

Together, We Can Manage Large Socio-Religious Gatherings – Dr. Pravin Togadia suggests

NCSRE - National Council for Socio-Religious Events

Prayag, February 11, 2013

On the tragic stampede at Prayag railway station that killed around 36 devotees & injured many, VHP International Working President Dr. Pravin Togadia has expressed grief & said, “Devotees who lost their lives & limbs for no fault of theirs were Hindu. They came to Mahakumbh from almost all states of Bharat & from all walks of life. It was the responsibility of both Central & the State Govts to care for them in every aspect. State Govt has advertised Prayag Mahakumbh in every state. Posters are stuck even on buses & hoardings in many towns all over Bharat with the target of tourism revenue. Nothing wrong in it but then there is a responsibility too. Not only because it is advertised but it is a religious right of Hindus. Now there is a stampede, both Govts blaming each other & jointly both Govts say – Because of large crowds the mishap happened. Blaming Hindus for everything has become the easiest way out for all now. RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, Hindu HelpLine & many Sadhu-Saints’ systems rushed to help the injured. Admin was not very cooperating even allowing the groups to help. Stretchers were limited, medical teams were not there & there was total chaos. The blame game will go on.

At every such incident, there is chaos & aftermath there is a blame game. Instead, we all should come out with concrete solutions & systems to handle such large socio-religious gatherings proactively. RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Hindu Help Line, many Sadhu-Saints are used to organizing large gatherings of people coming in from various states & from various social-economic classes. Govts should take help from all such groups rather than ostracizing them terming them ‘Hindu Terrorists’. There are experts in Disaster Management, Crowd Management, Traffic Management, Health services management, etc. It is skill & matter of expertise how not to let a large crowd being static at one place for a long time without disturbing the religious activities or without causing a commotion. We all have been handling it for long now. Many Para-military agencies have the expertise of disciplined event management. Millions of people attend many Saints discourses at a time. It is time that Govts heed to the advice & actual help from organizations like ours rather than trying to divide & rule. And then fail.

Here are specific actions that will help all manage such large socio-religious gatherings:

1. Form a National Council for Socio-Religious Events (NCSRE). Members of it should be: Union Minister for Cultural Affairs, Ministers of the same portfolio of all states, senior representative of a St Minister level & the Secretary level each from the Home Ministry at center & all states, retired senior Army & Police Officers, at least 5 prominent Sadhu-Saints (to be selected without political grudge), representative each from RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, Hindu Help Lie & other such organizations – again without any political bias, representative from the media – national & regional to report correctly without adding rumours to avoid further chaos, Telecom / IT dept representative along with the service providers representative to set up the routine & emergency connecting lines. (past 3 days, due to large crowds, the mobile connection networks are jammed resulting in not being able to send help in time.), Fire Services representative, Health & Medical facilities teams with the complete fleet of ambulances & first aid along with the RMOs (Resident Medical Officers) & trained nurses specially deputed for such gatherings, drinking & usage water supply dept representative, garbage disposal management organizations (this has been causing severe infections in such gatherings) & religion-friendly Art & Culture Experts to understand the sensitivity of the gatherings.
2. There can be added to many other representatives as & when needed. Primary responsibilities, checkpoint listing, deliverables, actual visits to the gathering locations, setting up pre-event preparation units at the locations & each state, coordination points with various related Govt departments, allocation of sufficient budgets & non-corrupt transparent dispersing of funds are some of the important tasks the NCSRE (National Council for Socio-Religious Events) should take up.
3. Obviously, studying the history of many such large gatherings is also an important part of this activity & various universities can depute the teams of students for this interesting & significant work. Depts. of History, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering (during this Kumbh, due to sudden rains, the electricity supply of the total Kumbh campus was cut off for more than an hour & the reason given was fear of short-circuiting. However valid the reason, millions of people were suddenly left in the dark at the unknown location on the banks of the rivers in the crowd. Experts may suggest better management of electricity supply.) & any



other relevant depts. The universities can help study many aspects of such gatherings.

4. Task allocation in time & then making necessary systems available to the task-teams are key areas of making such gatherings hassle-free & happy for the devotees. It is not only the matter of disaster management but also preventing the disaster as well as creating congenial smooth atmosphere & systems for millions of people at culturally important places is a must. Blaming each other, pre-judging large socio-religious organizations with a bias & deep-rooted apathy towards masses will not help the nation in anyways. Condemning such socio-religious gatherings as a national waste has also become a fashion these days among some so-called pseudo-secular groups who have great respect for other faiths' gatherings but to Hindus. Such biased views make Hindu devotees victims of further negligence by the administrations. Therefore, once & for all, everybody in Bharat should realize that such socio-religious gatherings & the faith behind them is the religious psyche' of Bharat & it is the duty of all to facilitate it not only for religious tourism but also as a national duty.

5. At this moment, however apparent is the discrimination to Hindus vis-à-vis other faiths' gatherings such as Hajj, Carnivals, etc, I will not elaborate on it. It is time to set of concrete systems as suggested above & we all are more than willing to work together on this with all Govts & administrations so that Bharat will be an example for the world for the largest socio-cultural gatherings with joy, faith & care without tragedies & loss of human lives.

_____ Contact: drtogadia@gmail.com