

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday, September 2, 1996/Bhadra 11, 1918 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Three Minutes Past

Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

[English]

SHRI TARIQ ANWAR (KATIHAR): Happy birthday, Sir.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Happy birthday retrospectively, Sir !

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

11.04 hrs.

OBITUARY REFERENCES

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, I inform the House, with a deep sense of sorrow, of the passing away of two of our esteemed friends Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha and Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen.

Shri Mirdha, a sitting Member of this House, passed away on the 30th August, 1996 in New Delhi at the age of seventy-five.

Hailing from Nagaur District of Rajasthan, Shri Mirdha simultaneously fought feudalism as well as the British during the freedom Movement. Drawing his strength primarily from the peasantry, he was an undisputed leader of his people for nearly five decades. He was a Member of the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1967 and 1984 to 1989 and held several important portfolios in the Government of Rajasthan. Commencing from 1972, he was returned to the Lok Sabha six times. He served in the Union Council of Ministers in 1979-80 and 1989-90. He served too, with distinction, as the Chairman of the National Agricultural Prices Commission.

He was also the Deputy Leader of the Congress-I Parliamentary Party in the present House.

With the passing away of Shri Mirdha, a living link with

the days of freedom movement has been snapped, the peasantry have lost one of the doyens of their emancipation; and this House, a near constant Member.

Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen passed away on 31st August, 1996 in New Delhi at the age of eighty-three.

Having had his higher education initially at Dhaka and Calcutta, he did his Economics at the London School of Economics and Bar at Grays Inn at London.

He started his career teaching Law in the City College, Calcutta and later practising it in the Calcutta High Court. He was a specialist in criminal, commercial and International law.

He entered public life as a contemporary of the first generation leaders of modern India like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Bidhan Chandra Roy and Shri V.K. Krishna Menon. With his electoral base at North West Calcutta, he served the Lok Sabha from 1957 to 1977 and from 1980 to 1989. He was a Member, Rajya Sabha till April, 1996. He was Union Cabinet Minister five times over. For long, he was the inevitable Union Minister of Law, the portfolio he held with distinction. Other portfolios he held include Communications, Steel and Mines.

He ably represented India in the United Nations and the Commonwealth several times.

He was a keen journalist as well. He was the editor of the Calcutta Law Journal for about a decade from 1948.

Shri Ashoke Sen was at once a brilliant academic, a legal luminary with few peers, a steady parliamentarian, a capable administrator, a sophisticated diplomat and a reputed legal journalist.

In his demise, we have lost a distinguished and versatile son of India.

We deeply mourn the loss of these veterans. I am sure that the House will join me in conveying our condolences to the bereaved families.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA): Hon. Speaker, Sir, the death of Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha has left a void in the public life of this country. Shri Mirdha was a veteran freedom fighter and an erudite Parliamentarian. He was a Member of either the Lok Sabha or the State Legislature of Rajasthan for nearly half a century. During this long period,

he held many important positions like Chairman, National Commission on Agriculture, Minister of State for Irrigation, Finance, Food and Civil Supplies and Chairman of many important Parliamentary Committees.

He rendered yeoman service to the cause of the farmers, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections of the society. His services to the farming community will be long remembered. Shri Mirdha has won the recent elections to the Lok Sabha with an impressive margin even without visiting his constituency once due to bad health, which shows his immense popularity with the masses.

A lawyer by profession, Shri Mirdha also rendered invaluable service in the field of education by establishing many educational institutions and hostels.

On my behalf and on behalf of the Government, I pay my humble tributes to the late Mirdhaji and request you, Sir, to convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

We also deeply mourn the passing away of Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen, who was a Member of the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Eighth Lok Sabhas. He was an eminent jurist, who occupied the position of Law Minister at the Centre for many years under successive Prime Ministers. He was a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court and the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association for nearly a decade. He led the Indian delegations to the United Nations Conference on Law, the United Nations Conference on Human Rights and several other conferences. He was a Member of the Rajya Sabha till recently. Shri Sen has had several publications to his credit. He was the Editor of Calcutta Law Journal.

I request you, Sir, to convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family of Shri Sen.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (CHITTORGARH): Mr. Speaker, Sir, even while Parliament was observing its weekly break, the reaper of death was busy and had taken from our midst two stalwarts of Indian democracy.

I consider them both in their respective fields and coming as they did from two desperate parts of the country, the East and almost the Western edge of India - as two of the principal masons of our democracy who helped laying and who helped first dig the foundation and then lay it. This is a very great loss because, I believe, that this is a generation and the passing away of hon. Shri Sen, we have lost an eminent jurist and we have lost a link to the late Panditji's days, a colleague of ours who was holding Cabinet rank from the Second Lok Sabha. His legal experience and activities were encyclopedic. I mourn his passing away personally and on behalf of the Party because I knew him.

[Translation]

With the passing away of Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha, not only the Marwad region or Rajasthan but India has lost a great son. Our individual relationship as well as our family bonds are decades old. Shri Nathu Ram started his political career alongwith Shri Baldev Ram, father of Shri Ram Niwas Mirdha by forming 'Kisan Sangh'. He became a Minister in the erstwhile princely state of Jodhpur. He carved a niche for himself in this field in 1948. The sweet fragrance of the sand of Marwad region was reflected in his behaviour, his way of speaking and understanding. He was one of the founders of Rajasthan. Nathu Ram ji was a contemporary of the first generation who made invaluable contributions in the development of Rajasthan since 1952. With the sad demise of Shri Mirdha, an important link of the chain has been severed.

While associating myself and my party with the sentiments expressed by you and the Honourable Prime Minister, I convey my condolences to the bereaved families of Shri Ashoke Sen, and Shri Nathu Ram Mirdha.

[English]

SHRI P.V. NARASIMHA RAO (BERHAMPUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, this has been a particularly sad experience for us to lose two stalwarts within 24 hours. Shri Nathu Ramji was a real leader who built himself up from the grassroot level and remained an intrepid leader all his life. He refused to change his views or go back on his word. He had those qualities of the old order. Those qualities had really brought them into the freedom struggle in spite of the fact that they had absolutely nothing to look forward, except jail, except *lathi* charge and except untold suffering at the hands of the British and also the State Administrations of those days of which I do have a little experience.

For a couple of years, he had been ailing. He had a bypass, but the bypass took much longer time to heal than happens in the normal cases of bypass. I visited him several times in the hospital. He was cheerful in spite of everything. Then he suddenly sent for me. I went there. One of those strange things happened. The person had had some kind of a premonition that he would not survive the election. When I went there, he presented a nomination paper before me and said:

[Translation]

"Rao Sahib, please sign it and go ahead with your tour. You will be elected next Member of Parliament from Nagaur."

[English]

I was so moved, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I could not respond to him. I only said, "Please think about it, let me also think about it. I will come tomorrow." On the following day, I went and with

great difficulty I convinced him that he should himself fight. There was no need for him to go to the constituency and everybody knows that he does not have to go. So, he agreed with great difficulty and without entering the constituency, he was elected with a thumping majority as expected.

Sir, such individuals are very rare. They are becoming rarer, persons on whom you can rely all your lives. Even if you do not meet him for ten years, you can rely on him that he will keep his word and he will be true to you. It is difficult to find this kind of character, rock like character and I particularly consider this as a personal loss to me.

On the other side, comes our very very dear *dada*, Shri Ashok Sen, again who was very fond of me and I was fond of him. More than anything else, more than everything that has been stated, he was the President of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, a man of versatile qualities. There was hardly anything which he touched and did not turn into gold. That was the genius of the person. I was to visit him just about two days back; I was told that he was critically ill, but still he was able to speak. But it so happened that on the day I was to visit him, the same morning he passed away and we have lost another stalwart, whose presence was felt everywhere Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, the Ministry, outside the Ministry and wherever he went. He exuded confidence, scholarship a genius of his own. Again it is something very rare to find.

Personally I feel very sad at this double loss to the country, from distant parts, as Shri Jaswant Singhji has said.

I associate myself and my party with all the sentiments expressed by you, Sir, and the Prime Minister.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a very sad moment that we have to mourn the loss of two of our outstanding colleagues who have left their imprint on the sands of parliamentary democracy in this country. We have had the privilege of knowing both of them closely because they have been Members in this House for a very long time.

Shri Nathuram Mirdha, with his discerning smile and his attitude of friendship and cooperation with other Members, endeared himself to all and sundry. All of us those who knew him had the great privilege of enjoying his affection and his friendship. We remember particularly how with great concern, he discharged his functions as a Minister for Food in the National Front Government. His was concern for the common people of this country was for all to see.

A known freedom fighter, he had faced a lot of trouble and problems in his life but never flinched from his devotion to the causes he cherished. He was a man who made his impression wherever he was and whatever he did. I deeply mourn his passing away.

So far as Shri Ashoke Kumar Sen is concerned, it is, in a sense, a personal loss. For nearly 50 years or over 50 years, I have known him very closely. He was an outstanding lawyer of his time. When I joined the Bar in 1954, he was, in a sense, a junior lawyer. But he was competing with the recognised Senior Advocates of those days. A man with phenomenal memory and outstanding qualities as a lawyer, a lawyer who could think on his legs, as we said, with his wide knowledge of law and Constitution, naturally made a tremendous impact in the profession.

I believe, I can say perhaps without any contradiction that during the days when he was out of the Government and was practising in the Supreme Court, he really stood like a Colossus in the legal arena of this country. He made his mark apart from his profession that he chose. I was told that he was a very successful teacher also. He was an author of several books. One of them is a very well-known book of Commercial Law which is read by the students also and consulted by practising lawyers. He made his mark in the House no doubt and also in many international fora, while representing the country, with great distinction. I feel personally very difficult to have a substitute very easily. I have had the privilege of knowing his family, and his relations.

Sir, I personally and deeply mourn his passing away and on my own behalf and on behalf of my party, I convey my sincere condolences to the members of his family and I pay my tribute to the memory of the deceased.

MR. SPEAKER: The House may now stand in silence for a short while.

11.24 hrs.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow at 11 o'Clock.

[Translation]

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Allocation of funds under Literacy Campaign

*421. SHRI FAGGAN SINGH KULESTE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the allocation made to the States under the literacy campaign during 1995-96;

(b) the number of districts in which the said amount was allocated by the Government of Madhya Pradesh alongwith the district-wise details thereof; and

(c) the district-wise number of people covered under the said campaign?