

17.02 hrs.

STATEMENT ON AHMEDABAD
RIOTS

[*English*]

THE MINISTRY OF AFFAIRS (SHRI S. B. CHAVAN) : Sir, The House is aware that since the middle of February, 1985 disturbed law and order situation is prevailing in Ahmedabad and part of Gujrat. I had made a statement in the House on 21st March. Very recently, on 18th April I had made another statement and informed the House of the prevailing situation. I had also expressed a hope that all sections will contribute to the restoration of normalcy and ensure that there is no breach of peace in Ahmedabad and elsewhere in the State. It is unfortunate that despite steps taken by the State Government to take concerted positive measures, the situation took a serious turn on 22nd April.

The communal trouble that had erupted on 17/18th night was brought under control by the morning of 18th April. The Chief Minister and his colleagues held discussions with various sections of the society including representatives of the various associations, leaders of opposition parties and other political leaders, educationists, etc. A common appeal was issued by all concerned on 19th April to call off the agitation. Unfortunately, certain political leaders, although their party had subscribed to the common appeal, continued to engage in activities which lead to intensifying the agitation. There were wide-ranging allegations against the police.

In the meantime on 20th April, the High Court of Gujarat gave two directions in order to ascertain the veracity of the contents of certain petitions moved before the High Court. Firstly, a committee of two members was appointed to hold a discreet enquiry into the incidents which had been averred in the petitions as well as into

the newspaper reports and statements of persons from the locality. This Committee consisted of two members, namely, Shri P. P. Rathod, Secretary, Revenue Department of the State Government and Shri J. N. Bhatt, Registrar of the Gujarat High Court. The Committee was asked to submit report to the High Court in sealed cover not later than 25th April, 1985. Secondly, the High Court directed their Joint Registrar, assisted by the Additional Registrar to arrange for taking photographs of the properties alleged to have been damaged. The petitioners were asked to furnish a list of places which such petitioners want to have photographs to be taken.

The State Government was directed to render all facilities in carrying out the two directions issued by the High Court.

Earlier on 20th April, 1985 in Khadia area, a determined mob of 1000 persons had indulged in pelting stones on the police men on duty. Despite police urging the mob to go back to their places and not to defy the curfew order, the mob insisted that police should not be present in their area. On the same day, i.e. on 20th April, the Gujarat High Court was moved by certain individuals of the Khadia-Raipur area to restrain the police from using undue force against women and from entering into their houses. It is reported that these developments emboldened the people to insist complete withdrawal of the police from their area. This demoralised the police personnel and they became restive and started assembling at one place. As soon as this was known, senior police officers urged the police to go back to their duty points which they did almost immediately. However, as a precautionary measure, the Commissioner of Police decided to deploy Army in Khadia and Raipur area following which most of the police personnel were withdrawn from that area.

It is with deep regret that I have to inform the House that while carrying

out the directions of the High Court on 22nd April, 1985 a grave incident took place. A team consisting of Additional Registrar, and Joint Registrar of the High Court accompanied by a photographer, the petitioners and the representative of the State Government visited Raipur and Khadia areas of Ahmedabad city for taking photographs of the property alleged to have been damaged. At about 11.00 hours, a hostile crowd collected in the area. When the team reached Raipur gate, the crowd following the team attacked one head-constable and one Home Guard with lethal weapons. The Head-Constable succumbed to injuries immediately. The Home Guard was also seriously injured.

The death of the head-constable compounded by adverse reporting in the Press on an earlier decision of the Judicial Magistrates' Court restraining certain police offices from entering into Raipur and Khadia areas had deeply hurt the feelings of the police force which was already demoralized. With this background, it would now appear that the visit of the team appointed by the High Court during which the head-constable was dastardly attacked and killed led to outbursts of pent up feelings in the police force. The funeral procession of the deceased head constable was attended by large number of police men. As the funeral procession moved on the police men got restive and unfortunately some of them indulged in acts of arson, damage to private properties, including vehicles on the road. The premises of the Gujarat Samachar Press and the Indian Express—the Jansatta Press were set on fire. Further, most of the city unarmed police deserted their duties and even the mobile police wireless communication system was disrupted.

As soon as the death of the head-constable was reported to the Chief Minister, he condemned the death and announced Rs. 1 lakh as relief to the family of the deceased. He also issued

an appeal to the police men to go back to their duties. Simultaneously, Home Minister and the Director General of Police also appealed to the police men. The DGF and the Commissioner of Police of Ahmedabad city and other senior officers moved from police station to police station persuading the police men to go back to their duties. All these conciliatory efforts were able to bring the police men on duty by 19.00 hours on 22nd April.

Following withdrawal of the police from duty; the State Government took a decision to strengthen the Army reinforcements and move the same to the riots effected same areas in the city. Very promptly the Army took positions in all the areas badly affected by violence. The Army had been called in to assist civil authority and information given out by certain news agencies that Ahmedabad city was handed over to Army is completely incorrect.

It has been reported that the High Court has since suspended till 25th April, the action on the directions and the matters would be reviewed by the Court on the 26th April. Directions regarding the movement etc. of certain police officials in some specified areas have also been reportedly stayed/suspended till the 29th April.

I have said in the past and the House has shared our feelings that all violence must be condemned. All sections of society and all political parties must act in a way so as to contribute to the restoration of normalcy not only in Ahmedabad but throughout the State of Gujarat. There has generally been positive response to the efforts of the State Government in this regard. Although it is a matter of regret that some individuals have continued to indulge in activities which has vitiated the atmosphere. Although the press has been extremely cooperative yet there were highly exaggerated and distorted versions of the incidents in some sections of the press. All this coupled with dastardly act which took

[Shri S. B. Chavan]

place during the course of implementing the High Court's directives, perhaps led to a situation and behaviour by the policemen unbecoming of a uniformed service.

I am sure, the House will join me in condemning the action of the mob which resulted in the death of the Head-Constable and serious injury to a Home Guard. Wholehearted and very positive efforts must be made by all to get rid of the violence and to restore law and order. Again I appeal to all sections of the House and also the Paess to co-operate in this task and help to restore normalcy in Ahmedabad and other parts of Gujarat.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Now we will take up item at serial No. 6...

(Interruptions)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Raipur) : Sir, in the morning both at 11 O'clock and at 12 O'clock
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down, all of you. I will hear each one of you. I do not want others to stand up. If any Member wants to say anything, let him stand and say. If all Members are standing like this, I would not be able to hear anything and I will not allow anything to go on record. I request all of you to sit down first. I am very firm in this matter. First, all of you please sit down. I will call each one of you but not like this. Yes, Professor Dandavate, what do you want to say ?

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Sir, in the morning
(Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I will call you also, I will call both the sides.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Sir, in the morning when we demanded that a statement be made by the Home

Minister, I had also suggested that the moment the Speaker had announced that Home Minister will make a statement, we took it for granted that the matter was already on the List of Business and we had given notice under Rules 194 and 193 that actually we take the statement of the Home Minister into consideration and proceed with the discussion. If you go through the records, in the morning, the Speaker had not rejected, he said, "I am not barring the discussion but I will decide on merits after the statement is made by the Minister". According to the rules, when the Minister makes a statement in the House, he has to provide a copy of the statement to the Speaker before he makes the statement. It is approved by the Speaker and then the Minister is granted permission to make the statement. So, he is already in possession of the text of the statement. By this time, knowing the seriousness of the situation, he must have made up his mind. I would like to quote a precedent. On 21st of February, 1982, when the Nellie massacre took place, at 11 O'clock I had demanded the actual cancellation and suspension of Question Hour. The entire House was agreed that we should suspend the Question Hour. Since the Speaker has said in the morning that he will consider the question of discussing the statement, I want to know what the decision of the Speaker is. This matter is extremely serious... ..
(Interruptions).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : He only said that he will consider.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Don't speak like the Minister, Sir, that the matter is under consideration. That is the standard reply given for the last hundred years. Let not the Deputy-Speaker speak in the language of the Minister... ..
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Please sit down, all of you. I shall answer him.

(Interruptions)