

**Statement of the Home Minister
on the
situation in Orissa**

The situation in Orissa has been engaging the attention of the Central Government in the last two weeks.

2. There was a call for a "Bandh" on December 25, 2008 by a number of organizations that had demanded the arrest of persons involved in the killing of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati. Members belonging to the Christian community, including Church leaders, had expressed apprehensions about their safety and the safety of their places of worship. Some organizations representing the tribal communities had also put forward certain demands.

3. I have spoken to the Chief Minister of Orissa twice, including once today.

4. The Government of Orissa has reported that they had arrested seven persons suspected in the murder of Swami Lakshmanananda Saraswati. The State Government has also been able to persuade the organizations concerned to withdraw their call for a bandh. The Chief Minister has assured me that there will be no bandh on December 25, 2008.

5. The Central Government has provided a large number of security personnel to assist the State Government in maintaining Law and Order. Apart from 24 companies of CRPF deployed on a long term basis in Orissa, the Central Government has provided an additional 49 companies of CRPF and 4 companies of Rapid Action Force (RAF).

6. Today, the Central Government has provided a helicopter to the State Government for patrolling over Kandhamal and Sambhalpur districts.

7. The Central Government is in constant touch with the State Government. I have requested the Chief Minister to keep me informed about the developments and have offered him further assistance, if necessary. I have impressed upon him that it is the responsibility of the State Government to maintain Law and Order and protect the lives and property of all sections of the people in the State.

8. My appeal to the people of Orissa is to maintain the peace and harmony among different communities. Christmas is celebrated in many countries of the world, including India, as a day of joy, happiness and peace. I am confident that the Government of Orissa will ensure that December 25, 2008 and the days following will be marked by peace and harmony.

Sd/-

**(P. Chidambaram)
Home Minister
December 24, 2008**