

Freebies distributed by States should not be compensated by funds for disaster relief: Amit Shah

Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024 passed by voice vote in the Rajya Sabha; send realistic proposals, the Union Home Minister told States

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VIJAITA SINGH



Union Home Minister Amit Shah speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session of the Parliament in New Delhi on Tuesday. | Photo Credit: ANI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday (March 25, 2025) said the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024 did not infringe upon federalism, adding that States could not compensate freebies from the allocated disaster response funds.

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The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by a voice vote on Tuesday. Mr. Shah said that funds disbursed under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) were fixed according to the norms prescribed by the Finance Commission, and if a State complained that they had not received enough funds, then they should send the proposal in the prescribed format.

“Finance Commission has fixed norms for disaster management. I want to request all States to submit request according to norms. The freebies distributed by you cannot be compensated from disaster management funds. The norms permit ₹5,000 crore and you demand ₹50,000 crore. If you do not have the guidelines, the Chief Ministers should write to me, I will have them sent across to them personally,” Mr. Shah said.

Responding to a remark by All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) member M. Thambidurai, Mr. Shah said that the “flood of alcohol and corruption” would stop in the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK)-led Tamil Nadu government after the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government came to power in the State in 2026.

Defending the Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) fund that was set up during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Home Minister said that the money was spent in a transparent manner, and a committee comprising Secretary-rank officers and Cabinet Ministers oversaw the trust.

Mr. Shah said the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund (PMNRF), constituted during the Congress’s rule, had been controlled by one family.

“This is Parliament, not some street, you cannot shoot and scoot. Congress president used to be a member of PMNRF, which is a public fund. Under PM-CARES, Union Ministers are members. If tomorrow, we are not there, though unlikely, the Ministers of the day will be members. The BJP president [J.P.] Nadda is not a member of PM-CARES. There was no transparency then. Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) run by [former] Congress president [Sonia Gandhi] received funds from PMNRF, whereas PM-CARES spent on vaccination to help the poor during COVID-19,” Mr. Shah said.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh rose to protest Mr. Shah’s claim. Mr. Ramesh said the Minister was misleading the House.

Mr. Shah said many organisations involved in religious conversions and Chinese entities funded the RGF.

He also claimed that India was “more or less free of the use of single use plastic”.

Participating in the debate, Sandosh Kumar P. of the Communist Party of India (CPI) demanded that the Bill be sent to the Joint Parliamentary Committee for further scrutiny.

Referring to the Wayanad floods, Congress’s Jebi Mather Hashim said that Kerala should get its due, and flood-affected people should not be discriminated against.

Priyanka Chaturvedi of the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray or UBT) said that the Bill “omitted the manmade situation related to law and order”, and freed the government in terms of responsibility for relief in disasters, including the recent stampede at the New Delhi Railway Station or at the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj.

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