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Title: Political situation in West Asian and North African Countries.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Thank you Madam. The winds of change are sweeping across the West Asian and North African countries. The people of Arab-African West Asia have long despaired about the possibility of change. They have felt doomed to live under strongmen, who have hoarded their wealth and beaten down dissent; doomed to have as an alternative only to the Islamic fundamentalists who have imposed their harsh beliefs and beaten down dissent.

In countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, the autocrats and the Islamic fundamentalists have merged into one, but nowhere had the people had a wholly free choice in how they are to be ruled. West has surrendered to this despair assuming that only the strongmen could hold back the extreme fundamentalists. In a region that had rotted under repression a young generation has suddenly found voice, pushing ahead of their elders they have become the instruments of change. Two months ago, a Tunisian fruit-seller, called Md. Bouazizi, set fire to himself and took his life. Tunisians and later Egyptians took to the streets; almost miraculously the people overwhelmed the strongmen who had oppressed for decades.

In the past few days, tens of thousands have marched in Tehran. In tiny Bahrain, men have died. In Libya crowds have been shot dead. Algeria is unstable.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please let us know what do you want from the Central Government?

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Yes, Madam. Yemen is seething; it has had a distant echo in Shanghai and also in Beijing. When strongmen are coming out to repress the public with a heavy hand as demonstrated in Tripoli and Shanghai, we have to make a right choice as the outside world can play its part. India, the Government, should be on the right side. The price could be a family of new democracies not Poland or the Czech Republic but Turkey, perhaps, and also Indonesia. I urge the Government not to be a silent spectator in this hour when history is in the making. The hon. President has made a passing remark about Egypt when she read out her speech yesterday. The people of West Asia and African countries are no longer worried about hostile colonial powers; they are more concerned about their political rights. Economic gains and democratic freedoms are two different things. Whatever economic advantage people have, it cannot suppress the desire for democracy. This has been proved at least in China. This is something that the international community including our community must keep in mind. In Washington, in Delhi and elsewhere, this paradigm shift must be prepared for and welcomed.

I urge, through you, to this House, Madam, that this House should also adopt a resolution in support of the people's upsurge for freedom. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: The names of Shri Arjun Meghwal,

Shri D.V. Sadananda Gowda,

Shri Virender Kashyap and

Shri Ravindra Kumar Pandey are associated with the matter raised by Shri B. Mahtab.

...(Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : आप बैठ जाइए। आपको बुलवाएंगे।

तैः!(व्यवधान)

श्री धर्मेन्द्र यादव (बदायूँ): महोदया, हमने सबसे पहले नोटिस दिया था।...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदया : आपको बुलवाएंगे। जिन्होंने भी नोटिस दिया है, उन सभी को बुलवाएंगे।

तैः!(व्यवधान)