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Title: The Minister of Home Affairs made a statement regarding violence by All Adivasi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) on 24th November, 2007.

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL): Sir, I rise, with a deep sense of anguish, to inform this august House of the violence which took place in Guwahati on 24th November, 2007. The Government of Assam has informed that :-

1. All Adivashi Students Association of Assam (AASAA) had applied to District Magistrate, Guwahati on 6-11-2007 for holding a Gana Samabesh (rally) on 24-11-07 at Guwahati in the South Beltola School field to press for their demand of declaring the Adivashis in Assam as Scheduled Tribes (Plains). No permission was granted to the Association for holding the rally. However, the people brought by AASAA started gathering in the field of South Beltola High School from the morning of 24-11-07. About 3000 to 3500 people gathered at the site by 11.30 AM. Most of the people came from the districts of Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglong, Darrang, Udalguri, Golaghat etc. in about 50 to 60 buses. After gathering, they wanted to take out a procession to the Dispur Capital complex.

They were not given permission by the Magistrate on duty to take out the procession. But about 1000 to 1500 persons broke away forcefully by overpowering the Police pickets at around 12 noon and entered the Bassistha Road leading to Dispur Capital complex from Beltola. On the way, they reportedly indulged in vandalism and damage to shops and cars by pelting stones and using the lathis, bows and arrows, which they were carrying with them. More than 50 vehicles and 30 shops are said to have been damaged in the process. When the processionists reached near the entrance to the MLAs Hostel, the Police party dispersed them by mild lathi charge and fired tear gas shells. On being dispersed, the processionists ran in different directions and entered different bylanes in the area in addition to the main Basistha Road. While they were dispersing the persons affected by the violence of these people retaliated and attacked them. As a result number of processionists/agitationists were injured. The situation was brought under control by 1 PM on 24th November, 2007 with the arrival of additional police force.

All the injured persons were shifted to Guwahati Medical College Hospital and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Civil Hospital. The total number of persons injured are 242, out of which 10 persons have been injured seriously. One person succumbed to his injury in the Hospital in the evening. The identity of the dead person is yet to be ascertained. 57 persons have been discharged and sent back to their respective districts on 25-11-07. All steps are being taken to give free medical treatment. It is expected that all the remaining persons other than the ten seriously injured persons will be discharged and sent to their respective home districts by 26-11-07 forenoon.

The District Magistrate imposed curfew as a precautionary measure from 2.25 PM on 24-11-07 which had been relaxed for 12 hours from 8 AM on 25-11-07. The curfew has been withdrawn from 8 PM on 25th November, 2007. On 24th November, 2007 after the incident, about 2000 persons who were in the meeting ground were safely sent back to their districts with police escort in the evening in the vehicles brought by them. About 900 people were rescued from different roads and bylanes and they were taken to Basistha Thana and sent to their respective home districts by 25th November morning under police escort.

The State Government has already announced ex gratia of Rs 3 lakh to the next of kin of the person killed and Rs 50,000/- to the persons seriously injured and Rs 10,000/- to the persons with simple injury. An enquiry by Shri P P Verma, Additional Chief Secretary has been ordered. Now I am told, Sir, that a judicial inquiry is ordered.

The situation at present is peaceful and under watch. The AASAA has given a call for 36 hours Assam bandh from 5 AM of 26-11-07 to 5 PM of 27-11-07.

2. There has been a demand for giving Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Tea and ex-tea garden communities comprising Munda, Oran, Gonds, Santhals etc. from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh etc. This has been examined several times by the office of the RGI. The Lokur Committee had also considered this issue in 1965, and had noted that they agreed with the opinion of the Backward Classes Commission and did not recommend the tea plantation labourers to be treated as STs. The settlers in the tea estates have tended to lose their tribal characteristics in the new surroundings. Moreover, the office of RGI noted that many of the tea tribe communities were not STs even in their native States i.e. Basor, Bhattar, Basphoor, Bhagta, Tandoi etc. They were SCs in the native states while Bhamij, Beha, etc. were listed as SC/ST in different states of origin. Based on these considerations and the observations of the Lokur committee, as well as the Backward Classes Commission, the RGI has not supported the proposal of the State Government for inclusion of tea tribes in the list of STs in Assam. The then Government of Assam had also initially consistently opposed giving them the ST status.

3. A close watch is being kept on the situation. The senior officers of the Ministry of Home Affairs are in constant touch with the Chief Secretary and the DGP of the State.0

I had also spoken to the Chief Minister.

(Placed in Library, See No. LT – 7396/07)

MR. SPEAKER: Please speak one by one.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Let me see how we can deal with this issue. Hon. Members, I have received five notices.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. Thank you for your kind help to the Chair.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Allow me to say something on this issue. I want a proper discussion like we had yesterday. I have received five notices for speaking during the Special Mention time on the Assam issue. If you want I can invite all the five hon. Members to speak, and they are from different Parties. I can call one or two more hon. Leaders, and we can have a discussion here. Do you want this discussion immediately or afterwards?

...(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): We want it to be discussed immediately. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (DEORIA): Sir, let us finish the discussion on this issue right now. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, are you ready for this discussion, and if some brief references are made here?

...(Interruptions)

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Sir, my problem is that I have some other matter in the other House, and I am expected to be there. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the system in this House, and you all know it very well as all of you are very experienced Members. No questions are permitted, and no discussion is allowed on this statement. Therefore, I shall give you proper time for discussion on this issue.

...(Interruptions)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दक्षिण दिल्ली) : जिस महिला को वहां नग्न किया गया, निर्वस्त्र किया गया, उसको जिस तरह से पीटा, उसके साथ जो घटना हुई, उसका इस स्टेटमेंट में जिक्र नहीं किया गया है।

MR. SPEAKER : We shall deal with it.

...(Interruptions)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : पूरे स्टेटमेंट में यह नहीं बताया गया है कि वहां कितने लोग मारे गए, क्या हुआ और वहां क्या स्थिति है?

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will be recorded.

(Interruptions) *â€!

MR. SPEAKER : No, I have agreed to it, but it would be discussed at a proper time.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Now, nothing will be recorded.

(Interruptions)* â€!

* Not recorded

12.17 hrs.