

Title: Regarding the allegedly corrupt dealings between the Finance Minister and the Flex Industries over printing and supply of election material.

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SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the news about the infamous Flex Industries having printed and supplied election material worth lakhs of rupees to the hon. Finance Minister, Shri Yashwant Sinha, have come to light. It is so disturbing that it raises a threatening question mark against the ability of the Government, against the will of the Government and even against an honest endeavour by the Government to prosecute Government officials like Shri Someshwar Mishra, the then Chief Excise Commissioner of New Delhi, who was caught red-handed for accepting bribe from the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Flex Industries. Thereafter, a case was registered against all those people. It is also pertinent to mention here that even Shri Prabhat Kumar, who was the Governor of Jharkhand, had to resign because what came to light was that the same man, the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Flex Industries, had paid for the bills of various parties hosted at the residence of Shri Prabhat Kumar when he was the Cabinet Secretary.

Sir, this matter, that has come to light, has, in fact, the potential of exposing a real stinking quagmire of corruption and the association between the hon. men in the Government and businessmen of dubious character.

Sir, what has been evidenced is that it was somewhere in the month of August the Chairman-cum-Managing Director of Flex Industries had visited the official residence of Shri Yashwant Sinha, who was then also the Finance Minister, and supplied him important...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Do you have materials to authenticate what you are saying?

MR. SPEAKER: Will you authenticate it?

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL : Yes, Sir, I will authenticate it.

The Newspaper has the photocopies of the Bills. If what I am saying is incorrect, I take the responsibility for that...*(Interruptions)* I am taking the responsibility.

Sir, *The Indian Express* has gone to the extent of going to the Railway Stations at New Delhi and Old Delhi and culled out the materials from there. They found that the election material was booked by the personal assistant or somebody else working in the office of Shri Yashwant Sinha in the name of somebody where election was being fought, and that material was received there.

As to whether it was used or to what extent it was used, is not what I am saying. But it is disturbing. It is not really my concern if somebody has printed some material for somebody. Now, here is the question. The very conduct of the CMD of Flex Industries is under question.

Sir, two pertinent questions arise in this context. When that case was registered, one Mr. Kailash Sethi who was the number two man in the Central Excise Intelligence Bureau was suddenly eased out. The allegation against him was that he was overstepping his jurisdiction in tapping certain telephones from where he could gather some information about the linkages between the businessmen and officials. For that reason, he was eased out. That time, we did not take it seriously. But today this acquires that seriousness. It is because at that stage the hon. Finance Minister declined to re-instate Mr. Sethi.

The second point was that the request from the Department for Mr. M.S. Bali, the chief of the CBI's Delhi unit who was handling this case relating to the Flex Industries, to stay on till the investigation was over, was turned down by the hon. Minister.

Sir, on these two matters, we certainly expect that when a matter of this gigantic proportion is raised, if any one of us -- and most of all -- if any person in the Government of India had any association whatsoever with that person, it was upto him to rise clean of that, to stand up and say "well, at one point of time, this man also entered my life." But he has done nothing of that sort. Rather, we find the Government sitting tight over the files and the investigations are taking inordinately long.

Those are the matters which now have a cumulative effect. It casts doubts and shadows on the very functioning of the Government. It puts the Government in dock whether the Government is really willing to prosecute those people who were involved in matters relating to Mr. Chaturvedi, CMD of Flex Industries. In this context, this revelation, which involves the Finance Minister, acquires greater urgency.

When the Governor could resign; when action could be taken against him, we immediately expect that the hon. Minister should come to the House and make a detailed statement about this and hand himself over to the Agency.

The Agency should question him. His role during that period should be questioned by the Agency inquiring into the matter relating to the Flex Industries.

MR. SPEAKER: Have you finished? It is because after you finish, I would ask the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to say, if he wants to say.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL : Sir, last of all, most importantly, when we talk of cleansing the public life and of probity in public life, what the minimum the hon. Finance Minister should do now is that he should resign on moral grounds.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, I would like to make only three very small points. I am not going into the details which the newspaper had said.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Nobody has stood up for him! (Interruptions)

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, when I stand up for somebody, I do not need anybody to stand up for me. I am competent enough and I do not need any support.

Sir, the first thing one must appreciate is that the action against the Flex Industries has been initiated by this Government.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : He was caught during your time. I do not know why you are taking credit for that!

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Do you want to take the credit?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : No. Not at all.

MR. SPEAKER: No cross talk, please.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Secondly, Sir, I assure the House that the action taken against Flex Industries; investigation and prosecution will go to its logical end.

I was also naturally disturbed when I saw that news item in the newspaper yesterday, as was Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal. As I said, it is very difficult for me at this juncture – to go to the Railway Station on Sunday – to find out all those things. I have requested the hon. Finance Minister to come to this House and make a statement on this issue. Time is needed for him also to get the relevant papers, etc. The Election Commission is also involved. So, I requested him to come on the 15th, that is, day after tomorrow and make a statement.

Whether it will be a detailed one or a short one, depends on him. But he will make a statement on the 15th, at a suitable time, which will hopefully answer the questions raised by Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal.

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL (LATUR): Certain points have been made by the hon. Member while putting this matter before the House. Let those points be replied to.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I do not draft the statement. ... (Interruptions) The best I could do is this. Copy of *The Indian Express* is available with everybody. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : You can convey what Shri Bansal has said. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Let me complete.

Whatever Shri Bansal has said is on record. But to facilitate the Minister and Shri Bansal both, I will send a copy of what he said in the House now, to the hon. Finance Minister with your request. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI SHIVRAJ V. PATIL : Let it be replied. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : He is very accommodative today because it looks like the Minister is going! ... (Interruptions)