. I did not consent with him always but while being a Member of Janata Dal, sometimes I did not agree with him. He was not confined to anyone party and stated what seemed correct.

Several Members have stated about his contribution in the freedom struggle. Chandra Shekharji is present here and he is a witness to the important role played by him and his struggle for formation of Janata Dal during the emergency. On behalf of my party and myself I pay my homage to Biju Patnaikji.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to say something on the Haj tragedy. I had gone to perform Haj twice and personally seen the arrangements there. Can say this with full confidence that Saudi Arabian Government has tried its best and spent a huge amount on arrangements

required for this pilgrimage. There is no need to find fault with it. It is the lack of experience of the people who control traffic and equipments installed for safety of such a large number of people. I would like to say that there is no lacunae in arrangements made for pilgrims.

This is such a large holy gathering where even if minor incidents or any quarrel takes place, it does not hurt or cause any injury to anyone but a minor incident of stampede takes the lives of 100-50 people. The incident of this year which has claimed the lives of 200-250 people has shocked us greatly. The members of the affected families are worried about their safety. Eleven members of my neighbour's family in Lucknow had also gone and now the whole family is quite disturbed. I dialed all the telephone numbers in my possession - even upto Mecca - and established contacts but in vain. However, yesterday evening they themselves received a call from Mecca conveying them that their family members were earlier missing but now they are safe. I am hopeful that the Government would be able to know about safety of the Mecca visiting people and let their worried families know about them within a day or two. I offer my heart felt tributes to the people killed in Haj fire incident. I, myself and on behalf of my party, also equally share the sorrows of the brief stricken families. With this I conclude my speech.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Nalanda) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the country has lost a great patriot with the passing away of Biju Patnaik. Many things have been said about his qualities and works by you, the Prime Minister and the leader of opposition and other members. I want to say only two or three things. I had got an opportunity of enjoying his company for nearly 31 years.

We used to say him one thing again and again that. He should write down his experiences, which he got during the freedom struggle and other struggles for it is very necessary to let the people of this country know about the contribution he made in our freedom struggle. For this purpose, we used to insist upon him time and again. This was more necessary in view of the fact that many people for many years have launched a well planned move to defame Biju ji. If it were a different thing that Biju ji never bothered about such things or his was a great soul. But his critics never threw any light on his dynamic life and the contributions he made not only for the independence of this country but also the independence of some of our other neighbouring countries. I don't know if Biju ji had written something about his life or not. But we repeatedly requested his daughter to get his conversation tape recorded whenever he spoke about the country so that the coming generation of this country may know that a great soul had taken birth in of this country. Just now the leader of Congress Party, Shri Sharad Pawarji, has referred to his contributions by him for the freedom struggle of this country inspite of the fact that at that time he was working

in Royal Air Force. His house was the centre of the movement of the underground people. Dr. Lohiya, Jai Prakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali and several other leaders used to launch their struggle from the very house of Biju ji. Whenever journey to any part of the country became tiresome, these people used to come back to his house and there were occasions when Biju Patnaik used to carry these people to their respective destinations. Just now comrade Shri Chitta Basu has told us as to how Biju used to disseminate the information of the movements of Indian National Army of Netaji to the country. The greatest quality of Biju ji was that he was working as an officer of the Royal Air Force. He was not merely a Pilot but also the chief of the Transport command of the Royal Air Force of Southern Asia and in that capacity he was drawing his salary and rendering his services honestly to the Britishers. Later in Barma, not once but on several occasions his plane was shot down by the Britishers bullet. On several occasions it was declared that Biju Patnaik had been killed in the war. Such statements also came from Englishmen but as he had to escape so he did. He escaped not only from the bullets of Britishers but also from the death sentence he was awarded. He made a significant contribution in 1942 movement and at the last of the movement when he was arrested, he escaped from the death sentence. It is not necessary to discuss right now as to how he managed to escape. It was his luck and luck of the country that he managed to escape for he had yet to do many things for the country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, not only you but almost every member of the House has said that he was the real founder of the new Orissa and we have discussed over here his contribution in this regard. Orissa in one of the two most poor states in India. Only one state, Bihar, is more backward than Orissa. We are using certain words which also convey some different meanings which we should understand. Why is the state of Orissa, for which Biju ji devoted his whole life, today in a situation of helplessness? Why are people today dying of starvation in that state? In the opinion of Biju Patnaik, the reason for this, was the injustice being done to certain states in the matter of development and the resultant countrywide imbalance. Could this not be the proper occasion to mention all these things but I beg your pardon, for our new Prime Minister is sitting over here and, therefore, I want to say one thing and that is when a new Prime Minister assumes his office he starts diverting thousands of crores of Rupees to his own area within months. Very few think in terms of the Prime Minister of India. And Biju Patnaik had always complained about it. Therefore, if you have got any amount of respect for him in your hearts then you should give priority to Orissa in your agenda and take up the developmental work of Orissa in your hands. From the mineral points of view, Orissa is one of the most rich states. After Bihar, it is the most prosperous state in the matter of minerals but today that state is in a poor condition and if this Government devotes itself for bailing

our the state from poverty and the new Prime Minister thinks not only in regional terms but in terms of the whole country then, in my view, it would be our great achievement and sincere tribute to Biju Patnaik. I, on behalf of myself and my party, offer my tributes to him on his sad demise.

At the same time, I also express my heart felt sympathies with the families of those people who had gone to Haj pilgrimage and died there in the fire incident. We do not know as to what happens there and what contribution our government or we people can make in that regard but his is my request to the Government that if it is possible on her part to evolve any safety measures for the safe journey of our pilgrims then it must do so, for this is another horrible fire incident which has claimed the lives of so many people. With this request I wind-up.

SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I think of the multi dimensional personality of Shri Biju Patnaik, I am reminded of the following lines written by the great poet Iqbal :-

Hazon Sal Nargis Apani Benoori Pe Roti Hai,  
Badi Mushkil se Hota Hai Chaman Mein Didawar  
Paida.

Mr. Speaker, Sir one of the same stalwarts has passed away. It is tragic and shocking that we have lost a great son of our mother land India. We would like to request you to kindly convey our sympathies to the grief stricken family. Assurance should be given to the members of the grief stricken family that we equally share their feelings. Shri Biju Patnaik was a man of high stature. Still we needed him most, particularly in a situation when the country is passing through many difficulties, his suggestions could have been of utmost importance and useful. But ultimately everybody has to die. His death has caused us severe losses.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we heard the tragic and heart rendering news of fire incidence in Haj, it was like a bolt from blue for us. Words are not sufficient to describe our feelings. Certainly the arrangements made by the Saudi Government are praiseworthy. But in spite of it the Saudi Government have instituted an enquiry into the whole tragic affair.

We also praise our Government for having extended their full cooperation in this respect. Our Prime Minister Shri Gujral Saheb has assured that all possible help will be extended and for this we are grateful to him. We pray to God for the people who died in the terrific fire incident and express our sympathies with the people who were injured in the incident. In India also many families, their relatives, friends and others were worried about the safety of their family members who had gone to Haj pilgrimage. They had to face a lot of difficulties in this respect. I hope that the Government will take all these things into account and make more effective and better arrangements in the future.

[Shri G.M. Banatwalla]

With these words I, myself and on behalf my party, express sympathies with the injured people and pray God to give power to the affected families to bear this loss.

[English]

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (Joynagar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir. Shri Biju Patnaik, a sitting Member of the House, was one of the most colourful veterans in the Indian politics. He was a towering personality and one of the last of a dwindling breed of pre-Independence politicians. Following his death the country has lost a great patriot and an able administrator.

I, on behalf of my party, R.S.P., and on my own behalf convey our deepest condolences to the family of the departed Member. I also convey our

deepest condolences to the bereaved families of those Haj Pilgrims who had lost their lives in Saudi Arabia.

MR. SPEAKER : The House may stand in silence for a short while in memory of the deceased.

**12.52 hrs.**

*The Members then stood in silence for a short while.*

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow the 22nd April, 1997 at 11 A.M.

**12.53 hrs.**

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, April 22, 1997/Vaisakha 2, 1919  
(Saka)*

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