

11.44 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**REPORTED SERIOUS SITUATION ARISING
OUT OF VIOLENT AGITATION IN ASSAM
AND MEGHALAYA**

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN
(Cooch Behar): 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:—

“Reported serious situation arising out of the violent agitation in Assam and Meghalaya against linguistic minorities in the name of “foreigners” and steps taken by the Government in the matter.”

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN
THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
AND IN THE DEPARTMENT
OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
(SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH):**
Mr. Speaker, Sir, the recent developments in Assam and Meghalaya have caused us deep distress and concern.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: This is my job. I must inform you that they sought my permission beforehand and it is being allowed.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are right. But they have sought my permission.

(Interruptions)

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI-
MATI INDIRA GANDHI):** I want to make it clear that it is the Government's prerogative to decide who will answer on our behalf.

MR. SPEAKER: They have sought my permission and I have given that permission. Under the rules, Minister means any Minister. There is a collective responsibility.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI:
I want to make it clear to the whole House through you, Sir, that it is the Government's prerogative whom it asks to answer any question or make any statement.

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH:
Sir, the recent developments in Assam and Meghalaya have caused us deep distress and concern.

The overall law and order situation in Assam from August 1979 has been steadily deteriorating. On the one hand, Assam has witnessed a prolonged agitation initially for deletion of the names of foreign nationals from electoral rolls, then for the postponement of the poll and in the last two weeks, frequent bundhs, hartals and other attempts to bring economic activities, working of offices, educational institutions, etc. to a standstill. On the other hand, in the atmosphere of distrust and bitterness prevailing, there have been a large number of shocking incidents of violence. Between August and December, 26 persons lost their lives; there were about 120 incidents of arson and about 327 cases of assault. In January, there was a further deterioration of the situation. In Nalbari and Barpeta sub-divisions of Kamrup District, 41 persons have lost their lives; over 3200 houses in about 40 villages have been set on fire; and as a result, over 15,000 people have been rendered homeless. In Cachar district, 6 persons lost their lives in clashes of a communal nature. Most recently, on the 18th January, 5 persons, including a Senior Technical Officer of Oil India, lost their lives in violent incidents arising out of picketing the oil installation at Duliajan. In Meghalaya also, there have been equally shocking incidents of violence. 20 persons lost their lives between October and December 1979 and about 1900 persons have been driven away from their homes and had to seek shelter in relief camps.

In the situation obtaining in Assam and Meghalaya, the House will appre-

ciate that the foremost duty of the Government is to maintain peace and order and restore a sense of security amongst the different sections of the people. No Government can allow the conditions of lawlessness which had engulfed the State to continue. Equally important is the task of providing relief to the large number of innocent people whose houses have been burnt and to all whose belongings have been destroyed; reconstruction of their houses and their rehabilitation in their normal place of residence. Simultaneously, Government have also taken note of the apprehensions which have led to the prevailing atmosphere in Assam and Meghalaya. The problems facing Assam and other States in North-Eastern region are complex. Solution to these problems has to be formulated in an atmosphere of peace and understanding. Government have already initiated steps towards this end. In order to intensify our vigilance against unauthorised infiltration into Assam, the border security arrangements have been strengthened by initiating steps for 20 additional border posts. Secondly, steps have also been taken to reassure the students and others who have been engaged in this agitation of our anxiety to continue our discussions with them and create an atmosphere conducive to evolving solutions to the problems they face.

We are fully aware that law and order will have to be firmly maintained. The task of rehabilitating the people affected by the recent disturbances has to be expeditiously completed. Immediate steps have also to be taken to strengthen the border security arrangements to prevent any further unauthorised influx. We are equally aware of the sentiments of people of Assam, Meghalaya and other States in the North-Eastern parts of our country and their zealous desire to preserve and develop their cultural identities. Their apprehensions require to be allayed with sympathy and understanding. Hence we are devoting our immediate attention to the

task of finding acceptable solutions to the problems acceptable to all concerned in Assam, Meghalaya and other States in an atmosphere of understanding and goodwill. I will seek the cooperation of all sections of the House in this endeavour.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: Sir, you will agree, as also the Prime Minister and Home Minister, that the statement made by the hon. Minister of State is no better than a school essay. This is a serious issue and burning question of today and the question of the integrity of the nation lies in this issue. But it is an evasive statement only. (*Interruptions*). As you know, for the last three months, an alarming situation is prevailing in Assam and Meghalaya. Non-Assamese and Non-Khasis are being treated as foreigners. And, on this issue, Lok Sabha election in 12 constituencies in Assam has been postponed. Nobody knows when the election will be held next. Firing, arson, looting, rape and murder of human being are now a day to day affair.

MR. SPEAKER: That has been done. You come to the precise issue. What is the issue?

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: A reign of terror, rather say, a reign of jungle is prevailing. A high Central Government official and a renowned scientist, Dr. Rabindra Mitra, was brutally killed in broad day light by throwing stones at him. Non-Assamese people were being subjected to intimidation, insults, assault and eviction from their homes, even those who are living there for generations. Thousands of inhabitants of Assam have left Assam and came over to other parts of India.

MR. SPEAKER: Are you reading a statement or putting a question?

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: A secessionist movement is being sought to be encouraged in Assam and anti-India posters are also being brought

[Shri Ama Roy Pradhan]

out there. Some foreign agencies are also working behind it. A complete lawlessness is going on in Assam and there is none to protect the lives of linguistic minorities.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BIRENDRA SINGH RAO): On a point of order, Sir. He is reading a statement.

MR. SPEAKER: A point of order has been raised. What is your question?

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: It may have some repercussions in other parts of the country. Already Chief Minister of West Bengal, Comrade Jyoti Basu has sent a note requesting the Centre to take stern steps immediately. But the Central Government is sleeping and deliberately ignoring this issue. (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: Is the hon. Member making a statement or asking a question? You are supposed to ask a question.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: I raised the issue the other day and said that some stern steps should be taken immediately but nothing has been done. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Will you please put your question? If you don't put a question, what has the Minister to answer?

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: I will put my question. Under the above circumstances, I would like to know from the hon. Minister clearly:

(a) What immediate and specific steps are going to be taken to give protection to everyone including linguistic minorities regarding life and properties, who are living there for generations?

(b) I would like to have a categorical answer from the Minister as to who would be treated as foreigners according to our Constitution and what would be the method to determine the foreigners.

MR. SPEAKER: That is all. You cannot go on like that.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: (c) What are the specific steps that are being taken to prevent new and fresh infiltrators into Assam and Meghalaya from outside?

(d) I would like to know whether the Prime Minister will talk to the non-Assamese people also at the discussions with the other political leaders?

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH: We are one with the hon. Member when he says that there are certain disturbing trends in this part of the country.

I may submit in this connection that this is the legacy of the past Government. (*Interruptions*) Immediately after the new Government assumed office, the Prime Minister went into this question. Some senior leaders of our party have been sent there. They had detailed discussions with cross-sections of the population and with students, and they have studied the situation. The Governor came here and he had discussions with the Prime Minister and with the Home Minister, and he is studying the matter.

About the second point which the hon. Member has raised with regard to the steps taken to safeguard and protect the lives and properties of the people, I have already mentioned in my statement that we have strengthened the security arrangements. Some twenty additional border posts have been stationed there to obstruct further influx of population from the other side of our border. These are the important steps we have taken. We are continuing to take those steps in that direction.

About the posters which the hon. Member has mentioned, it has also been brought to the notice of the Government, but I may assure the hon. House that the Government is in a position to take whatever steps that are possible to maintain law and order and that secessionist activities will not be allowed to continue there. We will do whatever is possible for us to deal with the situation in a proper manner.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Somnath Chatterjee.

SHRI AMAR ROY PRADHAN: My question has not been answered properly, because I asked categorically who will be treated as foreigners.

MR. SPEAKER: Will you take your seat?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat): A pointed question was asked about foreigners. He did not reply to that. The question is about the definition of foreigners, who is a foreigner in Assam. That question was put, and he has not replied to it. Is the Member not entitled to get a reply?

MR. SPEAKER: Will you reply to that?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI-MATI INDIRA GANDHI): This is a very delicate situation and hon. Members are fully aware that different people are calling different people foreigners. We do not know who the foreigners are. The whole matter can be gone into. That is why we had put this matter to the hon. Members of the Opposition and it was agreed that the question should be kept above parties and we should all consider it seriously and in depth. Almost immediately after the meeting, I sent some people to Assam. I asked the Governor to come to Delhi. We have been in touch. It is not an easy situation. We must be very careful that we do not say anything that further inflames feelings. Who is to be called a foreigner, to what date do you take it back—these are all

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matters which we must discuss privately with some of you and with some of the Assam people. I am in touch with various people there. We had agreed to call a meeting here; I have not had a response from them.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Jadavpur): We are happy at the timely intervention of the hon. Prime Minister. It is no doubt the prerogative of the Government to choose its spokesmen, but we felt that in a very important matter like this the people would have been more assured if the hon. Home Minister or the Prime Minister had replied, but since there has been an intervention by the Prime Minister, it will be helpful. We do not wish to rouse passions. It is not our intention. The matter is very important and very delicate and the situation there is explosive. We do not wish to say anything which may aggravate the situation there. We have given notice of this call attention more out of a sense of shock, anguish and concern for the large number of people who are there, especially the linguistic minorities. The statement shows the concern for the situation that is prevailing there now. But it seems that some of the important aspects of the problem and the situation that is now prevailing there have not been taken note of. This is not just an isolated instance of trying to drive out the so-called foreigners. There are serious apprehensions of foreign agencies intermeddling in that area.

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When the hon. Prime Minister, after she took charge, sent some leaders of her party, it appears that those leaders met the students primarily, but the persons who have been affected, have not been consulted or discussions have not taken place with them; at least, it has not come out in the newspapers. The Prime Minister, it appears, has sent for the representatives of the Students' Unions. But I have been told that who are the leaders of those Unions itself is very much in doubt in that part of the country, because everybody

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seems to be taking up the leadership there and there is chaos and the matter is completely out of control even in the students' unions.

Secondly we would have expected that if the hon. Prime Minister could have visited Assam in the midst of her manifold duties, that would have been reassuring to the people there and her presence would have been of great help to them. Now the point is whether she is going to call the representatives of those who have been affected, the victims of the atrocities that are being committed. I have got the whole list of the nature of atrocities that have been committed there. I do not wish to go into all of them here. But I would request the hon. Prime Minister to inform the House and through the House the nation whether the Maghalaya Minorities Coordination Committee have given representations on the 15th of this month setting out the nature of atrocities that have been committed, setting out the seriousness of the situation there. Now representations have also come from people in Assam, from the people in Cachar. What initially started as an issue of foreigners really started when the bye-election was to be held in Mangaldoi Parliamentary constituency after the passing away of our good friend, Mr. Patwari, who was a Member of the previous Lok Sabha. Then the question was first raised and at that time the charge was that the forms for deletion of names were printed by the Assam Police and leaflets were printed by the police asking for the deletion of the names of so-called foreigners. Even today, the Government of India is unable to spell out who is a foreigner in this country. I am not minimising the importance of the difficulties of the question of deciding who is a foreigner. But that cannot be a matter of political decision. It has to be decided on the basis of the Constitution, on the basis of the laws of

this country. It is not a matter to be decided just to placate a section of the people of the country, to suit their whims and desires. It is a very important matter.

I am respectfully submitting before the House through you that the question as to who is a foreigner is being utilised to go on a rampage, and unthinkable brutality is being committed. There have been looting, arson and beating up. A very well qualified Manager of Oil India was stoned to death for no fault of his. He was called to the Hospital to come and see one of the employees of Oil India; he responded to the call and when he came to the hospital, in front of the hospital he was beaten up and stoned to death. This is happening in the 20th century in this country.

That is why we expected that there would be greater expression of shock, anguish and determination. That is why we expected the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Home Minister to reply to the Calling Attention. It is not to minimise the status of our very good friend, Mr. P. Venkatasubbaiah, that is not so. I wish him well and, I hope, he will go up in his status. It is only to show the country's anxiety, the Government's anxiety, in this matter.

When that did not succeed, then a plea was made to correct the voters' list. From the voters' list, 35,000 names were initially deleted. When protests were made by various political parties, including my party and the CPI, then some names were restored. When they did not succeed in deleting the names from the voters' list, then a plea came for boycott of elections.

Today, the people in Assam are taking pride in saying that the Constitution of India does not apply to Assam. They say that they have succeeded in stalling the elections. It shows that the writ of Delhi, does not run in Assam, I do not know whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to these published leaflets, these printed circulars, where Indian people have been described as

"foreign dogs". The people in Assam are circulating these leaflets calling Indians non-Assamese, as "dogs", calling them "Indian dogs". I have been told that these are the posters the leaflets, which have been printed in Gauhati University press. This is the charge.

Inside the campus of Gauhati University, in the medical college, one of the brightest students, Mr. Anjan Chakravarty, was killed. It is a shame for this country that his colleagues, his friends, in the college, in the university, danced upon his dead body after killing him. The Secretary of the motor workers' union, Assam, has been killed. The Secretary of the Namrup Fertiliser union has been killed. The propaganda is being called on... (Interruptions) I would implore my hon. friends there, please do not create a situation which will give a feeling to the people of this country that this House is not taking up the matter seriously. I would beseech my hon. friends to show patience—you have got the strength; have patience to match it.

The posters are being printed and circulated with the word "United State of Assam". It has spread to Meghalaya. The students from Assam, the people from Assam, have gone to Meghalaya. They have also carried out the rampage in Meghalaya in association with some of the local people. I am sure, the hon. Minister knows the name of Prof. Martin Majaw who is one of the ring leaders. Everybody knows it in Assam and Meghalaya.

Now, support has come from the people in Mizoram and Nagaland. A call is being given, a concerted effort is being made where we suspect—not suspect, we are almost sure because of the way the things are happening—that foreign intervention is there; the foreign agency is there. A call is being given for "United State of Assam", Indians are being described as "foreign dogs". This is the situation. I would request the hon. Prime Minister—I am glad that she is now present in the House—to give the most serious attention to this matter.

I would like to know in this context whether the Government will issue some clarification on the question of "foreigners". I know its difficulty, the question of "foreigners" cannot be decided on a point of date. But there is one very significant sentence in the Minister's statement. He says:

"Immediate steps have also to be taken to strengthen the border security arrangements to prevent any further unauthorised influx."

It shows that the Government thinks that there is already an unauthorised influx. That will create difficulties. Please choose words very carefully. If you say, there is already an unauthorised influx and that you are going to stop further influx, the people there will say, "Our stand is vindicated."

Today the Government of India is unable to define who is a "foreigner". In that context, how can you say that you want to stop further unauthorised influx? Therefore, it is very necessary, until the situation is normalised, that immediate strong steps have to be taken to secure the life and property of the persons there, minorities there, linguistic minorities there. We would like to know what compensation is going to be given to the people who have suffered for no fault of theirs. We would like to know what specific steps are being taken in that direction. They are Indians; they are staying in India for ages, for years and years. They have voted in the last elections. They are being held to ransom by some anti-social goonda elements in this country. Therefore, I would like to know whether the Government will give a clear pledge to the people there, the minorities there, the linguistic minorities there, that not one person will be allowed to be touched or molested or assaulted in that part of the country, that their life and property will be secure and that it will be a special responsibility of the Government of India to ensure that.

Secondly, I would like to know whether the hon. Prime Minister will arrange to send an all-party delegation there which will create an atmosphere

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of confidence in the minds of the people, the victims, there and will help in the restoration of an atmosphere of sanity in that part of the country. I would again request the hon. Prime Minister and the Government to clearly specify who, according to them, is a "foreigner". This is an issue on which nobody should be allowed to go on a rampage like this. This assurance has to be given and a decision has to be taken by the Government as soon as possible.

As regards the question of compensation that I have raised, I would request the hon. Prime Minister, if she chooses or the Home Minister to reply whether any specific steps will be taken in that direction at an early date.

SHRI MUNDER SHARMA (Jabalpur): What is the date of the posters which were circulated in Assam?

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: I have got it. I can give it to the Prime Minister. I can lay it on the Table of the House. These are in Assamese language.

गृह मंत्री (श्री जैल सिंह): इस्टर्न जीन के सम्बन्ध में जो कालिंग एट्रेशन है उसके बारे में मिनिस्टरी की तरफ से एक कम्प्रिहेंसिव स्टेटमेंट दिया गया है। मैं आनरबल मੈम्बरज के सैटिमेन्ट्स की कद्र करता हूँ और उन सैटिमेन्ट्स में उनके साथ शामिल हूँ। लेकिन मैं यह दरखास्त करता हूँ कि यह मामला आज से नौ महीने पहले शुरू हुआ और उस वक्त की सरकार ने इन बातों पर ध्यान नहीं दिया। कुछ बातें बेबनियादी हैं, मिसअंडरस्टैंडिंग पर आधारित हैं। यह जो लीफलेट की बात की गई है, सीसैशनिस्ट्स की, मैं चाहता था कि इसको लेकर जिम्मेवारी से बात की जाती। मੈम्बर साहिबान इस बात का यकीन रखें कि सरकार इस हाउस से कोई भी बात छिपा कर रखना नहीं चाहती। लेकिन जो हाउस में बात कही जाती है यह दुनिया में जाती है। मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि सीसैशनिस्ट्स का वहाँ कोई वजूद नहीं है, वहाँ कुछ उनकी हस्तौ नहीं है, उनकी कोई गिनती नहीं है।

उनका जो लीफलेट छपा दिखाया गया है उसमें किसी का नाम नहीं है। यह बात बेबनियादी है। इसके बारे में आपको और हाउस को चिन्ता नहीं करनी चाहिये। गर्वनमेंट इन बातों पर पूरा गौर करके ध्यान दे रही है। आज से तेरह दिन पहले से हमने इस्टर्न जीन के तमाम स्टेट्स के चीफ मिनिस्टर्स से और जहाँ चीफ मिनिस्टर नहीं है वहाँ के गवर्नर से बात की, चीफ सैक्रेटरीज से बात करके इन तमाम समस्याओं को, तमाम मामलात को गौर में रखा है और मैं तमाम मੈम्बर साहिबान से अपील करना चाहता हूँ कि इस समस्या को वे पॉलिटिकल पार्टीज के तौर पर न लें। यह मुल्क की बात है, हिन्दुस्तान की बात है। इसके लिए हम उनकी मिल वर्तन चाहते हैं। और वह अपनी मिलवर्तन दें। जहाँ तक आनरबिल मੈम्बरस ने.....

(अवधान)

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani): Sir, on a point of order. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: My point of order is simply this, Mr. Speaker, that we are told in the statement that there are secessionist activities and the hon. Minister says that we should not be exercised about it....

MR. SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Please sit down. Let the Minister make his statement.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: Contradictory statements are being made by the Treasury Benches here....

MR. SPEAKER: I think you have not followed him.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: We have totally followed him, Sir. I want you also to follow.

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down.

श्री जैल सिंह: स्पीकर साहब, यह काल एट्रेशन नोटिस था। उसके लिये एक स्टेटमेंट सरकार की तरफ से आयी और एक

सवाल हो सकता था। लेकिन आपने अलाउ किया, तीन, चार तकरीर करा दीं। अब जब मैं उनका जवाब दे रहा हूँ तो उनको सब से, सन्तोष से सुनना चाहिए।

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): The Home Minister made a statement that there was foreign hand.... (Interruptions)

SHRI ZAIL SINGH: I doubt it.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Bosu, you have not followed him. He says that it is not so much as it has been made out to be. (Interruptions)

श्री इन्द्रजीत गुप्त: बेबुनियाद को क्या माने हैं?

MR. SPEAKER: He does not want to magnify that. That is all. He has not denied the fact. Let him make his statement.

मैं आप को बताना चाहता हूँ ग्यानी जी, कि यहां पांच सवाल होते हैं।

श्री जैल सिंह: आनरिबल मेम्बरान ने यह प्वाइंट उठाया था कि लिंग्इस्टिक माइनरिटीज और अदर काइन्ड आफ माइनरिटीज के जज्बात का भी वहां ध्यान रखा जाये। तो मैं हाउस को यकीन दिलाता हूँ कि हम हर ख्याल के, हर तबके के, हर विचार के लिंग्इस्टिक हों या रिलीजस हों या ट्राइबल हों उनके जज्बात और उनके सेंटिमेंट्स और रवायत को पूरा ध्यान में रख कर वहां का इन्तजाम करेंगे। किसी को इस बात के लिए चिन्ता नहीं करनी चाहिए।

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: What about compensation? What about an all-party Delegation? He has not answered to these?

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ग्यानी जी, उन्होंने कम्पेन्सेशन के लिए पूछा था। उसके बारे में क्या कहना है आपको?

श्री जैल सिंह: स्पीकर साहब, मैंने आनरिबल मेम्बरान की तकरीर को बड़े ध्यान से सुना। उन्होंने बहुत लम्बी तकरीर कीं, और मैं सोचता हूँ कि कुछ बातें जो उनकी

हाउस में नहीं कहनी चाहिए थी, वह उन्होंने कहीं।

जहां तक कम्पेन्सेशन का सवाल है यह सरकार इस मामले पर गौर कर रही है, देख रही है कि कैसे इस मामले को हल किया जाए। यह कोई छोटा मसला नहीं है, इस पर ध्यान दिया जायगा।

AN HON. MEMBER: What about an all-Party Delegation?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: No, Sir. I do not think there is any need for an all-Party Delegation. Serious allegations have been made—I would request the Members not to ask me to name any person or Party—about some Parties inciting the agitators. Therefore, an all-Party Delegation would not serve any useful purpose. What we have agreed to with the leaders of the Opposition is that we would call representatives of the national political parties in Assam. I am willing to accept the suggestion of the hon. Member, if any representatives of those who have suffered wish to come, I shall be glad to meet them.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Ramanna Rai.

Before you proceed with the question, please make it precise so that he can answer. If it is a long question, then the whole thing will be lost. If you put a specific question, he will be able to answer. Otherwise, it will be a statement and some points will be left out.

SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI (Kasargod): Sir, it is a known fact that the Chief Secretary of Assam himself is behind this agitation and if it is so, is it not necessary that a House Committee is appointed or a delegation is sent to find out the truth.

MR. SPEAKER: That has already been replied.

SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI:....to find out the truth....

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: He is a new Member, Sir.

SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI: Now, the main point is that against the "linguistic minorities", and "the religious minorities" some foreign agencies are working to disturb the peace in that area. The main point for consideration is that if this kind of agitation spreads to other parts of the country, then we will not be able to check this. There is a possibility of this kind of agitation extending to the South also. So, the real truth should be found out and the correct answer found for this problem for ever.

MR. SPEAKER: I think your questions have been answered. There is nothing new about it... If there is any specific question please put it.

SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI: My question is: whether some foreign agents are behind this and I want to know what is the role of the Chief Secretary of Assam in this matter.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: We are looking into all the complaints that have been made. So far as the question of foreign interference or foreign influence or foreign hand is concerned, it is not easy to find out these things. Some people are making such accusations. We are looking into the whole matter in depth and obviously, if there is any truth in these allegations we have to deal with the culprits severely and promptly.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN (Trichur): Before just going into the relevant question which I will put, I am sorry to say that contradictory statements are coming from the government benches. I do not know if they are functioning with any sense of collective responsibility. This is a sad state of affairs.... (Interruptions) Yes, yes, the statements are contradictory.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD (Bhagalpur): Point out one contradiction.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: No statement is contradictory. Please read whatever you are talking about.

SHRI BUTA SINGH (Ropar): If the hon. Member himself is confused, what can the Government do?

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: Unfortunately, the question of Assam is just an issue mishandled and exploited by chauvinists and communalists....

AN HON. MEMBER: Communists.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: Communalists.... (Interruptions) You cannot shout me down.

MR. SPEAKER: I am afraid you will again lose the importance of the question. Please put your question.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: I am just placing the background of the question.

MR. SPEAKER: You will lose your question.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: The whole background to the question is the handling of the whole problem by the previous government... (Interruptions) Please allow me to say. Why are you impatient?

The whole problem of Assam is the inept handling by the earlier Janata Government and the inept handling by the administration of the whole thing. But what we are more concerned now is how we are going to face the problem. This is not a problem of Assam alone. This epidemic has spread to the other parts of North-Eastern region also.

MR. SPEAKER: I think let us come to the point.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: A responsible person like the Chief Minister of West Bengal has written letters on this point expressing anxiety over the developing situation. Unfortunately this thing has happened. (Interruptions). The major problem is influx of foreigners. What is the definition of foreigners—this is my first point. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether some guideline is to

be evolved regarding who the foreigner is. That is my question.

Also I would like to know from the hon. Minister what concrete step has been taken for making the people responsible, that is, the officers of the check posts who are conniving with them by just allowing the people to infiltrate into this region.

MR. SPEAKER: Your point about the foreigners has already been answered twice.

SHRI K. A. RAJAN: No concrete reply has come from him.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: As you have rightly pointed out, Sir, these questions have been replied to. But, since the hon. Member seems to be a little confused about the whole matter, I should like to say a word with regard to who are the foreigners. This is a multi-pronged type of attack. Initially, it was supposed to be directed against those people who were supposed to have infiltrated from Bangladesh. But, later, other people were included. This is what I said in the beginning that different categories of people are being referred to as foreigners, that is, the people who have gone there for work because nobody else was willing to do it. They have gone from certain economically backward districts of Bihar and U.P. They have been working there for many years. Many of them have been declared as foreigners. Others also who have been living in Assam for hundreds of years, are being called foreigners. (Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you accept that?

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: We do not accept it. That is why I am asking for your cooperation. We request the hon. Members of the Opposition that in order to decide this very delicate point, we should sit and look into the question of who is a foreigner. Obviously, those who have

voted before or those who have lived there for a particular period of time are regarded as citizens. But, this matter has to be gone into in greater detail. There is no use making a statement here which will not help the situation.

We have said that we shall call the leaders of different parties or their representatives and discuss the matter with them. In the meantime, We are looking at the problem from the point of view of strengthening security and to ascertain whether the complaints are justified. If persons in authority themselves were responsible for inciting either the students or anybody else, obviously, they should be removed and replaced by others.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chitta Mahata. Will you like to say anything more now as it has been quite exhaustive? You put the questions.

श्री सी. आर. माहाटा (पूरुलिया) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, असाम और मेघालय की परिस्थिति बहुत ही गंभीर है। इस के संबंध में मैं दो सप्लीमेंट्री सवाल करना चाहता हूँ। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि वेस्ट बंगाल और त्रिपुरा में जो असाम के रहने वाले आए हैं उनके लिए सरकार क्या प्रबंध करने जा रही है?

दूसरा प्रश्न यह है कि अपर असाम के बहुत से युवक नागालैंड और त्रिपुरा हो कर ट्रेनिंग के लिए इंटरनेशनल बोर्डर पार कर के बर्मा चले गए हैं, क्या यह सरकार को पता है ?

SHRI NARAYAN CHOUBEY (Midnapore): What about the people who have taken shelter in Tripura and West Bengal from Assam?

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: You have to take them back.

SHRIMATI INDIRA GANDHI: All these questions will be discussed with you.