

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Madam Speaker, I must confess to you that it is with a tinge of sadness that I am addressing this august House.

Our country is faced with enormous challenges. The Middle East, West Asia and North Africa are in flames. We have six million citizens of our country based in these countries. We should be worrying about the future of those citizens of ours. Seventy per cent of our oil supplies come from the Middle East. If the conflict in the area gathers momentum, there will be a serious question mark about our quest for energy security. I thought that this august House would use this opportunity to reflect, not in a spirit of partisan upmanship, but as one, as people charged with the responsibility of governing this country to work out a viable strategy as to how we should and we can deal with these emerging events. Instead, we have chosen to be exercised by what some embassy official writes about us. I must warn the House that that is a dangerous path. Tomorrow, if another official of a foreign embassy takes it into his head to create a feeling of strife and distress among the political parties in our country, all that he has to do is to plant a diplomatic message, and also ensure that somehow it leaks. I think the nation, the country and this august Parliament should reflect as to what we are doing to our country. It is not in a spirit of any partisan upmanship I say this, but as someone who is worried about the aftermath, the after effect of this development on the future management of our country.

With these words, I come back to the main subject. Let me say that I am no match with Shrimati Sushmaji when it comes to her oratorical skills. She has narrated an Urdu couplet, I would also do so and say: माना के तेरी दीद के काबिल नहीं हूं
में... (व्यवधान)

“माना के तेरी दीद के काबिल नहीं हूं मैं,
तू मेरा शौक तो देख, मेरा इंतजार देख।”


Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that I have been faced in my parliamentary career with an opposition onslaught of the type that you have been witnessing of late. I had to go through that fate as the Finance Minister and as the Prime Minister. The main opposition party, right from the year 2004, adopted the attitude that we were a usurper. Shri Advani ji believes that being the Prime Minister was his birthright.... (*Interruptions*) And, therefore, he has never forgiven me.... (*Interruptions*) All that I can say to Shri Advani ji is that the people of India have voted us into power in a free and fair election; please wait for another three-and-a-half years in the wings.... (*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker, as the hon. Members will recall, several Members had raised allegations based on the reports in a newspaper about the purported cables from the US Embassy in New Delhi to their authorities in Washington. In response to the request from the Leader of the Opposition, I had made a Statement on this subject in this august House on March 18, 2011.

Madam, I reiterate that it is not possible for the Government of India to confirm the veracity or the contents of such communications. If they exist, they would be communications from the US diplomats stationed in New Delhi to their Government in Washington. This is not open to us to inquire from either of the two regarding the communications they exchanged amongst themselves. In my Statement of 18th March, 2011, I had also stated that many of the persons referred to in these communications have strongly denied their veracity.... (*Interruptions*)

Madam, in my Statement, I had also referred to the issue raised regarding the offence of bribery. Apart from rejecting the allegations, I had also drawn the attention of this august House to the fact that the allegations were investigated by a Committee constituted by the Fourteenth Lok Sabha and the Committee had concluded that there was insufficient evidence to draw a conclusion of bribery. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has questioned the veracity of this Statement

and I would spend some time to convince her and the Members of the opposition that the inference that I have drawn is not incorrect.

Madam, in this context, I refer to what the then Speaker Shri Somnath Chatterjee stated in this august House on 16th December, 2008 while introducing the Report of the Committee and I quote it. 

This is what Shri Somnath Chatterjee said:

“The finding of the Committee is that material on record does not conclusively prove that the money contained in the bag which was eventually displayed in the House was actually sent by the persons who were alleged to have sent it for the purpose of winning over Shri Ashok Argal, Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste and Shri Mahavir Bagora to vote in favour of Motion of Confidence. The Committee have, however, found the evidence given before the Committee by three persons involved in this episode as unconvincing and the Committee have suggested that their role in the matter needs to be investigated by investigating agencies.”

Shri Somnath Chatterjee went on to say:

“I am accordingly referring the matter pertaining to the said three persons to the hon. Minister of Home Affairs for appropriate action in the light of the recommendations of the Committee.”

So, Madam, what I had stated is exactly what Shri Somnath Chatterjee stated while introducing this Report and, therefore, I urge the hon. Members not to doubt my credentials in this regard.

Madam, the same thing emerges when we study the Report of the Committee in totality. It is no use quoting sections which suit one's convenience or which support one's argument. I had studied the Report and it is my considered judgement that on balance what I have stated, that the Committee came to the conclusion that there was no conclusive evidence of bribery, is the correct one. I quote again the Committee. In its paragraph 168, the Committee has observed as follows:

“The Committee, after taking into account their findings and conclusions in the matter as detailed in para 141, particularly at 14 to 17 relating to roles of Shri Sanjeev Saxena, Shri Sohail Hindustani and Shri Sudheendra Kulkarni, recommend that this matter may be probed further by an appropriate investigating agency.”

Madam, the matter was referred to the Delhi Police for investigation. Further investigation is in progress.

Madam Speaker, I leave it to the good sense of this august House to decide for itself whether the Report of the Committee, in any way, substantiates the wild allegations leveled by some hon. Members of the Opposition.

Madam, I would like to make it clear, once again, that none from the Congress Party or the Government indulged in any such unlawful act during the Trust Vote in 2008. We have not been involved in any such transactions and we have not authorized anyone to indulge in such transactions.