

people of North Bengal have been let down by the Government and I would like to have a satisfactory reply from the hon. Minister. I would like to know whether he is aware that the erstwhile democratic coalition Government of West Bengal had taken up, within its programme, that is, the 13 point programme, to constitute North Bengal Development Board. Secondly, I would like to know whether the hon. Minister is aware that just on the eve of the last midterm parliamentary poll, even our Hon. Prime Minister gave this assurance to the people of North Bengal that the North Bengal Development Board will be constituted as early as possible. The same programme was included in the election manifesto which was endorsed by the Congress High Command too.

MR. SPEAKER : Is it still a question ?

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY : So, Sir, in view of all this, may I know from the hon. Minister when decision will be taken by the Government as also by the Planning Commission.

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA : If this is the assurance given by the hon. Prime Minister, I can assure the House that it will be implemented very shortly.

SHRI B. K. DASCHOWDHURY : I am pleased with his reply, I will make one appeal and one suggestion. I hope he will consider it. When finally he constitutes the Board, will he make it a statutory Board ?

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA : I cannot say offhand regarding the statutory board and all those details. But I have assured the hon. Member that it will be taken into consideration.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : The hon. Minister in the course of his reply said that if the assurance had been given by the Prime Minister, it would be quickly implemented. Since the Prime Minister is present here, I would like to know from her whether such an assurance had been given by her.

MR. SPEAKER : It is for the hon. Minister concerned to reply.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : The Prime Minister is herself present here, and she can reply

to this. Moreover she is also the Minister in charge of planning.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA : She is not the Minister of Planning now but she is only the chairman of the Planning Commission.

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA : All these things will be examined. How can I say on the spot ?...

MR. SPEAKER : If the reply is not direct, then very complicated supplementary questions follow. So, it is better to give direct and straight answers.

SHRI MOHAN DHARIA : I am not yet aware of whether any such assurance was given or not.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE : The Prime Minister is present here. She should say whether she had given any such assurance or not.

THE PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF ATOMIC ENERGY, MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI) : It is true that I do feel that the problems of North Bengal need special attention and that the creation of special boards for it will help us to give that attention and to identify what areas are priority areas,

Law and Order Situation in West Bengal

*1266. **SHRI BISHWANATH JHUN-JHUNWALA :**
SHRI SAMAR GUHA :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

(a) whether the number of murders in Calcutta, in the Suburbs of Calcutta and in other parts of West Bengal have shown no signs of abatement ;

(b) the number of murders reported in the Press and those recorded with the Police during the last six months, month-wise ; and

(c) the elements responsible for this and the steps taken by Government to eradicate the evil ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI K. C. PANT) : (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

According to the information available, the number of political murders in West Bengal has continued to remain high and is thus a matter of serious concern. The information available monthwise is as follows :

Month	Murders	Political murders
January, 1971	174	90
February, 1971	204	85
March, 1971	264	99
April, 1971	233	112
May, 1971	249	65
June, 1971	not available	not available

These political murders were committed during inter-party clashes, agrarian disputes, industrial lawlessness and sneak attacks. Naxalites, other militant activists of political parties, and anti-social elements have been responsible for these murders. All possible steps under the law are being taken to curb the lawlessness in West Bengal.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Although I had asked for the figures for six months, in the statement the figures only for the period from January to May have been given. According to the statement, the total number of persons killed during those five months is 1124 and the total number of political murders is 451. It is also known that during the last three years, more than 5000 persons have been killed in West Bengal due to violent activities, and at least over a thousand political workers have lost their lives. May I know whether it is a fact that innumerable complaints have been made not only by the political parties but also by the public in this regard? Even in today's papers, there is a long report. In today's *Times of India* there is a long report about the failure of the police and also their corrupt practices and the fact that they are working in collusion with some extremists and

unsocial or anti-social elements. If so, may I know whether Government have gone into the failure of the police and intelligence services there in dealing with lawlessness and the violent activities in West Bengal?

SHRI K. C. PANT : I have seen the Press report to which my hon. friend has just referred. It is a fact that sometimes such complaints are received. It is the constant endeavour of Government to see that any specific complaints made are inquired into and corrective measures taken. The police in West Bengal are operating under extraordinary circumstances and among the sections of the population which have lost their lives as a result of deliberate action on the part of certain elements, police are one section of sufferers, and many policemen have lost their lives, and their families are also sought to be terrorised. They act under very peculiar circumstances, but wherever, as I have said, any specific instances are brought to our notice, we do look into them. In a general manner also, we provide them with housing facilities that they can live together and their families are not exposed to threats and terrorisation etc.; we also group them so that they can go out in groups and are not exposed to danger. All these things are also done so that they do not act out of fear and do not tend to compromise their position.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : What about corrupt practices by the police? In today's papers, there is a long list of it. They are operating in collusion with many extremist elements. About corrupt practice and whether the police are acting in collusion—this has not been replied to.

SHRI K. C. PANT : I have already answered. Wherever specific instances are brought to our notice, we do look into them.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : I have already said that more than 5,000 persons have been killed, of which about 1500 were political workers of different parties. These have been killed in these three years. In how many cases, the accused have been arrested, in how many cases have been started and how many of the offenders have been punished so far?

SHRI K. C. PANT : I do not have all these details for a number of years. I do know

that at one stage, many people who had been arrested and convicted were set free by one of the Governments.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Not even a dozen of the offenders have been punished. That is the tragedy of the whole situation.

SHRI K. C. PANT : I was trying to put the whole matter in perspective before the House. At one stage, a number of persons indulging in violence were arrested and during a previous Government's regime, they were set free. Thereafter, violence mounted. The position at present is that it is very difficult to get evidence. My hon. friend knows that even in the article he cited earlier, there is the instance of a person who had given some information and was, therefore, threatened to be killed in front of a number of people. None of them was prepared to give evidence. A brave lady saved him. I do not want to go into it now. But that particular incident typifies the kind of atmosphere there.

Coming to numbers of arrests of Naxalites and allied extremists, from April 1971 to 15 June, 1971, it was 1311; the total number of persons arrested during the period was 7189; 3421 persons have been detained in the State under the Prevention of Violent Activities Act upto 15-6-71.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : How many offenders have been punished? That is the most important thing.

SHRI SHIVAJI RAO S. DESHMUKH : Sometime before the fifth general election, I was in Calcutta city. In every street corner, there were invariably 2 traffic corps, one for controlling traffic and another to watch. There have been cases of serious assault on even traffic police. In view of this, has the Minister explored the possibility of installing electronic traffic control?

MR. SPEAKER : There is no question of electronic control in this.

SHRI SHIVAJI RAO S. DESHMUKH : I seek your protection. When a traffic constable is not assured of his safety, the matter is serious enough to warrant some other steps.

MR. SPEAKER : Please sit down.

SHRI H. N. MUKERJEE : In view of the apparent failure of the administration whe-

ther under President's rule or under the administration of responsible Ministers, to go into this matter and even to investigate properly cases of murder of eight or nine young people in four or five instances, may I know if Government is having any idea in regard to tackling this problem not merely by reinforcing the administrative process but also by seeing to it that a political dialogue takes place even with the so-called Naxalites and other young people who in today's worldwide atmosphere of violence are driven to certain ideas of quasi-revolutionary activity? May I know, therefore, if Government intends to treat them as a serious political movement and open a dialogue with them and then come to an understanding which alone can solve this extremely complicated position?

SHRI K. C. PANT : So far as the preamble to the question, if I may so put it, is concerned, the problem today in West Bengal is that whereas ordinarily when a crime is committed the bulk of the people who are peace-loving have no fear in coming forward and giving evidence or in intervening to save somebody's life which is threatened, such a situation does not prevail in West Bengal today because of terror. That has to be taken into account.

So far as the other part of the question is concerned, the dialogue of which my hon. friend Shri Mukerjee speaks is desirable if it can wean away these elements from their path of error, but that dialogue cannot be carried on by the Government alone. It is the responsibility of all of us to carry on such a dialogue and help them to see the path of reason and to restore their belief in democratic processes. Even now a dialogue is going on in Calcutta. For the last two days there have been meetings of political parties, and I would welcome any extension of this dialogue to include those elements which would like to work within the framework of the democratic system in which all of us or most of us do believe.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA : May I know how many members of the police have been killed, and in addition, can the hon. Minister tell us how many members of the political parties, party-wise, have been killed?

SHRI K. C. PANT : It is very difficult for me to give the information in terms of num-

bers. According to the information with me, so far as policemen go, in West Bengal during this year up to 15th July, 65 policemen were killed. So far as numbers of individual parties go, that figure I do not have on the basis of authoritative information from the West Bengal Government, and I would like to give only figures which are authoritative.

SHRI VIRBHADRA SINGH : One of the main reasons for the police force failing to cope with the law and order situation in West Bengal is that it is heavily infiltrated by people who have sympathies with these lawless elements. So, I want to know what steps the Government is taking to weed out these elements from the police force.

SHRI K. C. PANT : Wherever we find, whether in the police force or in the administration, that there are individuals who do not carry out their duties properly, whether in the context of my hon. friend's question or otherwise, we take action.

SHRI KRISHNA HALDER : I would like to know how many murders were committed in Calcutta in 1969-70 and 1970-71, and out of that, how many were political murders in the respective years.

SHRI K. C. PANT : That does not arise out of this question.

SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI : Has Government's attention been drawn to the very widespread allegation, even in Congress papers, that anybody giving information to the police runs the danger of being killed or murdered because that information is leaked from the police station itself. That allegation has come with regard to almost all the police stations in Birbhum; and also with regard to some of the specific police stations of Calcutta. People have actually been murdered even after offering to surrender their arms or giving some information. Has that aspect been taken into consideration and a thorough enquiry made into the working of the police force, intelligence, etc. taking all these aspects into consideration? Or has any proposal been formulated by the West Bengal Administration after the imposition of the President's rule? Or is it under the active consideration of the Government?

SHRI K. C. PANT : As I said earlier it is true that in West Bengal today individuals who give information pertaining to violent activities and their perpetrators....

SHRI TRIDIB CHAUDHURI : If you permit me I should like him to answer the question in the context of his answer earlier that people did not come forward to give evidence. People are demoralised.

SHRI K. C. PANT : That is precisely what I am saying. In the context of today people are afraid to come forward and to give information because they do feel threatened. I am agreeing with the premises which my hon. friend has placed before us. As to how the situation has to be met, what improvements are to be made in the police force and intelligence and how to increase their effectiveness are certainly matters which are being reviewed by us. During the earlier rule of the President, we had reviewed this question in some depth and had tried to strengthen the existing arrangements wherever necessary with some success. Now again this process is under way and only yesterday the Home Secretary and the Cabinet Secretary returned from Calcutta after an overall review of the situation.

SHRI S. B. GIRI : In the statement he says :

"Naxalites, other militant activists of political parties...have been responsible for these murders."

May I know from the hon. Minister which are the other political parties who are responsible for these violent activities?

SHRI K. C. PANT : It is a question of individuals indulging in these activities; they may also be incidentally members of political parties. But I think I should condemn the individuals who indulge in these activities....

SHRI S. B. GIRI : You have mentioned in the 'statement' Naxalites...other political parties...."

SHRI K. C. PANT : I have understood the question; there is no difficulty in understanding. Just now talks are going on in Calcutta between various political parties to try to get to the root of this very difficult problem.

SHRI S. B. GIRI : The written statement mentions about other political parties... (Interruptions)

SHRI K. C. PANT : I was mentioning that very serious efforts are being made to bring about a consensus so that all parties combine to put an end to this era of violence and bloodshed in West Bengal. Therefore, at this particular stage, even if one were in a position to mention the names of parties, I think it is much better not to mention.

Tagore's House at Shantiniketan Set on Fire

*1267. SHRI N. E. HORO : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that the Tagore's house at Shantiniketan was set on fire recently ;

(b) if so, the number of persons arrested in this connection ; and

(c) whether the arrested persons belong to any political party ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI K. C. PANT) : (a) Government have no such information.

(b) and (c). Do not arise .

SHRI N. E. HORO : The answer is in the negative ; I do not agree with this. Now, recently, you must have seen in the newspapers that there are reports, containing serious allegations against the police force who are said to be in league with some of the Naxalites. So, I would like to know from the Minister whether it is a fact that the Vice-Chancellor of the Visvabharati University has alleged that Government have refused to give arms licences to the guards of the University in spite of repeated requests.

SHRI K. C. PANT : Sir, I did see this morning a press report to that effect to which my hon. friend referred earlier—*The Times of*

India—but I will have to check on that, because I cannot say off-hand.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : May I know whether Government's attention has been drawn—particularly I am very happy that the Prime Minister is a student of Shantiniketan and also of poet Rabindranath Tagore and as such she has a special responsibility—to the reports in the newspapers today that the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Protul Chandra Gupta, has made a categorical statement that many valuable manuscripts to Tagore—

MR. SPEAKER : That was the point made previously.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : I am coming to the point.

MR. SPEAKER : You take a long time for coming to any point. That is the only bad point.

SHRI SAMAR GUHA : Perhaps I am not wrong if I refer to the hallowed memory of Rabindranath Tagore ; the Prime Minister was also a student of Gurudev Tagore. Now, the Vice-Chancellor of Visvabharati University has made an alarming report that many valuable manuscripts of Gurudev Tagore are being lost and some of them have been destroyed by some extremist elements. He has asked for protection of these valuable manuscripts from the Government. If that is so, what steps the Government are going to take to provide immediate protection of the valuable manuscripts of Tagore ?

SHRI K. C. PANT : In spite of stray incidents, I would like to assure my hon. friend that protection is being given by the police. It is not as though protection is being given. But in view of the historical and other kinds of treasures—literary and others—which are kept in the University, the Vice-Chancellor did take up the matter with the Central Government and at the Prime Minister's instance, two officers of the Intelligence Bureau visited the university and went into the security question in great detail, and they have made their suggestions and recommendations as to how to strengthen the security arrangements further. These are being implemented by the West Bengal Government.