

[Shri R. Venkataraman]

Lilian Carter, the mother of the President of the United States. I do not know if our Ambassador was engaged in a demonstration of the habit of touching the feet of elders in the American public. I am not also sure whether it is a gesture of new and genuine non-aligned policy assured by the government.

The report further goes on to say :

"It appears that at a lunch attended by our envoy, Miss Lilian had expressed a desire to own a pair of chappals to match the sarce she had. The Ambassador quickly jumped out of his seat to take measurements of Miss Lilian's foot oblivious of the fact that there are photographers present around."

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN (Arkonam): Where is the hon. Minister for External Affairs?

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: We know, Sir, that Mr. Palkhiwala is a very eminent lawyer but we did not know that he had other concealed virtues including chappal-fitting.

It is a pity that the Ambassador Extra-ordinary should have thought fit to display such accomplishment in the public lowering the dignity and respect of our country and our people.

The President of the Indians Association in the United States has expressed deep concern over the incident which tends to be little the image of our country. It is also reported that one of the newspapers had captioned this picture as a bootstrap diplomacy and this is a compliment to the government that what they are following is a bootstrap diplomacy.

The entire episode is shameful and the least the government should do in this matter is to recall not the Ambassador Extra-ordinary but the extra-ordinary Ambassador and if they so desire, put him in charge of export promotion of chappals to the United States of America.

SHRI O. V. ALAGESAN: Will you please ask the Minister of External Affairs who is not here to let us know his reactions?

(iv) STRIKE BY THE EMPLOYEES OF GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

SHRI PURNA SINHA (Tezpur): Sir, with effect from the 16th December, 1977, more than one lakh employees of the Govt. of Assam are on continuous strike demanding implementation of their demands including payment of additional

D.A. of Rs. 30 per month which was announced earlier by the State Chief Minister, making it payable from 1-7-77. He has not been able to pay because he pleads that he is in debt of Rs. 553 crores. He has become incapable of administering the State. Therefore the workers have again gone on strike.

Instead of making settlement with the workers the Government has threatened the employees with termination of services of the temporary ones and ordering break in services to the permanent ones. These threats are being issued over the Gauhati Station of AIR. At the same time, armed police battalions are being deployed to terrorise the striking employees and their families in their residences. In sympathy with this strike other government undertakings have also started going on strike. Industries undertakings and other public utility services are going to strike from December 28, next. It is likely that the strike will extend to other branches of the administration and public utility services including the State Electricity Board. The whole governmental machinery has collapsed in the meanwhile. Supply, procurement and distribution system has also been completely paralysed. So, under Rule 377, I draw the attention of the Government. The Central Government should immediately take steps to dismiss this Government which is incapable of administering the State. The Centre should take over the State administration of Assam and create a situation to satisfy the workers. Only Rs. 6 crores would be needed in order to satisfy their demands. That should be paid. The strike will be called off. At the same time peace will be established in the State. The State is running into difficulties. So, the Centre should step in immediately and save the State from ruin.

(v) CLOSURE OF DELHI EDITION OF NATIONAL HERALD AND WEATHER CONTROL AND EXPERIMENT ON WEATHER WARFARE

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): Sir, I have mentioned about the closure of the *National Herald*.

Today is the last day for this session and I am told that we are not meeting before the 19th of February next year.

Is this paper to be allowed to close down because some people want to shield and hide their economic malpractices and corruption? Every month, I am told, Mrs. Gandhi used to give Rs. 1 1/2 lakhs. I have told this to the Minister of State for Finance, Mr. Agarwal, to enquire into the matter through Revenue Intelligence and other sources. In the meantime, some 400 persons are going to be thrown out of employment. Their jobs have to be