

the Question Hour closes, a particular question may be taken up and given priority, I consider that matter and then allow it.

Shri M. L. Dwivedi: This means that the questions of those hon. Members who would be getting their legitimate chance could not be taken up.

Mr. Speaker: I decide that this question may be given priority just two minutes before the Question Hour closes. If any hon. Member had drawn my attention to any other question, I would have considered that also.

Statement by the Union Law Minister

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*1068 { **Shri Hem Barua:**
Pandit D. N. Tiwari:
Shri Khushwaqt Rai:
Shri N. R. Muniswamy:

Will the Minister of Home Affairs be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Union Law Minister while commending a settlement of Assam's language problem through negotiations between the Cachar leaders and the Union Home Minister said recently at a Press Conference in Calcutta to the effect that "if negotiations however break down, it will create a state for civil war in Assam with all its consequences";

(b) if so, whether Government are aware of the wide-spread reaction in Assam that the Law Minister's statement has led to; and

(c) whether Government would enlighten the public on the purport or genesis of this statement made by a member of Government?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Shri Datar): (a) Yes.

(b) Government are aware of certain reactions in Assam.

(c) The Law Minister was laying stress on the imperative necessity of accepting the formula that had emerged in the course of Shri Lal Bahadur

Shastri's discussions with the different parties, and of ending all disputes. He was stressing the serious consequences which might follow if the negotiations failed by the rejection of this formula.

Shri Hem Barua: May I know whether a statement of this sort coming from a Member of the Government, namely that 'If negotiations, however, break down, it will create a state of civil war in Assam with all its consequences', made to the Sangram Parishad of Cachar, that was the spearhead of the agitation there, is not an indirect encouragement to a certain section of the people to start a civil war in Assam?

Mr. Speaker: It is a matter of opinion.

The Minister of Home Affairs (Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri): As the reply says, the Law Minister did not give any kind of encouragement of that type or instigate people to start some kind of civil war. The fact of the matter is that he said something entirely different. He was appealing to them and requesting them not to start any kind of movement. And when they insisted that they would do so, he said that they should try persuasive methods and agree to the proposals which were put forward by me; but when they said 'Suppose it is not agreed to?', then, he said, that one did not know, but there might be difficulties and conflicts within the State itself.

Shri C. K. Bhattacharya: The hon. Minister has stated that Government have become aware of certain reactions. May I know from what spheres of public life these reactions have been ascertained, from the newspapers, from the meetings or from what other spheres of public life?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: We have read what has appeared in the papers both in Assam as well as in West Bengal.

Shri Manaen: In view of the recent decisions at the Chief Ministers' Conference, will some of the recommendations of the Shastri Formula, such as Bengali being the only language of Cachar, be dropped?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: No, Sir. The recommendations of the Chief Ministers' conference do not contradict or cancel the proposals which I had put forward. More or less the same principles have been agreed to with minor variations and changes, but Bengali will continue to be the administrative language of the district.

Pandit D. N. Tiwari: May I know whether, after this statement, the Chief Minister of Assam made any representation to the Government of India about the statement of the Law Minister, and whether the Government of India had some discussions with the Law Minister and the Chief Minister together?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: The Chief Minister had some doubt, and he wrote to the Law Minister, and a copy of that was sent to us also. The matter was explained to him, and I can only tell the House that the Law Minister was exceedingly helpful to us in this matter. His intentions were perfectly good and all right. He was trying to persuade the people not to start agitations and movements, and I think that the talks and discussions that they had helped us a good deal. The Chief Minister is perfectly satisfied that what the Law Minister had said had nothing to do with the kind of imputations which were ascribed to him.

Shri Manaen: Will the hon. Home Minister make one thing clear, because that vitally affects my area, namely Darjeeling, where the question of language is seriously agitating the minds of the people? May I know whether Bengali will be the administrative language in addition to Assamese, or Bengali be the only language for administrative and other official purpose in Cachar? This will have to be made absolutely clear,

because the people of Darjeeling have also been demanding almost on the same lines as those of Cachar. If Bengali there is in addition to Assamese, then the people of Darjeeling may also perhaps accept Nepali being the official language in addition to Bengali, because we would like that there should not be two sets of principles for the people living in the same country.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has not been attending Parliament recently. Therefore, he wanted to take this opportunity of making a speech!

Shri Manaen: In fact, I have given notice of a motion for discussion on the report of the Chief Ministers' conference.

Mr. Speaker: I shall see if it can be admitted.

Is it in addition to Assamese, or exclusively Bengali?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: Of course, the regional language of the State cannot be ruled out from any part or any area of the State, but as Bengali-speaking people are more or less 70 per cent. in that area, it has been decided that the administrative language will be Bengali. The practical thing is that Bengali will be used; no other language can be used in that district.

Shri Hem Barua: May I draw the attention of the hon. Home Minister to a letter written by the hon. Prime Minister to Shri Atulya Ghosh, where he says: "A State language is a language for the whole State"? If that is so, may I know whether that would also apply in the case of the declared official language of Assam which means that the declared official language of Assam will not be dislodged from any area of the State?

Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri: I have made it clear that the official language of the State will be for the whole of the State. Yet there can be areas where there are linguistic minorities, and for them the necessary facilities will be given both in the administration as well in education.