

MR. SPEAKER: Should I read it? This is the Manual. It says:

"The Chair is not bound to give reasons for withholding consent to an adjournment motion."

Now, I am ready to discuss it in my Chamber with any hon. Member who comes. Now if you want to force my hands.....

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: What are you quoting from?

MR. SPEAKER: This is the Manual of Business.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: It cannot supersede the rules.

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to me. I will satisfy you.

Now, we take up call attention—Shri Ajoy Biswas. Come along with your call attention. This is a very important matter. I have allowed your call attention.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: What about your promise you gave yesterday—that the Prime Minister will make a statement?

MR. SPEAKER: I have sent it... Yes, it will be done. The House is not yet over. Please take your seat. Why are you unnecessarily harassing the whole house? Yes, Mr. Biswas.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: The House cannot be treated like this.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, not like this.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: When is the Prime Minister going to make the statement? You made a solemn affirmation that she might.

MR. SPEAKER: I simply said that I have sent it... (*Interruptions*). Mr. Bosu you are always monopolising the business. This is not proper—I tell you. You cannot monopolise the proceedings all the time. You are one of the elected Members.

Mr. Biswas.

12.15 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

REPORTED FIRING ON ONION GROWERS AT PIMPALGAON-BASWANT (MAHARASHTRA)

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Calling Attention. Shri Biswas.

SHRI AJOY BISWAS (Tripura West): I call the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:—

"The reported police firing on the onion growers at Pimpalgaon-Baswant in Nasik District of Maharashtra on 19th March, 1980 resulting in the death of two peasants and injuries to several others".

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH): Mr. Speaker, Sir....

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI): What happened to the Assam thing? (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: After Call Attention.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): Sir, you made a solemn assurance.

MR. SPEAKER: That has been done. I never go back upon my assurance. It is only you who do that.

Now, the hon. Minister.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of deep regret and anguish that two precious lives have been lost and that some persons received injuries in the incident that took place at Pimpalgaon, District Nasik, on 19th March, 1980. The Government of India immediately called for a report from the Government of Maharashtra on these unfortunate happenings.

According to information furnished by the Government of Maharashtra on 18th March, 1960 there was sudden agitation by farmers by squatting and putting tractors on Bombay-Agra Road at about 1200 noon at Pimpalgaon, paralysing vehicular traffic, to demand purchase of all quantities of onions brought to market at the rate of Rs. 45 per quintal irrespective of quality of onions. District officials rushed to the spot, intervened and an amicable settlement was arrived between the onion growers and NAFED authorities and road bandh was lifted by farmers at about 5.45 PM on the same day.

In contravention of the oral agreement reached between the onion growers and NAFED authorities, one Shri Madhav Rao More, on 19-3-60, insisted that all quantities of onions be purchased by NAFED at certain rates. The NAFED officer regretted his inability to accede to the demand, as it contravened the oral agreement already reached. Shri More instigated the agriculturists to organise bandh on the Bombay-Agra Road. The farmers thereafter paralysed the traffic on the road by putting tractors and squatting there. Traffic from both the sides of the road was held up.

In the meantime, a company of the State Reserve Police (SRP) Group VI stationed at Dhule were returning from Bombay to their Headquarters by road and reached the spot. They were not concerned with the law and order arrangements at Pimpalgaon. Agitators obstructed SRP vehicles at about 11.45 AM. Officials of SRP requested agitators to allow them to proceed to Dhule but this request was turned down.

SHRI Z. M. Kahandole, M.P. from Malegaon constituency came to the spot and tried to address and pacify the farmers. The agitators were in no mood to listen to him. They abused him and the police officers and men. Shri More abruptly slapped Shri Kahandole. Police intervened. Shri Kahandole got himself rescued and

took shelter in one building. The agitators immediately started very heavy stone pelting and attempted to set fire to the SRP vehicles. Police had to make a mild cane charge. On getting stone injury on his head and hearing attempts to set his vehicle on fire and on finding that his vehicle was surrounded, a Head Constable of SRP fired 8 rounds from his rifle.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): There is a typing mistake. It is put as "mild cane charge", but it ought to be "wild cane charge...."

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: Thank you for the suggestion. The mob was chased away but it entered the police lines. The police again resorted to mild cane charge as the agitators were rowdy and continued stone pelting. One platoon of SRP was over-whelmed by the mob and had to fire 4 rounds when cane charge failed.

Two person died and 12 were injured, out of which 7 sustained bullet injuries. SRP personnel and officers were injured, some badly.

DIG of Police, DM and SP rushed to Pimpalgaon with reinforcements. Orders under section 144 Cr.P.C. were promulgated for 3 days. The situation is now reported to be under control.

The Divisional Commissioner, Bombay commenced an inquiry at Pimpalgaon into the incident on the 20th March at 9.00 A.M.

SHRI AJOY BISWAS: The statement made by the Minister is one-sided, and we are not satisfied with it. The onion crisis has come to the surface on two different occasions and in two different manners. Sir, immediately before the elections, due to the manipulations by big wealthy traders, merchants and exporters, the price was shot up. These people are big supporters of the present ruling party. And as a result, the retail price of onion throughout the country shot up to even Rs. 8 a kilo.

[Shri Ajoy Biswas]

that is, Rs. 800 a quintal and this was used as a big propaganda against different political parties who are in power in different States. And this time there is a widespread propaganda which says that there is a bumper harvest. The Agricultural Prices Commission in last May has given a report on pricing pattern of onion. The NAFED's procurement programme has been able to meet only a fraction of what the situation demands. This is a serious lapse on the part of the Govt. We are not aware if the STC has been asked to come to the market or the Government has mobilised all the de-hydration plants and the de-hydrated onions could be kept for defence forces personnel as well as for export. Sir, the whole thing is because the big onion traders and exporters (who are supporters of the ruling party) are now wanting to be rewarded and they are demanding Open General Licences for export of onions. And in order to create a difficult situation, they have totally absented themselves from all the onion wholesale markets and as a result onion is being sold at a price which is far below the cost of production, the cost price. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Are you putting the question? Please put the question.

SHRI AJOY BISWAS: I am coming to that. This is the background. . .

MR. SPEAKER: You must put the question.

SHRI AJOY BISWAS: The Government's attitude all along has been only to further the interest of the big traders, exporters and industrialists. I am sure that there is a secret understanding with the big onion traders and the ruling party that they will give a huge money to Cong. (I) for the coming Assembly elections. I am putting a question. . .

MR. SPEAKER: You are trying to make a political speech, nothing more.

SHRI AJOY BISWAS: Sir, I am putting the question. My question is this

Will the Government assure that the NAFED and the STC both would come to the market from the beginning of the onion harvesting season to ensure the growers get a remunerative price and regulate the exports so that there is no scarcity within the country?

MR. SPEAKER: This is the simple question for which you have taken 10 minutes.

(Interruptions).

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: Sir, my hon. friend has made some insinuations. I would like to apprise the House of the steps taken by the previous Janata Government of which Shri George Fernandes was a Member. (Interruptions) Sir, the Agricultural Prices Commission during the previous regime had fixed a support price of Rs. 40 per quintal for the 1978-80 season for onions of fair average quality. This was agreed by the previous government and so Rs. 40 was fixed and their instructions to the State Government as well as the NAFED to purchase these onions at the rate fixed by the Agricultural Prices Commission have been approved of by the previous government. Then the onion growers under the leadership of Shetkari Sangathan demanded a remunerative price of Rs. 70 per quintal for their produce and started an agitation towards this end. Negotiations of Shetkari Sangh with NAFED failed on 10th March 1980. Meanwhile certain incidents took place. On 1-3-1980, the farmers blocked the Pune-Nasik National Highway at Chakan with bullock carts thereby completely dislocating the traffic. On 13-3-1980, 490 satyagrahis were arrested in connection with "Pune-Nasik Road Bandh". And there are several instances which go to show that these farmers were not satisfied with the rate that has been fixed by the previous government

One, Shri Joshi, President of the Farmers' Organisation also started an

indefinite fast. When the Prime Minister was apprised of the situation, she reviewed the situation on 14-3-1980 with Members of the Secretaries Committee on Prices and also with the Secretary (Coordination). Then a decision was taken on 14-3-1980 by the Cabinet and the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture made an announcement on the floor of the House that the price of onions had been reviewed and a rate of Rs. 45 to Rs. 60 per quintal has been fixed according to the grade and quality of the onion. So this is the matter and also the NAFED was asked to take necessary action so that they can come to the rescue of the farmers and enter the market. Also the Maharashtra Co-operative Marketing Societies were put on the job and then the purchases were made. Then, Shri Joshi who was on an indefinite fast broke his fast and the agitation of the farmers in Poona district was withdrawn. NAFED officials visited Chakan and purchased all onions at Rs. 45 to Rs. 60 per quintal. Meanwhile, the whole situation was taken advantage of by some demoralised, discarded and discontented politicians. They went there and they have given a political colour. They instigated these innocent farmers to carry on the agitation and spread this agitation to other area also.

The hon. Member referred to the traders manipulating the prices and creating scarcity conditions. This Government and the Prime Minister is very particular and she insists that the anti-social elements should be taken care of and severe and strict measures are being taken against those who are committing these economic offences. The prices that have been offered by the present Government are better; they have been based on certain norms and formulas. The prices are within the range of Rs. 45 to 60 per quintal whereas the previous Government had fixed the prices at Rs. 40 per quintal for all grades of onions whether they were of better grade or inferior grade. It is only a politically motivated agitation to create a prob-

lem for the Government in spite of the fact that the Central Government has been favourably disposed to redress the grievances of the farmers in that onion-producing area. I can assure the hon. Members that we have carefully considered the problems of the farmers and have gone through the question of prices of onions carefully. The cooperative organisations, including the NAFED, have been asked to enter into the market in a big manner and see that relief measures are provided to the farmers so that they may not resort to distress sale and also allow the traders to exploit their distress.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): There are two aspects of this problem and I would have been happy if the Minister of Finance was also present. This issue figured when we were discussing the Maharashtra Government budget. I had raised all these questions at that time and the Finance Minister while replying to the debate had also made certain observations.

There are two aspects; one, the agitation by the farmers there, and the second, the immediate issue which I presume the Minister is trying to answer but he is not able to answer that question, so he is discussing what the previous Government did and what the hoarders did and so on and so forth. We are prepared to discuss your Government's attitude also to the hoarders. For instance, there was a news item only three days ago that in Orissa when the Magistrate arrested some hoarders, politicians belonging to your party released them. So, we can discuss that also: do not bring that here.

There are two issues; one is the firing that has taken place day before yesterday. I find that the Minister is now trying to run away from that. The brunt of his argument is that some disgruntled, discredited and discarded politicians went there. In other words, what he is trying to say is that the farmers of Maharashtra are so stupid that some discarded, disgruntled and discredited politicians could go

[Shri George Fernandes]

and exploit them. I presume those farmers voted for you. They were wise enough to vote for you and suddenly they have become foolish enough to listen to some discarded, disgruntled and discredited politicians as you are trying to call them, I do not know, who.

The agitation has been on the issue of prices. The Minister is trying to mislead the House when he says that the previous Government had fixed Rs. 40 per quintal uniformly. It was not so. I would like the Minister to correct that. I would like to come to that on some other occasion; I would not deal with that just now. We had categorised the onions into three categories. The price at that time fixed was Rs. 40 to Rs. 60 per quintal. I want the Minister to correct himself rather than expose himself to a motion of privilege on that. The farmers started the agitation some weeks ago. Assuming that the Janta Government or whatever Government it was had fixed the minimum price at Rs. 40 the prices which prevailed in Lasalgaon, Pimpalgaon and in the Ozal market were Rs. 25 per quintal day before yesterday when the police firing took place. This House had been told by the Finance Minister four days ago when we were discussing the Maharashtra Budget, when Mr. Chavan raised this question, I had also raised this question in the course of the discussion, that they have given instructions to NAFED to purchase onions at Rs. 45. I want the Finance Minister and the Agriculture Minister to tell us, what was NAFED doing there? Whose interest were they serving? Why was the price Rs. 25? There is a conspiracy between those who go to buy onions and between the traders. Let them not try to put labels and say: they belong to this party or that party. You are in power and they are your men; your NAFED, your traders conspired to deny the farmers at reasonable price which you in this House announced four days ago—saying Rs. 45 is the minimum price and Rs. 60 is the maximum price. The

farmers' demands are Rs. 50—70. It is a justified demand. I am prepared to accept your arbitration on behalf of the farmers. I have been there; I spent two days in Nasik district, in Pune district, when this agitation was going on.

MR. SPEAKER: Please put the question.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: It is a far more important issue.

MR. SPEAKER: You have emphasised it.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: I am prepared to accept your arbitration on behalf of the farmers; they are demanding Rs. 50—70. I should like to know from the government what it intends to do about the demand of farmers, Rs. 50—70.

The third question arising out of this is the role that Mr. Kahandole played. The Minister is trying to mislead the House. Mr. Kahandole who is a Member of Parliament from Malegaon belongs to the (I) Congress, your party. He went there in order to play politics with the farmers and their demands. I know the speech he made, I can quote it back to you; he said:

“इन्दिरा गांधी देवी की अवतार है, यहाँ आप किसानोंके लिए ही उतर कर आई है। इन्दिरा गांधी आप लोगों को 125 रुपये का दाम दिलाने के लिए तैयार है, लेकिन शरद पवार और जो तशकवित्त श्रम्य लोग है, इन के चलते यह काम नहीं हो पा रहा है।”

That is the speech he made. Then the provocation came and thereafter the police ran riot. I want the Minister to tell the House. In the statement he says that SRP vehicle arrived at 11.45. What time was the firing? Were there any officials? His statement further says that a head constable ordered firing. He also says there were police officers present; he says the head constable ordered firing. Then his statement says: two persons died of bullet injuries and seven persons have bullet injuries. According to him 12 rounds

were fired in order to shoot and kill the poor people. He says they were obstructing the road for four days there was no obstruction; there was no killing. Why did those people go there to kill them? What were the district officials doing? They knew that there was an agitation going on. The Minister must be categorical in what he is trying to tell us. In so far as this agitation itself is concerned, the issue involved was agricultural. The Agricultural Minister and the Finance Minister should tell us.

Further, you know the kind of lawlessness that has been let loose in that area. Is the Minister aware that when the injured were taken to the civil hospital your SRP men and policemen went and beat the doctor there. Dr. Dey was beaten up in the civil hospital, the patients were removed from the civil hospital and they had to be treated in private clinics. Firing was in four places. He is talking about the SRP vehicle being obstructed, as if they were trying to shoot their way out, the poor farmers. Mr. Zail Singh, Home Minister, is this what you have done in the last few months since you took over? From blind people,

सड़कों से लेकर किसानों तक, उधर अदालत से लेकर मंडक तक लाठी और बन्दूक को छोट कर और बूट नहीं आता। होम-मिनिस्टर, आप लोग क्या कर रहे हैं।

MR. SPEAKER: Please exercise restraint.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: I am exercising restraint but I have reasons to feel exercised. I want them to tell us: what was their treatment to the people who were injured? Were they treated in the hospital? Is it true that the doctor and the patients were beaten up? Is it true that people had to be removed to clinics? I want the Minister to be truthful when he replies to this House.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBIAH: Mr. Speaker Shri George Fernandes is noted for his rhetoric and demagogey. (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat. Minister is already on his legs. He is to reply, not you. He is to reply.

Nothing should be recorded without my permission. (Interruptions).**

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. Please sit down. Please take your seat.

Nothing should be recorded without my permission. (Interruptions).**

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBIAH: I am not confusing, friends, I am not trying to misled the House. The fact remains that the previous Government has fixed the support price of Rs. 40 informally for all ranges of onions and our Government took a decision to revise, as the Government felt that Rs. 40 for all ranges of onions will not do justice to the farmers. So a range from Rs. 45 to Rs 60 was fixed. As a matter of fact Shri Joshi, the President of the Farmers Union, he broke the fast. There is an oral agreement made and the NAFED was asked to purchase all the onions available. If the onion price has crashed at Rs. 25 as mentioned by the hon. Members, the Government has come forward with the support price of Rs. 45 to Rs. 60. Is it not helping the farmers to rescue them from the clutches of unscrupulous traders?

SHRI NIREN GHOSH (Dum Dum): How?

(Interruptions)

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBIAH: Please hear me.

There is an agreement reached. NAFED and the marketing society started buying. Meanwhile Congress(U) and the local janata party were supporting the Chakan agitation.

[Shri P. Venkatasubbaiah]

Shri Unna Joshi, President, Pune City Janata Party and Dr. Arvind Lele, former M.L.A. of Maharashtra threatened to spread the agitation and organised the Pune Bandh on the issue. Already the President had broken his fast. He is satisfied with the rates fixed by the Government. Shri Sharad Pawar, former Chief Minister, Maharashtra, met some of the agitators and commended their agitational role. This is the political aspect of it. I would like to tell Shri Fernandes this is the political aspect of the matter.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: The only person was Shri Khandole, your M.P. What are you talking? What are you talking, Mr. Minister?

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: You must have the patience to listen to me. About the police firings, the Head Constable, the S.R.P., they were threatened. Their vehicles were surrounded and even though they wanted to retreat, they went into the police lines. When the Head Constable, as I submitted in my statement felt that his life was threatened and his vehicle was going to be set on fire in his self defence he fired certain rounds and some people were injured.

** (Interruptions)

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Minister is misleading the House.

** (Interruptions)

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: The injured people were taken to the hospital. According to Shri George Fernandes the S.R.P., men went there, threatened the doctors not to treat them and they were treated in a private hospital. That was what Shri George Fernandes said. I take this words. People have got some private information. What I was told, I have told the House. If what he says, if there is any truth in the matter, we will also enquire into this as to what has really happened.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: On a point of order, Sir. The Minister has made a misleading statement. I have caught him and he says now, "Mr. George Fernandes may have some private information; this is the information I received; he may be right," etc. (Interruptions) You must protect the interests of the House, Sir. He is misleading the House.

MR. SPEAKER: Shrimati Pramila Dandavate.

श्रीमती प्रमिला दंडवते (बम्बई उत्तर मध्य) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मंत्री महोदय ने जो बातें कही हैं, उन से एक बात उभरती है कि उनके स्टेटमेंट में जो दो किसान वहां मर गये हैं उनके बारे में सरकार को कोई दुःख नहीं है। उनके जवाब में इस बात का कोई जिक्र नहीं है। जो इस प्रकार के आन्दोलन होते हैं और उनमें किसी के दृक्म के सिवा जो बेकानूनी और कानूनी भी जो फायरिंग करते हैं और उसमें जो कोई मर जाते हैं तो उनके बारे में भी सरकार को कुछ कहना चाहिए। लेकिन इसमें उसके बारे में भी कोई बात नहीं है।

आज मुझे जो खबर मिली है उससे पता चलता है कि वहां जो आन्दोलन चल रहा था उसके बारे में किसानों ने सब बाने उनको पहले म कह दिया था। नाना साहब गोरे वहां पर गये थे, जज फर्नान्डीस वहां पर गए थे, सब को किसानों ने कहा था कि यह आन्दोलन राजनीति से दूर रह चलाया जा रहा है लेकिन बार-बार अभी मिनिस्टर साहब उसको राजनीतिक कलर, राजनीतिक रंग देने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं।

किसानों पर फायरिंग का जो सवाल है उसके बारे में जार्ज फर्नान्डीस ने कह दिया है उससे भागे उस पर कहने की जरूरत नहीं है। जो मुझे पता चला है कि सेन्ट्रल गवर्नमेंट ने नाफेड के बारे में जो बातें कही थीं, उससे बहुत नीचे दाम व किसानों को देने की कोशिश कर रहे थे। वहां के किसानों की मांग है कि 70 से 75 रुपये क्विंटल उनको बेग के देने चाहिए यही उनको रेगुलरेटिव प्राइस पड़ती है। उन्होंने यह भी कहा था कि हम अपना आन्दोलन वापस लेने को तैयार हैं अगर हमें 40-45 रुपये दाम दे दिये जाएं। इस 40-45 रुपये क्विंटल पर भी हम बेचने के लिए तैयार हैं लेकिन पांच रुपये क्विंटल बोस के रूप में बाद में हम को दे दिया जाए। लेकिन उन्होंने इसको नहीं माना। उन्होंने कहा कि यह हम वापस नहीं करेंगे।

मुझे सरकार से अब यह पूछना है कि इसके बारे में सरकार की कोई ग टर्म नीति रहने

**Not recorded

वाली है या नहीं? बार-बार जब कंजुमर विक्रयित करने हैं जो एक्सपोर्ट बंद कर दिया जाता है। मुझे ऐसा लगता है कि हमारे देश में एग्रीकल्चर के बारे में कोई लॉग टर्म पालिसी सरकार की नहीं है जिससे कि किसानों को रेग्युलरेटिव प्राइस मिले और उसके साथ-साथ कंजुमर्स को भी ठीक दाम पर चीजें मिलें। जब पांच रुपये किलो व्याज बिक रहा था उस समय किसान को 25 पैसे किलो में व्याज बेचना पड़ा।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप सवाल कीजिए।

श्रीमती प्रमिला बंडवते : मैं यह पूछना चाहती हूँ कि मिडिलमैन को एल्लोमिनेट करने के बारे में सरकार क्या करने वाली है?

दूसरे में यह पूछना चाहती हूँ कि क्या सरकार ऐसी कोई पालिसी बनायेगी जिससे कि किसानों को रेग्युलरेटिव प्राइस मिले और कंजुमर को काफी मात्रा में आवश्यक चीजें ठीक दाम पर मिले और जितना एक्सपोर्ट आवश्यक हो उतना ही एक्सपोर्ट किया जाए?

तीसरे इस प्रकार की अफन जनता और सरकार पर नहीं आये जिससे कि फायरिंग हो, इसके बारे में सरकार की लॉग टर्म पालिसी क्या है?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : यह सब हो गया है, बार-बार मिसेज दंडवते आप क्यों दोहरा रही हैं?

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: For the information of the hon. lady member, I started my reply expressing deep regret.

श्री मनोराम बागडी (हिंमर) : ये लेडी मेम्बर कह रहे हैं, क्या प्राइस मिनिस्टर को भी ये लेडी मेम्बर कहेंगे?

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: Mr. Bagri knows English better than me. I correct myself and say 'honourable member'. I started my reply expressing our deep regret and anguish. Government will not like situations to arise, where human lives are lost. Under certain circumstances, which were beyond control, as I have stated, the police had to resort to firing.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: Totally unjustified.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: An administrative enquiry is being conducted. I would only request the hon. Members opposite to cooperate with the Government in having a thorough and

exhaustive enquiry so that the Government may be in a position to take necessary action against those who will be found guilty.

Again, the hon. Member pleaded the case of consumers. This is a matter which is being very carefully looked into by the Agriculture Ministry and the hon. Prime Minister. We have to strike a balance to see that the farmers get a remunerative price and at the same time, the consumers should not get affected; they should not suffer. This is a matter in which we have gone deeply and the Agriculture Ministry has taken a decision fixing the price.

MR. SPEAKER: She has specifically asked whether this distress sale was there or not or whether you have taken steps not to allow this sort of distress sale.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: We have taken every step to see that there is no distress sale. That was why, on 18-3-1980 NAFED officers entered the market to purchase these onions. On instigation by Shri Laxman Bhika Pagar, the farmers became unruly. The Tehsildar of that place intervened and an amicable settlement was arrived at. The Cooperative Marketing Society and the NAFED are prepared to purchase all the onions that are available in order to avoid distress sale by the farmers.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN (Trichur): I am on a point of order. Rule 40, sub-rule 14 says: "Members sitting in the House should not read newspapers...." Mr. Jyotirmoy Bosu is reading newspaper openly in the House.

MR. SPEAKER: The point of order is upheld. (Interruptions) That is not allowed.

PROF. MADHU DANAVATE (Rajapur): I would like to put specific questions to the hon. Minister. There are three aspects to this problem. One is that onion growers had

[Prof. Madhu Dandavate]

demande remunerative price where Police offered them bullets and they in return offered you *marpit*. There are two major questions that arise out of this. (1) I want the hon. Minister to tell this House very specifically whether it is not a fact that not only the Police resorted to firing resulting in the death of two persons and injury to several others, but the same Police went to the Civil Hospital, the doctor was beaten and even his wife was beaten. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This is repetition. Professor, you are a very learned man. I will only request that what George has said, you add something to that.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I am forced to repeat that question because he did not reply. Is it not a fact that the Police resorted to beating of the Doctor in the Civil Hospital and his wife?

MR. SPEAKER: He has already replied to that.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : Sir, have a little more patience.

MR. SPEAKER: You are only repeating.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: It is a compound sentence I am reading; I have not completed it. If you listen to the rest of the sentence, you will find it is relevant.

Is it not a fact that some policemen chased the farmers to the courts of law and resorted to beating, harassment and humiliation of the farmers within the precincts of the court? Secondly, is it not a fact that in spite of the announcement made on the floor of the House, the real trouble began because the NAFED, in spite of the price structure that has been announced here, tried to negotiate a price of Rs. 25 to 30 and that actually irritated the onion

growers? Add to that, was there not the incident which we referred to, namely, the speech made by the hon. Member of Parliament, who actually said, tape-record of the speech is available, that it was the Sharad Pawar Government that was responsible for all this trouble, Mrs. Gandhi's Government is going to solve the problem, to which some of the onion growers said "we belong here to all parties some of us belong to Congress(I), some of us belong to the opposition parties, we do not want to inject political issues into this agitation; so please do not bring politics at all"? Therefore, is it not a fact that this is an attempt to give a political colour to this agitation deliberately, hoodwinking the House and trying to divert attention from the main issue?

The agitation has taken place in two different spots. Is it not a fact that out of a total output of 20 lakh tonnes of onion, actually 12 lakh tonnes of onion are produced in Maharashtra and, out of that, 6 lakh tonnes are produced in Nasik and Poona districts, and that is why the concentration of the agitation has **taken place in these two places**, not because there is any political background, but because of this fact, and that is why there has been more concentration of agitation at this point, and not because of any political consideration?

MR. SPEAKER: Two of these points have been answered.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: There has been no reference to beating in the court.

Is it not a fact that when the price structure was announced, the real malpractice was that some of the officials of the NAFED and some of the private traders were in collusion and as a result some of the best quality onions were given to the private traders and only the second best

quality was left with the NAFED, as a result of which NAFED was incurring losses? Is it not a fact that because of these malpractices we were losing? Will this malpractice be stopped?

MR. SPEAKER: Already answered.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: If the present crisis continues, is the Government conscious of the fact that, as happened in the case of sugarcane, there would be diversion of crops?

If this question of a remunerative price to the onion crop is not settled, will there be no diversion of crop from onion to some other crop? So, from the point of view of the long term perspective, will an integrated price policy not be arrived, at, so that the problem could be solved?

MR. SPEAKER: The only question to be answered is the last one.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Also the beating in the court.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: There is an enquiry going on. All these matters will be taken care of during that enquiry. I may appeal to the hon. Members to co-operate with the enquiry. Each party should co-operate in the matter so that we can bring out the real truth.

So far as production and fair price are concerned, the Agriculture Minister will certainly deal with them. We are second to none in saying that we are wedded to the welfare of the marginal and small farmers. Government will take every step to see that the interests of both the farmers and the consumers are protected. I can assure the hon. Members that the allegations that have been made against the NAFED officials will be looked into by the Agriculture Ministry.

13.00 hrs.

SHRI MUKUNDA MANDAL (Mathurapur): Sir, the hon. Minister has made a misleading statement in the House. On 18th March 1980, there was an agitation...

MR. SPEAKER: You put your question.

SHRI MUKUNDA MANDAL: I am coming to the question. The onion growers have been agitating for their minimum prices for a number of years. The hon. Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr. R. V. Swaminathan, promised and made a statement that NAFED will purchase onions at Rs. 50 to Rs. 70 per quintal. After that very statement, the onion growers withdrew their movement and agitation. But later on NAFED refused to purchase onions from the onion growers at Rs. 50 to 70 per quintal. This was the position and the NAFED told the onion growers that they were not bound by the Minister's commitments because they were an autonomous public corporation. This was the attitude of the NAFED. My point is that after the onion growers went on a special procession...

MR. SPEAKER: What is the question?

SHRI MUKUNDA MANDAL: I am coming to the question. (*Interruptions*). The hon. Minister told us that it is a political issue. Some political parties have taken part and that is why the onion growers were so agitated. My point is that one of the Congress(I) M.Ps. went there and asked the onion growers to join the Congress(I) and told them that Indira Gandhi alone can solve the problem.

MR. SPEAKER: This is a repetition, Mr. Mandal.

SHRI MUKUNDA MANDAL: When the onion growers told that they were not concerned with any political party

[Shri Mukunda Mandal]

and then organised a procession, the police fired on them. About this incident, what the country will be ashamed of is that the police went to the hospital and asked the doctors not to admit and treat the injured. When the doctors replied that they were duty bound, then the doctors were threatened and beaten.

MR. SPEAKER: Why can't you give something new? This has already been said twice.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MUKUNDA MANDAL: My question is: Will the Government give an assurance that all those who have been killed and injured will be adequately compensated? Will the concerned guilty officials be punished and a judicial inquiry presided over by a sitting High Court Judge be conducted?

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: Sir, in such cases, as I have already stated, an inquiry is going on and then we shall see...

MR. SPEAKER: About compensation.

SHRI KRISHNA CHANDRA HALDER (Durgapur): About compensation and judicial inquiry.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: About compensation also, the Government will look into the matter and take a decision.

13.05 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. DEMONSTRATION
IN WEST BENGAL OVER THE
SITUATION IN ASSAM

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI): I was present in the House yesterday when the hon. Members were expressing their concern regarding the demonstration in Bengal. I would have spoken then

and there but for the fact that other Members raised other issues and started shouting in most unparliamentary language.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): It was from the Congress-I.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: No, it was from hon. Members sitting opposite me.

We sympathise with the genuine grievances of the Assamese people. At the same time, we are also aware of the hardships which the agitation in Assam is causing to certain sections of the people in Assam itself, in West Bengal and to other parts of the country. We cannot ignore the genuine apprehensions and fears which have risen in the minds of people in West Bengal and the fact that emotions are running high there also. The Youth Congress merely wishes to give expression to this widespread feeling.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: With your approval.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: Indeed the Chief Minister himself has called it a just cause, and I seem to remember—I cannot locate at the moment where the news appeared—the Chief Minister mentioning some time ago something about the mounting concern of Bengal at the continuing agitation in Assam. On Wednesday I had already conveyed to the House my own and the Government's desire that nothing should be done which could lead to an aggravation of the situation either in Assam or in Bengal. (Interruptions)

The Youth Congress has itself issued a press release appealing to all its members and others not to indulge in any action that might worsen the situation and has urged that the moves that we here in Delhi have initiated for finding a solution to the difficult Assamese problem should be