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Title: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs made a statement regarding attempt to commit suicide by four girl trainees of Sports Authority of India's Special Area Games Water Sports Centre at Alappuzha.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY): Madam, on behalf of the hon. Minister of State of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, I beg to lay a Statement regarding attempt to commit suicide by four girl trainee of Sports Authority of India's Special Area Games Water Sports Centre at Alappuzha....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Madam, it is one of the serious issues. We had raised that issue yesterday also. The hon. Minister has assured the House that he would make a statement in this regard. Kindly read the statement.

HON. SPEAKER: You can read the Statement.

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: This is certainly a very important matter. The hon. Minister has made a complete statement and all the facts are mentioned here. In case, you feel that there is anything additional to be asked, we can certainly get back.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: How can we know without reading it?

SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDY: I am laying this Statement. If you want me to read it, I can read it out. It is an important issue of Kerala and everyone should know about it. Now, I read it.

Speaker Madam, on behalf of my colleague Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, I wish to read a suo-moto statement in this august House on the most tragic and shocking incident in the history of Sports Authority of India (SAI) occurred at the SAI Special Area Games (SAG) Water Sports Centre (WSC) at Alappuzha, Kerala on 06.05.2015 wherein four girl inmates attempted to commit suicide by consumption of a locally available poisonous fruit known as "*Othallanga*", whose botanical name is *Cerbera Odollam*. The tree bearing this fruit is commonly referred to as suicide tree. The girls were detected to be unwell around 7.15 p.m. and were admitted to Alappuzha Medical College hospital around 9.00 p.m. One girl trainee Ms. Aparna Ramambhadran, a 17 year old promising junior national level rower succumbed to the poison in the early hours of 07.05.2015 while the remaining three girls are undergoing treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital. According to the latest update, as of 12.05.2015 early morning, the three surviving girls' health condition has improved significantly and stabilised.

The matter was reported to the hon. Minister in the morning and he directed Director General, SAI to immediately enquire into the matter and submit a report for necessary action. DG, SAI reached Kochi around 9.00 p.m. and proceeded straight to the Alappuzha Government Medical College by road and reached the hospital around 11.30 p.m. He visited the 3 surviving girl trainees in the ICU and enquired about their health. He also met the parents of the girls. DG, SAI later spoke to the District Collector and indicated that SAI was willing to airlift the girls for treatment at AIIMS, New Delhi, if the situation so warranted.

Based on his request, the Director, AIIMS constituted a Medical Board comprising the Heads of Medicine, Pharmacology, Cardiology and Emergency for providing necessary advice and support in the treatment of the girls. A telemedicine video conference was held with the expert doctors of AIIMS on 08.05.2015 at 10.00 a.m. The team of doctors at AIIMS expressed satisfaction over the treatment procedure adopted by the Alappuzha Government Medical College, but suggested certain modifications in the treatment management, which was duly followed. The DG, SAI once again met the parents of the three surviving girls and handed over a financial assistance of Rs.25,000/- each for meeting the miscellaneous expenditure. He also visited the house of the deceased girl, Ms Aparna Ramabhadran and assured fair enquiry and stringent action if anyone was found guilty. He handed over a cheque for Rs. 5,00,000/- (Rupees five lakhs only) to the mother of late Ms Aparna Ramabhadran as ex-gratia payment. He also offered her a job on a contract basis in SAI as a Multi-Tasking Staff.

DG, SAI interacted with the girl inmates in their hostel premises, which is a rented building, and appealed to them to face the situation with strength and cooperate with the ongoing investigations. Thereafter, he enquired from them as to what had actually happened. He also enquired from boy trainees, who have accommodated in the SAI centre, about the incident. Based on the interaction, the following decisions were taken for immediate action:-

- i. Psychology counselors may be engaged to counsel the trainees so that they can come out of the emotional trauma;
- ii. Particular care would be taken to ensure psychological and emotional rehabilitation of the three girls who have survived the suicide attempt;
- iii. The mothers of girl trainees may be allowed to stay in the hostel for a week or so until the situation normalizes;
- iv. The trainees who are keen to take a short break may be allowed to be taken home by their parents provided their presence is not required for the ongoing investigations;
- v. Hostels should be constructed by using pre-fabricated technology and all the inmates should be shifted within the shortest possible time to the premises of SAI centre;
- vi. An Assistant Director will be stationed at Alappuzha until normalcy is restored.

Several external investigations are currently underway, which include police investigation, preliminary enquiry conducted by the District Administration, enquiry by the State Sports Secretary, enquiry by State Human Rights Commission, etc. Hence it would not be appropriate to make any specific comment in this regard at this point of time. However, the shocking and tragic incident that occurred at the SAG Water Sports Centre, Alappuzha does point out an urgent need to strengthen the SAI training system. DG, SAI has made elaborate suggestions for the purpose. Some of the major recommendations made by DG, SAI as follows

(i) Engagement of counseling psychologists in all SAI training Centres for the purpose of group counseling as well as one-on-one counseling. This is considered most essential for the emotional well-being of the trainees;

(ii) Yoga may be introduced as a compulsory activity in all SAI centres, as it would have a salutary effect on holistic development and emotional well-being of SAI trainees. Part-time Yoga instructors may be engaged for this purpose;

(iii) AIIMS to develop a two-day module on sports psychology for SAI trainees, which would be extremely useful for them;

(iv) We may request iconic sportspersons to adopt SAI centres and act as SAI Trainee Mentors. This will not only inspire young SAI trainees but also enable them to emulate the qualities of their role model;

(v) A 24X7 Helpline may be introduced for SAI trainee related grievance redressed, especially for reporting the cases of sexual harassment;

(vi) A robust institutionalized mechanism should be put in place to maintain close rapport and coordination with the State Sports department.

(vii) An Expert Committee may be constituted to study the existing SAI training system and make necessary recommendations for its further improvement in the areas of sports and related infrastructure, equipment support, coaching, sports science (including sports medicine and sports psychology), competition exposure, skill development, management, holistic trainee development, athlete grievance redressal, anti-sexual harassment measures and overall security. The Committee may visit, a few SAI Centres to gain first-hand understanding. The Committee may submit its report along with recommendations within two months.

We would examine these suggestions and take necessary action at the earliest to ensure that such incidents do not occur in future.

I thank the Kerala Government and people from all walks of life in the State who extended full assistance to us in dealing with the situation.

Thank you.

11.15 hrs