

[English]

Plastic Processing Industry

2094. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the plastic processing industry has been affected due to increase in the prices of polymer in the international market;

(b) if so, the manner in which it has been affected;

(c) whether about 50,000 small scale units will face closure due to this price-rise; and

(d) if so, the action being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALVIYA): (a) and (d) As about 50% of the total requirement of Polymers has to be imported, the increase in the price of Polymers in international markets following the gulf crisis has resulted in high landed cost of such imports to consumers in the Plastic Processing industry. The gulf crisis has also resulted in restricted availability of polymers in the international market. Domestic manufacturers have been asked to maximise production. In the long run, new domestic production capacities being established will ease the supply problem.

12.00 hrs.

RE. REPORTED DISCONNECTION OF ELECTRICITY TO THOMSON PRESS IN FARIDABAD AND ALLEGED ATTEMPT TO CURB FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

[English]

SHRI L.K. ADVANI (New Delhi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday my colleague, Prof. Dandavate and many Members from all

sections of the House, not only of the Opposition, out even of the ruling party, had expressed concern over the goings-on in the Thomson Press, Haryana and the Prime Minister took note of the views expressed in this House and categorically told the House:

[Translation]

"It will be a matter of regret and shame for all of us if an assault is made on the freedom of the Press. Freedom of the Press should never be infringed. I would collect the information from the Haryana Government and I assure the Press that the Central Government would take all possible steps to see to it that the freedom of the Press is not infringed."

[English]

I do not think there can be more categorical reassurance for the House than what was said by the Prime Minister yesterday. But I am sorry to say that during the 24 hours that have passed since then, things have worsened. There has been no improvement of any kind in the situation so far as far as this particular episode is concerned. I have ascertained only this morning before coming to the House that the power is still cut off and the workers who wanted to go to the press were beaten up brutally. Here is a case of State power combining with the *goonda* power to suppress freedom of the press. When this goes on even after the country's highest executive has said in Parliament that he is not going to permit it and he uses the words:

[Translation]

I will protect freedom of the press at all costs.

[English]

It is, I believe, a challenge to the authority of the State, of the Centre and a challenge on the basis of the patronage that these *goondas* receive at the hands of the State Government.

In this particular case, there is a very long background, against which background I can very unhesitatingly say that the action being taken against *India Today* or *Newstrack* is a case of clear vendetta, it is a case of vindictiveness—only because you exposed us in the past, you did that, therefore, we are going to see that you are penalised and punished for it. Sir, in this matter time is of the essence. I have no doubt that after the assurance that the Prime Minister gave to the House, he must have asked his officers to send a message to the State Government asking for facts and telling them that the Press freedom should not be suppressed or muzzled in anyway as this is the assurance given to the House. But it very often happens that these messages keep lying there and after three or four days the State officials say that they did not know anything about it and after they came to know about it they have restored the power. After three or four days they say that they have done this and have done that.

I have sought your permission to raise this matter because as I said time is of the essence. *India Today* publication should not be delayed even for a single day. The situation today is that only 15 per cent or 18 per cent of workers are able to come to the press because they are afraid of being beaten up by *gundas*. This is certainly an assault of the Press which this House took note of yesterday and which I hope that the Government will immediately take note of to see that by this evening the situation in the Thomson Press improves.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday when I sought your permission to move an Adjournment Motion on this issue the Prime Minister intervened and gave us a categorical assurance which Mr. Advani has raised just now and after that we felt that the situation would be actually relaxed. But, Sir, representatives of the Hind Mazdoor Sabha, AITUC and CITU contacted me this morning and they said that more *goondaism* has been started at the entrance of the Thomson Press

and some of them have said that "you may try to raise the issue in the Parliament but ultimately you have to deal with us here." That is what they have said. So, in spite of the assurance given by the Prime Minister, Trade Unions belonging to the Hind Mazdoor Sabha and affiliated unions continue to be attacked and assurance given by the Prime Minister has remained only in the Parliament. It has not been percolated down to the Thomson Press.

Therefore, you as Speaker should direct the Government that all that the Government should do is whatever assurance is given on the floor of the Parliament yesterday should be implemented. I think that direction should go from the Speaker as that will salvage the situation.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I join my friends here. Sir, it is very clear that this is not just an action taken on the spot by some of the workers there. This is a calculated action which has been taken to browbeat this Press and the journals. In view of the categorical assurance given by the Hon. Prime Minister yesterday the Government owes an explanation why no action has been taken. Sir, I would also like to know how Mr. Bhajan Lal sitting in the treasury benches would react to it. He is sitting in the treasury benches, so let us have his reaction to it when further incidents have taken place. The question is whether the Prime Minister's decision has any value in this country any longer or not. I would like to know whether his writ runs in the country or not. Haryana is not far off. It is not difficult to even send instructions from here. Therefore, I would like to know what the Government has done and is going to do in the course of today.

SHRI P. V. NARASIMHARAO (Ramtek): I would like to reiterate that the Prime Minister's assurance given yesterday should be implemented and the House is entitled to know what has been done and what is proposed to be done. I agree that time is of the essence.

[Translation]

SHRIBHAJAN LAL (Faridabad): I spoke on this issue yesterday. (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: He wanted to speak on this and even Somnath Babu wanted him to speak.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, since I have spoken on this subject in detail yesterday only I would just like to submit that the assurance given by the Prime Minister in this regard in the House yesterday should be implemented without further delay because I feel an influential person is involved in it and he is at fault.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: You name that person.

SHRIBHAJAN LAL: Kindly listen to me.

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: Unless you listen to me how will I put forth my point. Mr. Speaker, Sir, he is the General Secretary of the Janata Dal (S) and his father is President of that party and the Haryana Government is being run under their directives. Unless the Prime Minister personally takes interest in the matter the injustice done to the press cannot be done away with. I represent that area and I am fully aware of the situation prevailing there. The workers have been victimised and excesses have been committed upon them. The matter should be either investigated by a Committee of this House or the Prime Minister should be directed to get the matter investigated by C.B.I. Stringent action should be taken against the guilty persons.

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA (South Delhi): Withdraw your support.

SHRI BHAJAN LAL: How many times, you had withdrawn the support?

[English]

DR. THAMBI DURAI (Karur): I am thankful to the Prime Minister for the assurance given to this House. Yesterday, I further added in my submission regarding the atrocities committed against *Indian Express* and *Dinaman* by the State Government in Tamil Nadu. The Prime Minister should take action on that also. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Mr. Thambi Durai, you must address the Chair.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Thambi Durai, you are a seasoned Parliamentarian. Don't get carried away by others' interruptions. Please sit down. Yes, Mr. Chitta Basu.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): Yesterday the issue was clinched. The Prime Minister was kind enough to assure that he would look into the matter and see that the freedom of the press is not in any way affected. Sir, it is not the question of a particular press—whether it be Thomson Press or some other—or a publication. Now the Parliament is seized of the matter and the highest of the administration of the country has assured. But even that assurance has not yet been implemented in the least. Does it not mean an infringement on and a derogation of the parliamentary system? I want to raise this question. It was the opinion expressed by the entire House. It was responded to by the Prime Minister. But even after that, the State Government does not act according to it. This is a subject which relates to the fundamental right of the people and fundamental right of the press. Sir allow me to ask whether a State Government or Mr. Chautala or anybody else is much more powerful than the Parliament. This is the question I raise. Nobody is more powerful than the Parliament and if you do not take a decision and ask the Government to take a particular action in this matter, I think you

shall be allowing ourselves to be denigrated by an all powerful man who is reigning in Haryana.

SHRI I.K. GUJRAL (Jalandhar): Sir, you were kind enough to give some attention to my adjournment motion yesterday. I thought when you rejected it, it was in the light of the general opinion expressed in this House. This is a highly concerning issue. Despite the fact that the electricity remains disconnected from the third of this month—today is the eighth and five days have passed—no action has been taken. May I urge you to call upon the Prime Minister to make a categorical statement here at 4 o'clock, so that we will know who is at fault.

SHRI INDER JIT (Darjeeling): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is absolutely scandalous and a matter of grave concern that the Prime Minister's solemn assurance has not been carried out. I would suggest that the Prime Minister should, before the House rises for the day, tell this House what action has been taken for restoring power to the and for curbing all these anti-social and goonda elements in Faridabad.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: You say electric power otherwise it might be misunderstood!

SHRI SAIFUDDIN CHOUDHURY (Katwa): What Mr. Bhajan Lal has said—the way he pointed his finger at a particular person, who is the General Secretary of the ruling party Janata Dal (S)—we cannot take things very lightly. The Member who spoke alleging about this particular Leader of the Party in Government, is the member of the Party responsible for floating the Government. It is a very serious matter. This may be the reason why the Government is paralysed on this particular question. Apart from that, the Prime Minister must come and make a statement today as to what action has been taken.

What I want to know is this: What action this Government is going to take against this particular Leader or the Party in Government?

I think, if we have any sense and respect for democracy, then this man behind this whole episode should be arrested. Is anybody worried about what is going on there? Who is worried about it?

S. ATINDER PAL SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we hope that the assurance given by the Prime Minister in this House will be implemented very soon. The Prime Minister should enquire as to why the assurance given by him has not been implemented so far. He should also ensure that the freedom of the Press and media should not be bullied to serve political ends. We must inculcate political will power to maintain freedom of the Press because whichever Party comes into power it tries to prevail upon the Press. In fact there is a lot of difference between the words and deeds of the Members here. All the Members who are committed to freedom of the Press should unanimously move a resolution condemning this reprehensible act.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: The Hon. Prime Minister is not present in the House. Yesterday he had given an assurance in this regard and no other Minister is in a position to say anything about it, so what is the utility of carrying on with this discussion. The point put forth by Shri Advani has been endorsed by all the members of the House. If the unanimous opinions of the House is ignored it will really be a matter of shame for this Parliament. Let the Prime Minister be called, wherever he may be. He should tell the House the action taken on the assurance. Then only we will proceed further.

[English]

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU (Balasore): Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday, when the Prime Minister made a statement, if you could remember, I asked him something about the security of the workers. The Prime Minister listened to me but did not reply to it. This morning, I have been receiving telephone calls from the Thomson Press workers and also HMS Workers' Union. They said: "The police and other people are say-

ing that, here the Prime Minister's writ does not run, here the writ—of the most unseen hand—of the former Chief Minister runs, who is a close friend of the Prime Minister.

In the night yesterday, they have gone round in the colony and then hit every door and they shouted. "If you go to Thomson Press, then your dead body will be found." Inside the office, all the workers are brave, and, therefore, they have taken a vow that they will defend the freedom of the Press which this Government wants to muzzle. For the last five days, the Press is being run on a generator. The Prime Minister has done nothing so far. I still appeal to you that you kindly direct the Prime Minister to see that at least the security of the workers is assured. (*Interruptions*) I express my grateful thanks to all the Members who are here, those who have expressed their concern on this problem.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Hajipur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Members of all the parties have expressed their concern over this issue. I think no useful purpose will be served by calling the Prime Minister in the House as he is helpless in taking action against the person who is believed to be involved in this affair. Sir, it will, therefore, be proper that you give a ruling in the matter and assure the House that action will be taken to guarantee the freedom of the Press.

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA: Faridabad is just 20 kms. away from Delhi and a person sent from here to Faridabad can easily return here within an hour. (*Interruptions*) Had the place been as far as Kanyakumari, we would have realised the helplessness of the Government. What else can be expected of this Government headed by a Prime Minister who said yesterday that his Government could not deal with a matter concerning an incident taking place 20 kms. away from Delhi. It would be better if Prime Minister comes to the House and states the action taken in this regard. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRICHIRANJILAL SHARMA (Karnal): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I hail from Haryana. I represent a constituency which is in Haryana, and I know how democracy is being throttled in Haryana. You are talking of this press. This is not the first instance of its kind. In the recent past, there were such instances: one in Sirsa, and another in Kurukshetra. If the freedom of the Press is not kept in view, and if the freedom of the Press is throttled like this, I do not know where this democracy will go to. The matter is serious, and the whole House is very much concerned. I would, therefore, request you to ask the Prime Minister to take personal interest... (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI KAPIL DEV SHASTRI (Sonapat): Sir, discussion on this issue is going on since yesterday. I feel the assurance given by the Prime Minister will definitely be implemented. I am associated with Press. The freedom of Press should be maintained at all costs. The hon. members are taking only lop-sided view. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

SHRIMATISUBHASHINIALI (Kanpur): What is he talking about? (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Ali, he also has a right to talk like you.

(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI KAPIL DEV SHASTRI: When the agitation against Mandal Commission was at its peak about 180 boys and girls committed self immolation and their pictures were also published. The people belonging to ruling faction used brutal force against the demonstrations. The manner in which "Amar Ujala" and "Aaj" are indulging in anti-government propaganda, is not proper. (*Interruptions*) It was reported that 20-30 dead

bodies were found. The Prime Minister has openly said that it was not true that 100 dead bodies were recovered; *(Interruptions)* only 16 dead bodies were recovered. It has also been reported that hundreds of dead bodies were thrown into the river. Let them quote a single incident of this kind. This lopsided discussion is, therefore, of no use utility.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Let us now hear the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. Shri Malaviya.

(Interruptions)

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALVIYA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the freedom of Press is dear to everybody. It is dear to the Prime Minister and also to the Parliament.

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI (Jhansi): Mr. Speaker, Sir, what does this word 'dear' mean. In view of the feeling expressed by the members and what has come to light the hon. Minister has been prefixing words 'dear'. What does he exactly mean by this word? *(Interruptions)*

SHRISATYAPRAKASHMALVIYA: Sir, I would like to submit that the assurance given by the Prime Minister yesterday will be implemented in letter and spirit. *(Interruptions)*

It is against the rules to level a charge against the person who is not present in the House to defend himself. I, therefore, request you to expunge all those remarks from the proceedings of the House which have been uttered against the person who is not a member of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: His name has not been mentioned.

(Interruptions)

[*English*]

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I am on a point of order regarding the procedure. In this House, it has always been the precedent that, if any assurance is given by the representatives of the Government, if the member feels aggrieved that it is not being implemented, we have always raised the question with the Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I have already done that.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I only remind you. Therefore, all I am saying is you kindly direct the Prime Minister that it should be implemented and see that the assurance that is given by Prime Minister—you are the custodian of the House—should be implemented. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: Apart from the point that has been raised by Dandavateji, may I point out that this matter arose when a formal Adjournment Motion was tabled by Dandavateji; and that Adjournment Motion was not pressed. Adjournment Motion means that we would like to censure the Government for its failure. But when the Government itself said that "no, we are keen to see that the Press freedom is guaranteed and we will intervene immediately." That Adjournment Motion was not pressed because the Prime Minister himself said it.

Taking note of what my colleagues from Tamil Nadu or from West Bengal have said, that in case there is a discussion, then we are willing to open the whole gamut of the Press freedom. And how it is being muzzled in various States. Therefore, the matter cannot be closed by merely expressing our views that the assurance given yesterday was not implemented. Then it becomes obligatory on you either to permit the Adjournment Motion and let us have a discussion in the House or let the Prime minister or some one from the Government come and tell us what has happened since yesterday, and why this is

not being implemented. Either of the two courses should be taken into account. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Wardha): Let us have a discussion. That will be better. I support this.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Sathe, I think, the Government is taking note of it.

(*Interruptions*)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I want that there should be a direction from the Chair that the Government should implement the assurance. Why not straightway give a direction from the Chair that whatever assurance is there, Government should implement it?

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: Madhu ji, the Government has not said that it will not be implemented. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, since the House will be adjourned after two days. If these things continue will the freedom of the Press be safe.

SHRIMADANLAL KHURANA: Delayed action will not be of any use.

MR. SPEAKER: The Prime Minister and the entire country is for freedom of the Press. It is a constitutional provision. The House also wants to maintain freedom of the Press. The Prime Minister has given an assurance and we should believe him.

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats. Let us hear Mr. Dinesh Singh.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Let us hear Shri Dinesh

Singh. he is an elderly Member of the House.

SHRIDINESH SINGH (Pratapgarh): All the sections of the House are agreed that freedom of the Press is of utmost importance. Yesterday the Prime Minister also emphasised that, when he said that he would ensure that the freedom of the Press is maintained. Therefore, there should not be any need for any controversy on that issue. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI KALKA DAS (Karol Bagh): No action has been taken upon the assurance given in the House yesterday. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI DINESH SINGH: At least listen to some body... (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: He is making a submission. Lodhaji, why do you not hear Mr. Dinesh Singh?

SHRI DINESH SINGH: I am saying that the hon. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs is here. There should not be any difficulty in the Government making a statement before the House rises today as to what action they have taken in the matter. It is a straightforward issue and I think there should be no objection from the part of the hon. Minister to say that by the end of the day before the House rises, either the Prime Minister or the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs will make a statement. There is no difficulty in that. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

(*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER: The Parliamentary Affairs Minister is present here. He has taken

note of the feelings of the House in this regard.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I would like that the Government would make a statement on this issue before the House adjourns for the day today.

[Translation]

SHRI L.K. ADVANI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to mention specifically that you have given the apt direction. It will be better if an assurance for restoration of power is also given.

12.34 hrs.

RE. REPORTED INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE, SHRI SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY, TO THE *FINANCIAL TIMES*, LONDON, ABOUT TAXATION

[English]

SHRIMATI SUDHASHINI ALI (Kanpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to bring something very important to the notice of the House through you. This refers to an interview given by the Minister for Law and Commerce to the *Financial Times*, London on the 27th of last month. He would be more appropriately known as the "Lawless" Minister. It is a sad day for this country that he has been appointed Minister of Law. In this interview to the *Financial Times* he has talked about a decision taken by a member, his colleague, the Finance Minister in raising taxes and he has given a commitment to the *Financial Times* that "once we have managed the IMF loan negotiations we will get that reversed." He goes on to say. "If I can persuade Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Chandra Shekar to come together, and I would claim the lion's share of the credit for this, I have sufficient self-confidence to make the Prime Minister

accommodate this concept of liberalisation. Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, this interview raises several very important questions about the very principle of collective responsibility, functioning of the Cabinet and who is the spokesman of this Government. I mean, we have this Minister, some kind of a Minister, who goes abroad and make statements regarding the policies of this country; gives an assurance that taxes which have been levied by one of his colleagues are the product of a confused mind and a panic reaction; and gives an assurance that once he has negotiated the IMF loan, he will get those taxes reversed. He also goes to say, "Because my powers of convincing are so unparalleled, I could bring Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. Chandra Shekhar together and therefore I will make Mr. Chandra Shekhar to give up all his long healthy commitment to socialism, etc. etc and bring him to my way of thinking, to my understanding of liberalisation." I think, these are very serious matters that have to be taken note of. I would be happy if the Prime Minister of this country comes and makes a statement in this House as to what he and his Government stand for. He has to make this clear. He has named his party as Janata Dal (Socialism). What does this Government stand for? What does the Prime Minister stand for? I think that this Parliament has got a right to know this. We must know from the Prime Minister as to what is their policy if any... (Interruptions) Has it made a principle of expediency like this gentleman had done all these times... (Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Jodhpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would lend my voice to my friend and colleague, Shrimati Sudhashini Ali. There are four specific aspects that are involved. One is when a member of the Union Cabinet says that the step taken by the Union Cabinet is a panic reaction... (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI SUBRAMANIAM SWAMY): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to react to this...

(Interruptions)