

17.00 hrs.

Title: Regarding election campaign publicity material printed by Flex Industries and transfer of official in Central Economic Intelligence Bureau.

MR. SPEAKER: The Finance Minister will make a statement now.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, I am on a point of order.

Article 75 (4) says:

"Before a Minister enters upon his office, the President shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule."

The Minister swears before the President. The Third Schedule says:

"I will faithfully and conscientiously discharge my duties as a Minister for the Union and that I will do right to all manner of people in accordance with the Constitution and the law, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will."

When the Minister makes a statement, I expect that it will satisfy me. In that case, I will not question; otherwise, I will need your ruling.

I want to know whether in discharging his duties, any issue came to his notice pertaining to conflict of interest and whether at that particular point of time, he has divulged that interest to the appropriate agency of the Executive. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order because the statement is not before us.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : After the statement is made, you can give your ruling. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Let me first hear the statement.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : That is the point that I am making. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: But at this point of time, there is no point of order.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : The statement should satisfy us. ...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): The statement has to be to the satisfaction of the Finance Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : No. While discharging his duties, I ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: He knows his duties. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : If there was a conflict of interest and if he has reported that conflict of interest to the Executive agency, we have no objection. If he has not, then we would like to know whether he is discharging his duties conscientiously, as per the oath under the Constitution. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: There is nothing before us now on which a point of order can be raised.

Now, I would request the hon. Finance Minister to make a statement.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): Sir, the issue of my so-called links with Shri Ashok Chaturvedi of Flex Industries was raised in this House on May 13, 2002 by hon. Member, Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal. A demand for a statement from me on this issue was also made in the House. My colleague, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs had assured the House that I would make a statement on the issue on May 15. This statement is in response to that demand and the subsequent assurance, with your approval.

Sir, for my Lok Sabha election campaign of 1999, I had got some publicity material printed by a few printers in Delhi. Flex Industries, which is also in the business of printing, was one of those printers on whom I placed some printing orders. These printed materials were subsequently dispatched to me at Hazaribag by rail. For the supplies received from Flex Industries, as indeed from other printers, regular bills were raised by these firms and full payment was made to them. My records reveal that for the supplies received from Flex Industries, they had submitted five bills amounting to Rs.45,583/-. This amount was duly incorporated in my statutory return on election expenses filed with the District Election Officer of Hazaribag Lok Sabha constituency. These records should be available with the Election Commission and the District Election Officer.

The raids on the Office of the then Chief Commissioner of Excise Shri Someshwar were conducted by the CBI on November 7, 2001 after which Shri Someshwar and Shri Ashok Chaturvedi were taken into custody. The investigation in the matter is being conducted by the CBI which does not fall within the area of my ministerial responsibility. The CBI is neither required to report to me nor has it kept me updated on the progress of the case from time to time. There is, therefore, no conflict of interest between my present assignment and the investigation by the CBI in the case against Shri Someshwar and Shri Ashok Chaturvedi.

Shri Kailash Sethi, the then Deputy Director General of the Central Economic Intelligence Bureau had been on deputation to this organisation from his parent Department of Customs and Central Excise. His transfer back to the Department in December 2001 was done on administrative considerations and in public interest.

I would also like to add that I had nothing at all to do with the transfer of Shri M.S. Bali of CBI as alleged by the hon. Member, Shri Bansal.

The fact that I purchased some election publicity material from a supplier can, by no stretch of imagination, be construed to mean that I have a relationship with him. I cannot also be expected to guarantee his good character and good conduct forever. I would like to state categorically that neither my dignity as a Member of Parliament nor my effectiveness as Minister of Finance in this Government stands compromised as a result of this entirely routine, transparent and aboveboard transaction.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL (CHANDIGARH): Sir, I would like to know one point from the hon. Minister....(Interruptions) Kindly permit me, Sir....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are aware of the rules. On such issues, no clarification is permitted.

I, now, call upon Shri Kirit Somaiya.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, please sit down. Will you please sit down?

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Mulayam Singh, please sit down.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I am not inclined to permit any supplementary on this issue because rules do not permit that. Shri Somaiya to speak on the Bill.

17.07 hrs.

(At this stage, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi

and some other hon. Members left the House.)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing, whatever is being said after my ruling, will go on record.

(Interruptions) *

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Kirit Somaiya, please continue. What Shri Mulayam Singh is saying is not going on record.

(Interruptions) *

17. Not Recorded.