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Situation arising out of agitation by disrupting work of media and steps
taken by Govt. to resolve the issue.

13.02 1/2 hrs

PETITION RE. PROBLEMS OF
CONTRACT WORKERS WORKING IN
THE SOUTH EASTERN COAL FIELDS
LTD.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): Sir, I
beg to present a petition signed by Shri
Raghu Thakur, Acting President, Koyla
Kamgar Panchayat, Jahangirabad, Bhopal
regarding problems of contract workers
working in the South Eastern Coalfields Ltd.

13. 03 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Situation Arising out of the Agitation
by the Doordarshan Staff Disrupting the
work of the Media and the steps taken
by the Govt. to resolve the issue
Involved

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI AJIT PANJA): A small
number of the Doordarshan Production Staff
(mainly of Delhi and Calcutta) calling
themselves the Joint Action Council had
resorted to agitation in the form of 'cease to
work' for three days from 15th to 17th
September, 1992 and 'work to rule' with
effect from 18.9.92 to press for acceptance
of their demands. This is an unregistered/
unrecognised union formed only in July,
1992 claiming membership of about 2500
out of almost 35000 staff and employees of
AIR and Doordarshan.

The Minister of Information Broad-
casting, Secretary and Director General,
Doordarshan spent considerable time talking
to the representatives of the Programme
Production Staff listening to their points of
view and explaining the Government's
position. The Government assured them
that it will consider all their reasonable

demands fairly and their genuine grievances/
demands would be resolved expeditiously.
An appeal was made by Minister Information
& Broadcasting to the staff that they should
withdraw their agitation to Create an amicable
atmosphere for discussions on their
demands. Thereafter, the Staff decided to
"postpone" their agitation. The Government
immediately formed a committee consisting
of 6 members under the Chairmanship of
Shri K.A. Varadan, Additional Secretary to
go into the matter and report by 30.12.1992.
The committee has started hearing the
employees.

They, however in, relaunched their
agitation with effect from 12. 10. 92 in the
form of "work to rule" which, effect, means
that they will work only during 10.00 A.M. to
5. 00 P.M. prescribed for general duty office
staff, and not in the pattern hitherto being
followed since the inception of Doordarshan.
All appeal and assurances made by Minister
Information & Broadcasting, Secretary and
Director General, Doordarshan have failed
to elicit any positive response on part of the
staff so far, and they have been continuing
with their "work to rule" agitation.

In the meantime, discussions were held
with leaders of the agitating staff at various
levels, including that of Minister Information
& Broadcasting. In fact, five meetings have
been taken by Minister Information &
Broadcasting and Secretary with the agitating
staff from a number of meetings held by
Director General, Doordarshan to assure
them that all their reasonable demands would
be considered objectively. It has also been
explained to them that action has already
been initiated on a few of their demands
which pertain to their service matters.

While the Government has all along
been avoiding any direct confrontation with
the agitating Production Staff, the agitators
have, in some specific cases, resorted to
misbehaviour /deliberate and willful
infringement to discharge of official duties by
those who are. Incidents are discussed in
brief in the following paragraphs:-

(i) On the first day of the agitation i.e.,

159. 1992, a Production Assistant, and a TV News Correspondent, abetted the entry of Press Photographers into the studio premises of DDK, Delhi, which are "protected" areas and are out of bounds. The press photographers took photographs of the studios. When the Security Officer tried to prevent the photographers from going out with the photograph, THE Production Assistant and the TV News Correspondent pushed the Security Guards aside, forcing the gates open to let the photographers out of the complex.

- (ii) On 15.9.92, a Graphic Artist, DDK, Calcutta, forcibly stopped a Casual Production Assistant from performing his duties. The Casual Production Assistant was physically manhandled and received injuries in the incident. He had to be admitted to the local hospital for treatment. The Casual Production Assistant has already lodged and FIR with the Jadavpur Police Station.

In fact, in Calcutta, the willing workers are still being threatened and obstructed from performing their duties. The casuals, in particular, have been the target of such threats.

- (iii) In the second phase of the agitation on 17.10.92, a lady ASD, DDK, Delhi was obstructed from performing her official duties by a Production Assistant. According to the lady, the Production Assistant threatened to kill her and used abusive language. The lady has also lodged on FIR with the Parliament Street Police Station.

- (iv) On 27.10.92 wherein a Production Assistance and Cameraman Grade II tried to hit a Cameraman when the later was proceeding to Siri Fort

Auditorium for coverage of a SAARC Function. Both the Production Assistant and the Cameraman chased, on scooter, the Cameraman and tried to hit him with the Scooter itself.

- (v) On 31.10.92, CPC had scheduled recordings of National Programme of Dance by a lady. There was initial resistance to put up the sets for recording but through pursuation, the sets were got erected on 31st October, 1992. However, on 31st afternoon, a group of agitators went to CPC and dismantled the sets. Similarly, two of CPC recordings, scheduled for 3.1.92, were also badly disrupted because of a similar approach on part of the agitators.
- (vi) On 6.11.92, the Defence Secretary of Pakistan calling on Prime Minister could not be covered because of deliberate and wilful infringement caused by the agitating staff in transportation of the required equipments outside DDK premises.
- (vii) The agitators have all along been holding lunch hour gate meetings and shouting slogans. They have also been making public threats for stopping transmission. The Production Assistant, one of the leaders in the forefront of the agitation, has been inciting all categories of staff to join their agitation. Two Production Assistants have also been critical of the contingency arrangements made by the authorities for keeping the transmission going-through arrangements at Pitampura.

The agitation affected and is still affecting the services of great social and public importance, for example:-

- (a) Owing to the agitation of the staff, the weather report on its original format could not be telecast.

Presently, arrangements have been made through another agency to telecast this regularly.

- (b) Doordarshan's national newscast have also been affected, in-as-much -as, there has been a substantial reduction in the visual coverage of important national events. Captions and titles are also not being carried,
- (c) The telecast of information relating to missing persons, an important social service being done by Doordarshan was seriously affected for approximately one month. This has now been restored.
- (d) All outdoor/indoor recordings scheduled before 10.00 hrs. and after 17.00 hrs. have also suffered because of this so called "work to rule" agitation.

There have also been reports indicating the adverse effect of non-editing of news.

This "work to rule" agitation launched by the said employees has not so far affected Doordarshan Commercial Service. No specific instance of loss of revenue to the commercial service of Doordarshan has so far come to our notice, nor has this been reported by any regional Kendra.

Directorate General of Doordarshan and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting have been consistently monitoring the situation arising out of their "work-to-rule" agitation. While the demands of the agitating staff are being considered on their merits, the Governments have also decided to deal firmly with the agitating staff in order to maintain the public service of electronic media. Some official have been suspended and show cause memos have been issued to some others. In addition, the Government has examined the possibility of various other actions that can be taken against the agitating employees. However, I would like to make it clear that Government has no intention of being vindictive or make any confrontation.

I hope that good sense will prevail upon the agitating employees and they will resume their normal duties and will start working in the same manner as they were before launching this agitation. Two Joint Secretaries of Information & Broadcasting Ministry are still continuing negotiation with the agitating employees.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH (Deoria): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to seek clarification only on two matters. They have suspended their two leaders and sent Police to harass them (Interruptions)

[English]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No question should be asked now.

13.10 hrs

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT) (SHRI RANGARAJANKUMARAMANGALAM): Sir, on behalf of Shri Ghulam Nabi azad, Sir With your permission I rise to announce that Government Business during the week commencing 30th November 1992, will consist of:

1. Consideration of any item of government Business carried over from today's Order Paper.

2. Consideration and passing of;

- (a) The construction (Seventy-second Amendment) Bill, 1991 as reported by the Joint Committee.