

[Shri Jawaharlal Nehru]

just heard the President refer in his speech to the Kumbh Mela tragedy. I have no doubt that every Member of this House as well as elsewhere will associate himself with our deep sorrow and our sympathy and condolence with not only those who are bereaved, the families of those who have suffered in this tragedy, but with many others.

This is hardly the occasion for me to go into any facts of this terrible occurrence, partly because the matter is under enquiry by a distinguished committee, and partly because the State Government concerned is dealing with the matter. Some of us here were certainly present at the Kumbh Mela on this occasion, though they may not have been on the actual scene of this tragedy. I was in the Mela itself when this tragedy took place. In fact, I was in a rather high place—in the balcony of the Fort—having a distant view of the whole of that mighty concourse of human beings. I do not think that anyone who saw that enormous multitude—it is estimated that at least four million people had gathered together—can ever forget it. It came as a deep sorrow that, during this tremendous event when so many people had gathered together, there should have been this tragedy in which many suffered death.

As I said, I do not wish to go into the facts of this occurrence at this stage, but I think that it is right that we should begin our work today with our expression of sorrow and condolence.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat) rose—

Mr. Speaker: There is no occasion for a speech now.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty: May I know what has happened to the adjournment motion?

Mr. Speaker: That will come in due course; not now.

I entirely associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. the

Leader of the House. The tragedy was so sudden and so wide, in a sense affecting everyone in the whole of the Indian Union, that it has moved every heart to its depth. I think it is but proper that we should express our deep sorrow and our condolence to the families of the deceased and others who have suffered. We shall express our condolence and sympathy by standing in silence for two minutes.

(The House stood in silence for two minutes.)

DEATH OF SHRI NAMDHARI

Mr. Speaker: I regret to inform the House of the passing away of Shri Atma Singh Namdhari who was a sitting Member of the House, at the age of 53.

We mourn the loss of Shri Namdhari and I am sure the House will join me in conveying our condolences to his family. The House may stand in silence for a minute to express its sorrow.

(The House stood in silence for a minute.)

DETENTION OF SHRI BHAJAHARI MAHATA

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House that I have received the following communication from the Magistrate, 1st Class, Purulia, Manbhum, Bihar:—

"22nd January, 1954.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I have found it my duty in exercise of my powers under section 502 Cr.P.C. 1898 to direct that Shri Bhajahari Mahata, Member of the House of the People, [a report against whom under section 9(5) of the Bihar Maintenance of Public Order Act, 1949, has been received by me] be detained for the reason that his bailor Shri Sahadeb Chakrabarty who stood surety for him on 21-1-54 when he appeared in my

court in response to the summons issued by the S.D.O. Sadar Purulia, refused to stand surety for him and surrendered him in court for necessary legal action stating that Sri Mahata does not like to remain on bail. Sri Bhajahari Mahata was asked to furnish another surety but he declined to do so and instead asked for being remanded to custody in pursuance of the new policy of his party namely Lok Sevan Sangha.

Sri Bhajahari Mahata M.P. was accordingly taken into custody at 3 p.m. on 22nd day of January, 1954 and is at present lodged in the district Jail at Purulia, Manbhum."

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT

KUMBH MELA TRAGEDY

Mr. Speaker: I have received notices of adjournment motions relating to the same subject, viz. the Kumbh Mela tragedy,—one from Shrimati Renu Chakravartty, one from Shri V. G. Deshpande and another jointly from Shri Kripalani, Shri Gurupadaswamy and Shri K. Subrahmanyam. Before I give my ruling, I should like to know how these motions are admissible in this House, because however unfortunate the incident may be, the Mela administration was entirely a matter for the Uttar Pradesh Government, and they were in charge of the arrangements. I do not think the motions would be admissible, but I should like to know from those hon. Members who have tabled the motions if they have anything to say—not on the merits but on the question of admissibility.

I may state that there is also another reason for it, and that is that a committee of enquiry has already been set up and it will be premature to discuss anything without first knowing what the facts are, as may be found by the enquiry committee.

Further, there has been a reference to this incident in the President's Address, and though the discussion

may not be permissible on an adjournment motion, I think it may not be possible altogether to avoid reference to this subject during the discussion on the President's Address, because the mention has been made by the President in his Address today.

There are also other reasons, but the principal reason is that the central responsibility is not there. The Government at the Centre was not actually in charge of the administration of the Mela arrangements and I do not see how I can consent to this adjournment motion.

Shrimati Renu Chakravartty (Basirhat): May I state, Sir, first that technically you may rule it out, but even technically you cannot do so, because it is a national tragedy? On top of that it is the Central Government which authorised the Uttar Pradesh Government to impose a toll tax. Even in the matter of amenities provided for the pilgrims the Central Government took responsibility. Above all, Sir, the main reason why we should debate this matter in this House is that there were many important Union Ministers who were present there and it was the many arrangements that were made for them that was directly responsible for this tragedy. Not only that, after this tragedy had happened, several of them were attending tea parties, etc., which has shocked the whole of India.

These are the reasons, Sir, why we consider that this matter should be debated in this House.

Shri V. G. Deshpande (Guna): My submission is that this matter should engage the attention of the Centre and this House because it was a national calamity of such a colossal scale that the whole of India has been shocked. The list of casualties shows that not only people from Uttar Pradesh but also from Bihar, Gujerat and other provinces have been involved in the tragedy. Moreover, the Prime Minister, the President of the Republic and the Ministers of the Central Government, as the Prime Minister himself has just now referred, were present in the Mela when this