

Title: Demanded a statement from the Government regarding a White Paper on Disinvestment and the present status of Air India and also to constitute a standing committee for the Department of Disinvestment

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, in the last Session, we made two demands. One demand is regarding White Paper on Disinvestment. Second demand was of course addressed to the hon. Speaker by the LoP for constituting a Standing Committee for the Department of Disinvestment. There are no two opinions about that in any section of the House. Unfortunately, nothing has been responded to and on the eve of the Winter Session, news has been circulating in the electronic and print media, and outside the media that deliberate attempt has been made to under-value the existing asset of Air-India and to dispose it of in such a manner that the entire value goes down. The prime property of this country which carries the flag of this country – even the Prime Minister and President of India go by this carrier when they go abroad – is going to be disposed of in an under-valued manner. The House is kept entirely in the dark. Shri Sharad Yadav had demanded the Director (Commercial) to increase the sales. In spite of the fact that sales have gone up by more than Rs. 100 crore, and in spite of the fact that the Pilots demanded that they can manage this carrier better with more revenue, the entire House is kept in the dark. Nobody knows what would be the fate of Air India.

I demand from the Minister: (a) a White Paper on Disinvestment; and (b) the status of Air India should be openly disclosed to the House in a transparent manner. Without the consent of both the Houses, nothing should be done to dispose of the prime property of this nation by under-valuing and devaluing.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Sir, hon. Member, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi has raised two issues. One is about the Disinvestment Department coming under Parliamentary scrutiny through some Parliamentary Committee. You are aware that Government has no role in it. The Government does not even have the right to object to any Department coming under any Parliamentary Standing Committee, forget about having an opinion about it.

On the contrary, we are keen that all Departments should come under the scrutiny of one Standing Committee or the other. So, the Department of Disinvestment should also come under its scrutiny. I think it is the Speaker's prerogative to decide whether it should have a separate Standing Committee or it should be attached to one of the Standing Committees that is already existing. It is because every Department does not have a separate Standing Committee. In some cases you have one separate Standing Committee for one Department and in other cases you have four Departments coming under one Standing Committee.

13.00 hrs.

So, in whatever manner...(Interruptions)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : It is the discretion of the Speaker but before the hon. Speaker has communicated it to the Leader of Opposition, how can the Minister of the Department of Disinvestment publicly say that he rejects it? He is not the spokesman or the custodian of the House.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: As I said, I am not aware of it. So, I cannot comment. You may forget about 'a' or 'b' Minister, the entire Government has no right to say that no Department will come under parliamentary scrutiny. Therefore, as I said, if some department has been newly created, which was not there when the Standing Committees were created. -- 17 Parliamentary Standing Committees are already there -- naturally it has to come under one Standing Committee or another. Forget about rejecting it, Government is of the opinion that we must discuss it. After all, it is a parliamentary democracy. All departments must be subject to parliamentary scrutiny through parliamentary Standing Committees. So, we have no objection in it. I am not very sure about it. But I think, the disinvestment issue has already been allotted to one of the Standing Committees...(Interruptions)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : One of your Ministers has said in the CII forum that it has been rejected.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I cannot say anything about what somebody has said. I am responding to you on the floor of the House saying that we have no objection. It should be taken authoritatively. CII is one of the institutions. We are the Parliament. I am saying it on the floor of the House with responsibility.

Secondly, as far as disinvestment of Air India is also concerned, I would like to assure the hon. Member that in the coming Session, the Government is ready to discuss the disinvestment policy...(Interruptions)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : The Government was to discuss it in this Session itself and not in the coming Session.

SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: I am very sorry. I am born, brought up and educated in Marathi. So, my English is not that good. I correct myself. In this Session only, the Government is ready to discuss the disinvestment policy in general. If Members wish to discuss the disinvestment policy keeping in view a particular industry, we have no objection to that also. With the guidance of the Speaker, let us decide when and under what rule we should discuss it. We do not want to do anything at the back of the Parliament. We do not want to keep Parliament in dark. So, these allegations are entirely wrong. We are ready to discuss it.