

rehabilitate them. I would urge the government to intervene in the matter and resettle these people so that they could earn their livelihood. That is all, I wanted to say.

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am raising a question pertaining to human beings. The situation prevailing in Tripura is very serious. On 9th and 10th instant a team of 8 M. Ps. visited those areas of Tripura where according to our information nearly 102 tribal people expired this year due to the outbreak of this epidemic between 24th March and 3rd May. As per the statistics made available to us by the Government, 82 people have expired. Sir, last year, in this very month, the epidemic broke out and according to the information made available to us number of victims is 142 but the Government gives the number as 121. The number of casualties in such a low populated area, is very high in comparison to the number of casualties in any part of India. But it is a matter of regret that adequate arrangements are not being made there. We met the Chief Minister. He said that for the purpose of maintenance an amount of Rs. 500/- will be paid ex gratia under a scheme to be launched in the area after 15th to each of the bereaved families. It is quite shameful that the value of human life has been fixed at just Rs. 500/- in independent India. We have shot a videofilm and an application has also been sent. One man, Shri Pradeep Dev Verma, resident of Tosa Mohrampur in Village Manikpur has complained that he had to sell his two sons, one Shri Ramesh aged 5 years and another Shri Malik aged 3 years to Shri Pavindra Tripura and Shri Kavindra Tripura of that village at the rate of Rs. 40/- each. Nothing can be more shameful than this in this independent India. How much degradation has come in human values.

We visited the hospital and met the C.M.O. and the District Magistrate. According to the figures furnished by them the number of patients admitted during the last two months is two thousand. The

patients are to be brought from a distance of 30 kms. Sometimes, it so happens that the patients died on their way to hospital and their family members ran away leaving the dead body on the road. Some families fled to Bangladesh, some to Assam and some to Mizoram which is quite adjacent. In this manner, they left the dead-bodies which were being eaten by dogs, eagles and vultures. If the value of a human being is reduced to this extent, I think it would be a matter of utter shame for independent India.

I would like to draw the attention of the Government towards tribal belt. The Central Government is equally responsible for it. I would urge the Central Government to depute a special team to that village of Tripura where a large number of people have died because of this epidemic. Water is supplied through a tanker from a distance of 50 kilometres. At times the tanker arrives and at times it does not. There is no regular supply of water. Thus power force they have to drink dirty water that is available. There is no arrangement for the supply of food grains. The Ration depot is opened only for 2 days. A tribal who comes from a distance of 30 kilometres may or may not be able to purchase ration. He has no purchasing power. With the result, he has no option except to eat wild grass. Consequently, thousands of people are becoming victims of epidemic. The attention of the Central Government should be drawn to this issue and a team should be sent to assess the situation. The Government should make arrangements to provide not only medicine and food to the Advisis and by it should also arrange Mobile squads for distributing ration to Advisis in far flung areas.

The helpless people are compelled to run to neighbouring States to earn their livelihood. Such kind of helplessness should not be there. I urge the Central Government to undertake relief work immediately and arrangements may be made to pay at least Rs. 50,000/- as compensation to the bereaved families.

I conclude with this submission.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now, this is a serious matter. All of you have stood up. All of you are endorsing what Shri Mohan Singh has said. Now, let the hon. Minister respond. Then, we will go to the other points.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: We take it that you all are of the same view.

(Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV) : Sir, I do not have any reasons to disbelieve the statement of the hon. Member, who himself has visited the area along with other Members. I have been told that they had an interaction with the Chief Minister who was also there. They apprised the Chief Minister about this particular menancey which has taken place. It is a fact. It did happen last year and it has repeated this year. When it did happen last year I took it up with the hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare Shri M.L. Fotedar. A Central team visited there and identified the cause of this particular disease and also submitted a report. The follow-up action was also taken from the State Governemnt. This year when it happened, I took up with the Prime Minister and the prime Minister has instructed another team to visit. I do not know whether it has gone. It tis unfortunate that this repetition itself has crated a panc in the area. I do not want to go into dispute whether the people are going to Bangladesh and other place. It may happen. I have no reasons to disbelieve. i fully agree with the hon. Member that both Central Government and State Government should take appropriate action so that it does not occur again. I assure the hon. Members that I will again

take it up with the State Government as well as the Central Governemnt. I am one with them . I only request that this should not be politicised. (Interruptions) I am not saying it. (Interruptions) Am I saying that you are politicizing it?

(Interruptions)

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY: Please do not bring that discussion here. No one is saying that it should be politicized.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: I, therefore, say that this is a human tragedy and the State Government and the Central Government are looking into it from that aspect and I hope suitable action will be taken.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

*SHRI V.S. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: (Palaghat): Mr. Speaker, I am raising an important human problem. The bidi workers are the most backward and unorgansied section of our society. Although, Governemnt has formulated a number of schemes to protect these workers and to ensure job security and other rights, these schemes have not been propely iimplemented so far. In a country where lakhs of people are unemployed, this is a sector where with very meager capital investment, thousands of workers could be given employment. Unless the Government takes immediate steps to implement strictly the Bidi-cigar Act in all States and also to ensure the payment of minimum wages to them, lakhs of Bidi workers will suffer extreme miscry. bdi esdesorkers who have attain the age of 50 years must he bepaid a monthly pension of Rs. 250/- A corporation should be set up for the unorganised Bidi workers. The worker who

*Translation of the speech originally delivered in Malyalam.