

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Wednesday, April, 22, 1992/Vaisakha 2,
1914 (Saka)

• The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

RE. SUSPENSION OF QUESTION HOUR

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, we have given notice to suspend the Question Hour and to take up the Adjournment-motion. We want the Prime Minister should come here to the House and explain. We have given notice to suspend the Question Hour. See what has appeared in *the Statesman* today. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Mujaffarpur): MR. Speaker, Sir, I have given a notice for the suspension of Question Hour. (Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: The Prime Minister when he has told about Bofors on the floor of the House, has misled the House. He gave the note to Mr. Solanki. He has told the Swiss Government.... (Interruptions)

The Prime Minister should come and explain.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum): The House cannot be allowed to continue unless the Prime Minister comes.

This is a very serious allegation. (Interruptions)

SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO VADDE (Vijayawada): Please suspend the Question Hour. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Rosaera): We have also given a notice for the suspension of Question Hour. (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: What is your ruling about the suspension of Question Hour?

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): My colleague, Shri Jaswant Singh and several other colleagues of mine from the Opposition have given formal notice requesting you to allow them to place their point of view as to why Question Hour should be suspended to consider the matter on Bofors.

I fully appreciate that ordinarily the Question Hour should not be suspended and no one from this side would ordinarily be keen on it. But you would appreciate, this is an unprecedented situation. Now it is the 22nd of April. On the 24th April, there is a hearing which is likely to abort the entire investigation that has taken place till now. We feel, it is because of the sins of commissions and omissions of this Government, of this entire Government.

The other day, we were given the impression that it was only Mr. Solanki who was responsible for that note. But the revelations that have come today have shocked the entire country. We are amazed. The minimum that we expected was that the Government on its own, the Prime Minister on his own, after the publication of this morning report, would have come to the House and taken the House into confidence as to what are the facts in this regard. I had

myself written a long letter to him immediately after the Bofors discussion ended. But today I have stood up at the moment, only to plead with you to allow my colleague, Shri Jaswant Singh and others who have given notice of Motion to suspend Question Hour to have their say and take the opinion of the House as to whether the House should suspend the Question Hour or not.

MR. SPEAKER: I would certainly hear all the hon. Members on why the Question Hour should be suspended, not on the substantive issue involved.

[*Translation*]

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH (Fatehpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also referring to the same issue. As Shri Advanji has submitted, we do not ordinarily press for the suspension of Question Hour, nor it should be done ordinarily. But we are faced with such an issue which is more important than the Question Hour. This has been perturbing our minds for a long time. (*Interruptions*) The matter is urgent because a prestigious newspaper has published many serious things even for the Prime Minister of this country. We do not know as to whether there is any truth in it or not but revelations made in it are so serious that the Prime Minister himself should have come to the House and answered the all queries relating to it.

[*English*]

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (Chittorgarh): Sir, as I submitted earlier, I am entirely mindful of the caution about question hour to which both Shri Lal K. Advani and the former Prime Minister hon. Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singhji have referred. Question hour is a right that the Parliament has extracted out of the executive. It is a very valuable right and this right is not to be dispensed with lightly. In my long years of service to this institution, this is the first time ever that I have given a formal notice of suspension of question hour. Never earlier have I been able to persuade myself to forego this right of the legislature which has been extracted with great difficulty

and after years of turmoil in the other legislatures of the world. If, I am compelled, nevertheless, to take this very unusual step, it is because I am convinced that a situation of very grave public importance, a situation that is urgent, has arisen.

I am not basing my contention only on what newspaper reports say. My party leader is a witness to it. I have till now never discussed it with anyone else. Even in the earlier discussion that took place on this sorry episode, called the Solanki episode, we on this side exercised great restraint. We sat with the treasury benches and we discussed with the treasury benches, a way out of this, so that India's fair name should not be sullied. Why, therefore, are we compelled to raise this matter again is because even then we were in possession of facts that the Government had not come entirely clean. We restrained ourselves. We were in possession of facts that there existed a letter on the files of the Central bureau of Investigation, directly affecting the conduct of the Chief Executive of the Government, that the Chief Executive of the Government in his intervention in the House had not taken the House into full confidence.

There are two issues involved. One is that on the 24th of April, in the High Court of Delhi, the final hearing in the Bofors matter is to take place and that final hearing could well jeopardise the totality of the effort that this legislature and earlier legislatures have been making to eradicate this cancer of corruption in public life. At this hearing on 24th, it is our apprehension that the Government, despite assurances has not conduct itself satisfactorily and is not going to conduct itself satisfactorily.

Secondly, why we are urging for a suspension of the question hour is because it has been in our knowledge all these days and, indeed my leader Shri Lal K. Advanji wrote a letter to the Prime Minister soon after that debate was over, couched in the most dignified and the most restrained terms and to that letter I am not going to quote from or refer to at the present moment, indicating that it is incumbent on the Government to

come out with full facts on the Solanki episode. Why are we worried about the question of this infamous Solanki note? It is because we were even then in possession of the fact that the Solanki note was not some obscure note which some unknown lawyer had come and given to the former Minister for External Affairs who had innocently gone and given it to the Federal Chancellor for External Relations of the Government of Switzerland. That Solanki note was accompanied by certain assurances which Shri Solanki then gave verbally to the Federal Chancellor then. Thereafter, the Federal Chancellor had a communication sent to India to say that Shri Solanki has said that he is doing this at the behest of the Prime Minister of India, this fact was in our possession. But we did not refer to all this because we were of the opinion that the Government would itself come forward and say: "No, there is no such thing; or, Yes, there is such a thing but it is all a fabrication of Shri Solanki's imagination. Subsequently what happened? Despite the letter that has been written by my leader to which reply is still awaited, this very Shri Solanki goes to his home State and makes statement to the effect saying that: "When I speak up an explosion will be caused or it will have a worse effect that I have merely done my duty etc..." It is as if it was his duty to go and hand-over an unsigned note from some unknown lawyer about a case that has been involving India for a very long time. These are some aspects of it which we feel are so important that they can brook no more delay. 24th is next door. If we do not adjourn the Question Hour, if we do not suspend the Question Hour and take up the Adjournment Motion which I and a number of other hon. Members have moved to discuss this matter in its totality, we will be doing a deserved to the continuing concern that India and many earlier Parliaments have already shown in this regard. I am not at this moment on the question of whether an Adjournment Motion should be admitted; why it should be in the form of an Adjournment Motion; how an Adjournment Motion is advisable and is it the only way in which it could be discussed. I am only on the question of suspension of Question Hour. I do believe that the situation in regard to the continuing imbroglio of Solanki today is sufficiently important for the House

to suspend the Question Hour and to immediately take up the Adjournment Motion for discussing this important matter. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Just one minute. I will allow you. I would like to be helped by you with the reasons and logic which can be used for adjourning the Question Hour. In what cases the Question Hour should be adjourned? Can you help me with some case laws or rules or the statute?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: We will help you. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am mindful of the serious concern that you show about why the Question Hour should be suspended. I follow entirely your caution and concern. This is not a question of going into the legality or all the ramifications of the case proper. I am not on the case proper. I am only on the question of suspension of Question Hour. I admit that the suspension of Question Hour by any Legislature is a most extreme step.

MR. SPEAKER: It is an exception.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: It should not be taken lightly. It should be taken up in matters of such urgent importance and it can brook no further delay. There are two aspects. Either the Opposition or the collectivity of the House seized with the importance of a matter comes before you and says: "This is so important that it can brook no further delay. Please, therefore, suspend the Question Hour and taken up this matter under whichever other subsequent provision you may, in your wisdom, judge fit to take up this particular provision only and suspend the Question Hour. I started by saying that this right of the Legislature has been won after a great difficulty from the teeth of the Executive. In this case, it is not the case laws, it is not precedents, it is not any other example of that kind which has to guide the wisdom of the Chair in this House or the Presiding Officers of this House. It has to be the judgement that is exercised about the immediate seriousness of the matter. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not talk to each other.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mutterwafji, I will give you also the opportunity to say as to why the Question Hour should not be postponed. I will also give you the opportunity to say anything else if you want to say.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA(South Delhi): It will continue like this as long as you pass on a letter.

[English]

SHRIJASWANT SINGH: I will conclude, Sir. I am attempting to answer it. It is entirely relevant and extremely pointed requirement from you which is an act of courtesy to us. You need not consult. But the fact that you want to consult us and be guided is a responsibility upon us I have submitted that in addition to the case laws earlier, earlier instances, citations etc., which my senior leader Lalji Advani would be giving, I submit to you that it is not merely the case laws or precedents etc., which should guide the determination of the conduct of business in this House. That will occur in most unusual circumstances and most unusual situations which are not covered by any precedents and the Chair and the collectively of the wisdom of this House will then have to apply itself to that unusual circumstances and to that unusual situation*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: I will also give you a chance to speak*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: So far as precedents, earlier occurrences, case laws or citations etc., are concerned, I would leave that to the Leader of the Opposition so

that he can enlighten us on that score.*(Interruptions)*

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I will confine myself to the rules regarding suspension. Rule 388 says:

"Any Member may with the consent of the Speaker, move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a particular motion before the House and if the motion is carried, the rule in question shall be suspended for the time being."

This is the rule which entitles and empowers you only to rule whether the motion is frivolous or not. And if it is frivolous to refuse consent to it. The decision in respect of the suspension has not to be taken by the Chair, it has to be taken by the House. I have been a member of the other House for many years and I know that on several occasions, motion of this kind was moved and put to the House. It may have been rejected after that, but the consent was not withheld unless the motion was frivolous. In this case, I think, that there is large section in the House which is keen to see that this matter be taken up. *(Interruptions)* We want to give priority to it. Just like an Adjournment Motion it is essentially to suspend the business of the House and to give priority to some other motion. This is also a kind of an Adjournment Motion without the element of censure. There is no element of censure in it.

MR. SPEAKER: Agreed.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: But the fact that the House wants to discuss something else apart from the questions is entirely within the province of the House itself. And, therefore, I would plead with you that so far as the Chair is concerned, its approach should be limited to giving consent. And to rule it out or not on the grounds of frivolity, it is not for you to decide.*(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: This had happened on an occasion when we

demand the suspension of Question and it was readily accepted by that side. And the debate started immediately. I felt.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I would give you an opportunity. Please be seated.

MR. SPEAKER: Please, I would give you a chance.

[English]

Until that time, you just think of what you have to say.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please hear me. I am on my legs. Please hear, what I am saying, carefully. The discretion is certainly with the Presiding officer and that discretion has to be used. And whenever that discretion has to be used, it has to be used in a justifiable manner. What is judicious manner? It should be justifiable. What is a justifiable thing?

In the past, as far as I know, there are cases only when calamities had occurred or something like war had occurred, the Question-Hour was suspended.(Interruptions) Please hear me first. I will give you a chance. And there are cases when the parties agreed, then also the Question-Hour was suspended. There are also cases when parties did not agree and the matter was also not very serious but still the Question-Hour was suspended. What do you expect me to do?

(Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, there are three options, and you are entirely right, Sir.

Firstly, you judge these motions for the suspension of Question-Hour on their merits alone. And should you, in your wisdom, come to the decision that it is entirely frivolous, then you can of course, reject it outright saying that it does not matter any

consideration at all. I submit that this motion for suspension of Question-Hour that myself and some other hon. Members have moved is not frivolous.(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Nobody is saying that it is frivolous. One can say whether it is that weighty to suspend the Question-Hour.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Exactly, Sir. In determining as to weighty or not as weighty, say for example War which you have cited for the suspension of Hour, and whether it is as weighty as war, this is a subjective judgement. You could either decide this in the subjective judgment that you have or there is a third option. And the third option is again suggested by the Leader of the Opposition that you take the collective wish of the House, put it to the House to decide by a vote: do they want the suspension of the Question Hour or do they not want it? There are these three option only and not a fourth option.

MR. SPEAKER: I am allowing Shri George Fernandes and then I am allowing Shri Bansal. I allow other Members also.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRIBASUDEB ACHARIA: (Bankura): Sir, we have submitted notices. you should first allow us. Please hear us first.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, please consider the cases of those who have given notice.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I cannot go ahead without giving you a chance. I know that.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Please hear us first.(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow Shri Dighe and if other Members want to speak, I will allow them also. Shri Buta Singh is also here. I will also allow him.

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, you have made a reference to rules. I am not in a position to prove how times has the Question Hour been suspended.

MR. SPEAKER: I have myself said that three types of cases have been received and all are covered by them.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: I have been in and out of the House from Fourth Lok Sabha onwards. I remember that the Speaker suspended the Question Hour several times on our request. I will not go into the technicalities of the rules about which you have made a reference. You have already received a reply to that. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to make just one submission making the Prime Minister a witness. The first question in today's question list is addressed to the Prime Minister but he is not present in the House. May I know the reason? (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): I am present.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Who does not know you? (Interruptions) It is very strange. They are talking as if all of them have become Prime Minister. I am saying that the Prime Minister is not present in the House.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: He has got my permission.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA: It is not fair that Prime Minister's absence in the House should be criticised because he is busy with the guest, the Secretary General of the United Nations. (Interruptions) Why should he bring the Prime Minister's name?

[Translation]

SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES: All right, I give up that matter. (Interruptions) I have said that I would make my submission making the Prime Minister a witness. Mr. Speaker, Sir, you may refer to page No. 15905 of the proceedings recorded on 1st April which contains a statement by the Prime Minister on the discussion on Bofors issue:

[English]

"I do not wish this Government to function under a shadow. After my long experience in public life and Government....." (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (PROF. P.J. KURIEN): The question is whether the Question Hour should be suspended or not.

SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES: I am not yielding. I am on my legs.

SHRI P. J. KURIEN: But he has gone on to the subject. We do not want to hear that. (Interruptions)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: "After my long experience in public life I understand this much that no Government should ever function under a shadow."

PROF. P. J. KURIEN: I submit that the only point here is whether the Question Hour should be suspended or not. He cannot touch the subject. But he has already started a debate on the subject. We do not want to hear that.... (Interruptions)...if you have not allowed that, he cannot touch the subject.... (Interruptions)..... You have to give your ruling. You can allow a discussion separately.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Kurien is very much right.

(Interruptions)

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA: Simply the Congressment are shouting. They have no argument to put forth. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

.SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am saying it on the basis of what the Prime Minister has said. first of all, I have placed the statement in the House made by the Prime Minister before you. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please see, she has told me the reason why the Prime Minister is not present. He is busy with some guest, the Secretary General who has come here from abroad. (Interruptions)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: It's all right, I have left that matter. I have told you that it is a Prime Minister's statement.

MR. SPEAKER: You have to tell me why and how the Question Hour should be suspended?

[English]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Sir, the Government is under a cloud. (Interruptions) But the Prime Minister has declared on the floor of this House while discussing the Bofors matter;

" I do not wish this Government to function under a shadow".

But, the Government is under a shadow and I will tell you how it is under a shadow. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am referring to the statement made by the Prime Minister during the discussion that took place on the 1st April in the House. (Interruptions)

[English]

Sir, you are not looking at the spirit of the rule. (Interruptions)

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: You please tell me

under which rule the Question Hour has to be suspended.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. It is not like this. (Interruptions) A very good question was put to me by Shri Advani. I know that the Presiding Officer has to use his discretion. But, at the same time, you will all agree that if I start using my discretion left and right without any logic and reason, that will also be not proper. To the extent possible, I should stick to the constitutional provision, the statutory provisions, the rules and the conventions. I will for the benefit of the House, read out a ruling given.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Buta Singh, I am going to hear you also.

SHRI BUTA SINGH(Jalore): Please allow me after your ruling.

MR. SPEAKER: I am not giving a ruling. It is an interim ruling. It is not a final ruling.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Now, I am also not giving an interim ruling; but I am just reading out a ruling given. This is a ruling given on 23.9.1965 in the Lok Sabha. After this also, I am going to allow you to have your say on the floor of the House to enlighten me or to broden the ruling that is given.

"The Speaker may not agree to suspend the Question Hour if the opinion of the Members is not unanimous on that point".

I was reading out from the debate of 23.9.1965. And yet, I am allowing you.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: It is not like this. I am sure that the Members from this side are also prepared for an intellectual battle.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, in fact, I have explained every thing in my notice. Which I have handed over to you. I mentioned in it:-

[English]

"I wish to move for the suspension of the Question Hour today.

The Statesman has carried a most damning exposure of the developments in the Bofors matter. The Prime Minister is shown as having misled the House during the debate on Bofors on April 1 and being, in fact, involved in the cover-up. This matter must get priority over every other issue. The Prime Minister must come clean before the House can take up any other matter....." The Prime Minister is not just the Prime Minister. He is Leader of the House.

.....If the Leader of the House is under a cloud, what is left?"

[Translation]

Today, in the morning I have sent a letter to you explaining all these things. In my opinion no speaker would have faced such a situation of discretion as you are facing. Whatever has been stated by the Prime Minister in his statement made on the 1st of this month has created an odd situation not only before this country but also before the whole world. I understand your point that you are bound to follow the rules and procedure and even then we are raising this issue again and again.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I am still saying that this is my final word. You can enlighten me.

[Translation]

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is the opinion of the Leader of the House expressed by him here. This is his opinion.

[English]

"I do not wish this Government to function under a shadow."

[Translation]

If it is proved today.

[English]

The Government is under a shadow.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: No, Mr. George, not like this.....

(Interruptions)

I find it difficult to go on moving my head here and there.....*(Interruptions)*.....Do you feel that this hour is the right time for discussing such a matter?

[English]

SHRIGEORGE FERNANDES: The fact is that the Government is under a shadow.

[Translation]

We have a tradition. We do not find it proper that such things may be published in newspapers. There are so many things being published in newspapers but we never urge for any discussion on them. But the Bofors issue was always taken for discussion on the basis of the newspaper reports. It cannot be denied. Had this issue not been published in the newspapers or the Indian Express had not been published all the events regarding Bofors scandal, would this issue have been raised in this House on the 1st April? The situation of raising this issue in the House came only which a newspaper published it. If the Indian Express and other newspapers have not presented the facts before the country, would Mr. Solanki have resigned? Therefore, any news published in newspapers has a very clear meaning. I would like to submit before you.

[English]

The Government is under a cloud. We cannot allow the Question Hour. We cannot possibly have the Question Hour and allow this Government to try to have any business till this Government clears its position. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I am going to allow you also.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This is on the suspension. So, let him also speak.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): We have given notices.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Acharia, please sit down.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE (Bombay North Central): Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the Opposition Members want is suspension of Question Hour. Now as far as Question is concerned, it is a right of the House under rule 32:

"Unless the Speaker otherwise directs, the first hour of every sitting shall be available for the asking and answering of question."

Now they want to suspend this rule. There is no other provision in the rules for suspension of Question Hour separately. But they, in short, want to suspend a rule which is there - rule 32 - and that power of suspension of rules is under rule 388 only.

Rule 388 provides:

"Any Member with the consent of the Speaker move that only rule may be suspended....."

SHRI RAM KAPSE (Thane): If Sharad Digheji is in favour of voting, we welcome it... (Interruptions)

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE: As far as the suspension of Question Hour is concerned, by using this rule, there have been many precedent mentioned by Kaul and Shakhder at different places. I quote from page 393:

"In very exceptional cases, Question Hour may be dispensed with, for making available more time....." (Interruptions)

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker Sir... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Paswan, you are going to speak later. Please sit down.

SHRI SHARAD DIGHE: Sir, I am quoting from Kaul and Shakhder.

"In very exceptional cases, Question Hour may be dispensed with, for making available more time for any business that is before the House."

Now, as far as this question is concerned, they have given an Adjournment Motion on a particular day and they want to suspend the Question Hour and discuss the Adjournment Motion. But now, the Adjournment Motion is still not before the House. It is not before the House at all. Therefore, the Question Hour cannot be suspended for a business which is not before the House at all.

You can always ask for the suspension of Question Hour by saying that instead of the Question Hour, another business which requires urgent attention and more time should be taken up. Supposing I say that the Question Hour be suspended and the Demands of the Ministry of External affairs be taken up, because they are urgent and they required more time, that will be justified. But here, the Adjournment Motion is still not admitted by you and it is not before the House at all. Therefore, to ask for the suspension of any rule to devote the time for a business which is still not before the House is not at all according to the rules. I will also point out what Shakhder says on page 842 with regard to suspension of rules:

"A Member with the consent of the Speaker may move that any rule may be suspended in its application to a particular motion before the House."

So, there should be a motion before the House already. But there is no motion before the House. Question Hour is the right of all the Members and unless there is a broad consensus that the Question Hour should be suspended because the Members want to discuss some other urgent business immediately and Members want to devote more time to that business, the suspension of Question Hour should not be allowed. So, this motion for the suspension of Question Hour may not be allowed at all.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, a number of Members from this side have given a notice for the suspension of the Question Hour. We very rarely give notice to suspend the Question Hour because we all consider this Hour to be very important for us. But today, when we saw the new report carried by *The Statesman*...

MR. SPEAKER: You speak on why the Question Hour should be suspended. Come to that point please.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: I am coming to that only Sir. Just now, Shri Dighe has quoted from Kaul and Shakhder and said that a rule may be suspended if the matter is a very important one. Sir, we have a precedent. I remember that when the report on the assassination of Shrimati Indira Gandhi was not laid on the Table of the House and yet the Indian Express carried out a report on that, I demanded the suspension of Question Hour, even after 10 o'clock. The then Speaker wanted me to give a notice. Immediately I submitted a notice which was admitted and immediately the discussion on Adjournment Motion was started. So, we have a precedent in this regard.

So, Sir, we consider that this is a very important matter because the Prime Minister while replying to a debate on Bofors has misled the House. He has misled the House and said that he was not aware of the note

given by Shri Solanki. In fact, Shri Solanki was made a scapegoat.

He has to resign, whereas the Prime Minister was responsible for this. Minister was The Prime Minister gave a not to Shri Solanki to hand it over to his counterpart in Switzerland so that the inquiry which we had been depending.

MR. SPEAKER: I am very very sure that you can enlighten me as to why I should suspend the Question Hour.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, the motivation behind sending the note to the Foreign Minister was only to stall the investigation.

MR. SPEAKER: No, not like this.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, the Prime Minister while replying to the debate said that he does not want that the Government should remain under a cloud. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dum Dum): Sir, I have also given a notice.

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow you after Shri Buta Singh.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: This is very important matter. We want that the question Hour should be suspended and the Adjournment Motion which we have submitted should be immediately taken up for discussion.

SHRI BUTA SINGH (Jalore): Mr. Speaker, Sir, some of the hon. Members from the Opposition side including the Leader of the Opposition are trying to seek your consent for suspending the Question Hour. My submission first of all is that there is no provision in the Rules Book for suspending the Question Hour. Question Hour is a substantial part of the arrangement of Business and that is the prerogative of the Speaker's office. (*Interruptions*) Kindly let me have my say. I have some standing in the House. I know little bit of rules.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: There is a provision.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: There is no such provision. You show me any such provision in the Rules. There is no provision for suspending the Question Hour. There is a provision for suspending a Rule. You can suspend a Rule from the conduct of the Business but you cannot suspend the Question Hour. This is the beginning of the arrangement of the business with the Speaker and you cannot interfere with the administration of the Speaker's Office. This is a part of the Speaker's Office to arrange the list of the business. Question Hour is the first item on the list of Business. Therefore, you cannot, by extension of Rule or interpretation of rule suspend the Question Hour. You can suspend the Rule. And, Sir, Rule has to be suspended with the consent of the Speaker. You had very kindly read one of the rulings, in which some of us were present in 1965, a historic ruling which was given by the Speaker on 3.9.65.

It says that: "The Speaker will give consent if the Members are unanimous."

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: We heard that.

SHRI BUTA SINGH: So, sir, now it is for you to ascertain that it can be a demand from one section of the House but it cannot be termed as unanimous.

Sir, in the course of their intervention and when they were projecting their points of view, they have made very serious allegations. They have commented on the subject. My request is that, you kindly expunge all that have been said on the subject. Because, it cannot form part of the proceedings. It is not according to rules. According to rules only those things go on record which are relevant for the suspension of the rule.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition wanted suspension of Rule 32. I understand him properly.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM NAIK (Bombay North): Then your speech will also have to be expunged.

[English]

SHRI BUTA SINGH: Because they are relevant. Because they are speaking according to rule.

Rule 32 cannot be suspended as Mr. Sharad Dighe has just pointed. Let us say hypothetically, if we suspend Rule 32, what comes next? the next comes the Agenda Paper. Sir, have not admitted anything so far. Unless you have applied your mind, unless you have given your thought to any of the notices given by the hon. Members, there cannot anything before the House, except, the Agenda fixed for today. The Agenda says "Discussion on Demands for Grants of the Ministry of External Affairs". If that is so, you cannot have the rules suspended because it is already there. So, that is the first item on the agenda.

Therefore, my submission is that, let this discussion be over. it is hardly relevant. It has nothing to do with the subject matter of the Agenda and there is ample scope soon after the Question Hour when the same subject is going to come before the House. If they are so keen, let them make their points there. Therefore, let us not waste the time. This House is the repository of the national wisdom. The people of India have elected us not to waste the time. Let us not waste the time, let us proceed with the Agenda.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: Sir, I will make a reference to the rules.

MR. SPEAKER: I am allowing one after the other.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Roser): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Members of opposition as well as of the Treasury benches are speaking simultaneously. You, yourself have

also said that the Question Hour had been suspended many a times in this very House and discussion on other items were taken up. This power is vested in the Speaker, otherwise it is infringement of the right of the Speaker. You have to judge whether the issue raised before you is of national importance or not. Under rule 388 any Member may, with the consent of the Speaker, move for suspension of any business for taking up discussion. Since it is your right, we are not supposed to intervene in this matter but we can only point out one thing that there is no issue more important than this and perhaps this is the first such issue raised in this House, and as a result of it the Minister of External Affairs had to resign. It may be possible that the Prime Minister may also have to resign. The Parliament represents the country and we are representatives of the country. No other more important question would have been raised before the country than this question. I would not like to go into details because you have also come to know through newspapers and it has been proved as to who was the advocate and who was involved in it? Therefore, I would like to request you to suspend the Question Hour. Only 15 minutes are left. Please start discussion on it.

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: I will just make a reference to the relevant rules.

MR. SPEAKER: I will hear you. Mr. Rabi Ray.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: Sir, I will just take one minute.

Sir, upto now, reference has been made to Rule 388 and Rule 32.

Rule 388 permits suspension of Rules and the Question Hour is mentioned in Rule 32. Doubts have been expressed. I draw your attention to Rule 39 (Sub-Rule 3). Those who are questioning whether the Rule can be suspended or not, it is stated in this fashion.

"If the Question Hour on any day is dispensed with or suspended - those who are objecting to word 'suspension' I am referring this word to them, to devote more time.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: What are you reading?

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: I am reading Rule 39 (Sub-Rule 3) on Page 17.

It is from a book which you never read. It reads as follows:

"If the Question Hour on any day is dispensed with or suspended to devote more time on any other business...."

(Interruptions) That is what has been referred to. Now I add and this is added here. It reads further as follows:

"either for any other reason or for allowing any other time."(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please go to the other point. This is about Unstarred Questions and Starred Questions. If the Questions are not answered for any reasons, they become Unstarred Question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: It may lead to a situation when the rule is suspended for providing more time or for other reasons. It is important that this 'any other reason' should be important enough to seek your consent to suspend the rule.

MR. SPEAKER: You can leave the interpretation of the rules to the lawyers. You can guide up on economic matters.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: You have sought our help.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry, this does not apply.

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE:

What I am suggesting is that 'for any other reason' the rule can be suspended.

[English]

He is conspicuous by his absence.

[Translation]

Thus, I would like to make a request to him that.....(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE:

But the point is that for other reason the Question Hour may be suspended. Any other reason in this case is a question of country's prestige. (Interruptions) That is why we demand it because, as has been mentioned, it may lead even to the resignation of the Prime Minister. The issue is so important. I am not saying that he has to resign. But the issue is so important that if it is proved he has to submit his resignation. That can be a reason for.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: He has told me that he is coming here and is going to give the information about the discussion which has taken place.

[Translation]

[Translation]

SHRI RABIRAY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to help you. Shri Jakhar has also come. I want to help you in removing the confusion which is prevailing in the House on the subject. I don't want to go into this controversy. The oldest Member, Shri Atalji is sitting here.....(Interruptions).....Yes, Shri Indrajit Babu is the oldest Member. I hope that Shri Indrajit Babu and Shri Atalji would agree with me. I have come to know that the Hon. Prime Minister has left the House after taking permission.

SHRI RABI RAY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am not talking about it. I am saying that he should also develop a habit to sit in the House like Shri Jawahar LAL Nehru during the Question Hour. He should remain present in the House during Question Hour not only on his allotted days but every day. I am coming to it. Mr. Speaker, Sir two questions have been raised here. One question is under Rule 65. I want to say about it.....(Interruptions)....Therefore, I would like to say to the Members of the ruling party that this is a question of unanimity. To make it unanimous, I would like that the ruling party should agree on the importance of Question Hour. The Question Hour has its own importance. But in this house, Question Hour has been suspended many times even on flimsy grounds. As far as I know the Question Hour was suspended on the occasion of presentation of Thakkar Commission Report. The present issue is more important than the issue of presentation of report of Thakkar Commission. Whatever has come to light about Bofors is equally important. Because our former Minister of External Affairs has met Mr. Fabler in Switzerland. I am not complaining against him. You please listen to me. I am saying all this to help you. The way, the newspapers have published that Report, Mr. Fabler has commented on the Prime Minister and he has done nothing also.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Because the U. N. Secretary General has come to India.

SHRI RABI RAY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the first Prime Minister of our country, Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru used to sit in the House during Question Hour and during the discussion on important matters, except when he was on foreign tour. He was a pillar of Parliamentary democracy. Through you, I would like to call Shri Narsimha Rao, who is a matured politician and follower of traditions.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I must say that all the former Speakers have been helping me.

[Translation]

SHRI RABI RAY: Mr. Fabler has noted down that Shri Solanki had told him that the note which he handed over to him was in the knowledge of the Hon. Prime Minister. It was handed over as per the direction of the hon. Prime Minister. That is why through you, I would like to request the Hon. Prime Minister to come to the House and say that he was not involved in it. Will it be done when there would be a discussion on it in this House on the subject? That is why I want to say that.....(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow all the Members to speak.

[Translation]

SHRI RABI RAY: Unless a discussion is held on it the whole opposition would remain in tension and the Members of ruling party will also remain in tension, because the undesirable reference about the Hon. Prime Minister has been made here. That is why the ruling party is also in tension. And the opposition is also in tension. Now, it is your duty to make the House tension-free I am not referring to any rule book. To make the whole House tension-free I am urging upon you to suspend the Question Hour under your inherent powers. You are the Speaker of the biggest democracy in the world. This is my submission to you....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: When I try to run the House under the rules, nobody listen to me. If I use inherent powers, what would be the result.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: There is one thing. I will give chance to all.

[English]

Question Hour is over. There is one more thing which I want to bring to your notice. The Question Hour is over now. Question Hour without questions!

SHRI RAM NAIK: Question Hour is over. Long live Question Hour. It is always there.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Financial Assistance to Civil Supplies Corporations

*694. SHRIMATI DIPIKA H.
TOPIWALA:
SHRI RAO RAM SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government give financial assistance to the Civil Supplies Corporation of various States for construction of godowns;

(b) if so, the amount of assistance given to each of the States during each of the last three years; and

(c) the amount allocated for this purpose for 1992-93?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI KAMALUDDIN AHMED): (a) to(c) This Ministry has a scheme for providing financial assistance to State Governments/ U.T. Administrations for construction of godowns, especially in interior areas. The scheme is presently applicable