

**Title: Demanded clarifications from the Minister of Defence regarding the presence of any extra-constitutional authority in the administration of the Ministry and in the meetings of the defence service chiefs.**

**SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI :** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw your attention, the attention of the Government and the attention of the entire House to a very important matter relating to the security of our country.

It is the hon. Minister of Defence who is answerable to Parliament for all matters pertaining to the Ministry of Defence on behalf of the Government. That is the established practice. It is also a fact that the Service Chiefs are to report to the President of India, the Prime Minister of India and the Minister of Defence. They are supposed to report to no other authority.

A very important news report has been published now and the Government is still keeping quiet without any contradiction or denial. That is why, I have brought it before this House for the response of the Government. It has been reported on the 13th August in *The Asian Age* that the Officer on Special Duty in the Ministry of Defence Shri Arun Singh has acquired the status of *de facto* Minister of Defence.

...(Interruptions)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Hon. Member, please take your seat. Are you going to give the reply to it?....(Interruptions)

**DR. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA :** Sir, are you going to allow him to discuss newspaper reports here?

**MR. SPEAKER:** I have allowed him to speak. If the Minister concerned is here and wants to respond, he can reply....(Interruptions)

**SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE :** We shall be obliged if the Government gives us some information. ....(Interruptions)

**SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI :** Without having any constitutional authority, Shri Arun Singh holds weekly meetings with the three Service Chiefs, has access to each and every file of the Ministry of Defence and is the pointsperson for all major decisions. ....(Interruptions)

After the 'Tehelka exposure', the entire nation is quite aware of what is happening in the Ministry of Defence. We would be much obliged to the Government if the Government comes forward to make it clear whether such an extra-constitutional authority has any access to files. In the meetings of the three Service Chiefs only the Raksha Mantri, the Minister of State in that Ministry and the Defence Secretary can be present and none else.

That is the established procedure. How can an Officer on Special Duty or an Adviser – whatever may be the status of Shri Arun Singh – get access in such meetings? The Government has to answer to the House on this point. The hon. Minister of Defence may clarify the position. We have also moved a Calling Attention notice today from our Party on this issue. This matter cannot be dealt with casually. After the 'Tehelka' episode, the nation wants to know as to how many more such things are being done in the South Block, in the Ministry of Defence.

Therefore, if the Government responds now, it is fair enough. Or, I request that you admit our Calling Attention notice where the Government will have to categorically reply to the issue. We want the country's defence to be in safe hands. We want that no extra-constitutional authority should have any access inside the meetings in the Ministry of Defence or in the meetings of the Service Chiefs.

संसदीय कार्य मंत्री तथा सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री (श्री प्रमोद महाजन) : रक्षा मंत्रालय के सारे कार्यों में जो भी सदस्य उपस्थित रहते हैं, वे भारतीय संविधान और भारत के सभी कानूनों के अंतर्गत, जिनको अनुमति है, वही उपस्थित रहते हैं। There is no extra-constitutional authority in the Ministry of Defence. The entire working of the Ministry of Defence is done as per the laws of the land and the established conventions. ....(Interruptions)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Shri K. Yerrannaidu to raise his issue now.

**SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI :** Sir, my question was very specific. I want to know whether Shri Arun Singh has been designated as a Special Adviser or as O.S.D. and if so whether he has any access to such meetings. That is the question. He is trying to overrule it.

डॉ. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अरुण सिंह जी राजीव गांधी जी के सबसे नजदीकी दोस्त थे। आज इनको क्या हो गया है?â€(लवघान)  
What happened to you all of a sudden? ....(Interruptions)

श्री प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी : उससे क्या होता है। **â€(व्यवधान)** Please do not try to score any personal issues. I am talking on an important matter which has an issue of propriety. I insist that our Calling Attention notice may kindly be admitted and the Government should give a full reply. Sir, we gave the notice.

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आपको मालूम है कार्लिंग एटेंशन का मामला सदन में नहीं उठाया जाता है।

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Yes sir. We insist that Shri Jaswant Singh, hon. Minister of Defence must come to the House and clarify this issue. This is the concern of the entire House. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, the question is a specific one.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, it is not an issue to be dealt with so casually. We cannot accept it. ...*(Interruptions)* Do not take it casually but take it with some seriousness. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, please take your seat. I called Shri Yerrannaidu.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, this is a serious matter.

MR. SPEAKER: You have raised the issue.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : We raised the issue. The Government did not respond. Sir, the Government did not respond to my specific question whether Shri Arun Singh has been appointed as a Special Adviser and whether he has access to files and the meetings of the Defence Service Chiefs. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, today is the last day of the week. Forty notices are with me. You have raised the issue. The Government has also responded to it.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, the Government did not respond to the specific question.

MR. SPEAKER: What about the other hon. Members who want to raise their issues?

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : The other hon. Members also will get their chance. This is also a very important matter.

MR. SPEAKER: You have raised it. I think you have asked the Chair also to include it as a Calling Attention Motion.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, I raised a genuine issue. The Government did not come out with a specific reply. The Government cannot avoid a specific question.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, please allow Shri Yerrannaidu to speak.