

17.13 hrs.

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

REPORTED EXPLOSION IN THE THERMAL
POWER PLANT AT UKAI IN GUJARAT

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil). Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Energy to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:

“Reported explosion in the thermal power plant at Ukai in Gujarat and the damage caused by it.”

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY (SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN): The Ukai Thermal Power Plant is under the control of the Gujarat Electricity Board. This Board operates under the administrative control of the Government of Gujarat.

There are two units each of 120 MW under operation at Ukai. Each turbine is fed with steam from its own unit boiler. The first unit was commissioned in March 1976 and the second in June 1976. Another unit of 210 MW is under erection.

As per information received from Gujarat Electricity Board, there was an explosion at about 2.40 P.M. on 15th December, 1977 in an over-head coal bunker on the top of boiler No. 1 at Ukai Thermal Power Station. There was, however, no damage to the plant but two employees received minor injuries. The plant is working normally. The matter is being investigated by the State Police.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: This kind of explosions and accidents have become a routine affair, have become the order of the day, now a days. This is not an isolated incident. In the last two months, this Parliament, on many occasions, has discussed such happenings, such kinds of explosions, in different parts of the country. There is a suspicion that these may be due to sabotage by certain elements—I can call them ‘anti-national elements’.

What is happening then? What is the Government doing? The Government have been taking these matters very lightly. They have made some statements on the Floor of this House, or the Home Minister has gone over the All India Radio and said that these happenings would put a reverse gear to the democratic process in this country. That is what is happening, nothing more. This a very serious matter concerning the whole nation and the people of the country. The safety of the people travelling by trains and people working in all India Radio and these Plants is threatened today. The Home Minister stated yesterday that they have not been able to find any clue to these happenings or locate who is after these happenings.

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to raise a calling attention motion regarding the explosion which took place at the heavy water plant in Baroda. The Prime Minister, as usual, had assured the House that he was looking into the matter. With your permission, Madam, I would like to quote from the Hindu, a very responsible newspaper. It has revealed certain startling facts. It say:

“It puzzles even experts because of the various things that happened immediately after the explosion. Fire broke out early in the night and there was immediately a failure in the telephone exchange. Many extension lines snapped making it difficult to get outside assistance. When the Atomic Energy Commission in Bombay was informed, it is stated, a security man gave the first information that there was a fire in the plant”.

The report further states:

“Apart from the startling failure of the telephone exchange, which works round the clock, the fire was noticed by one of the technicians

[Shri Vayalar Ravi]

who went to check an equipment. Normally, a round-the-clock check is maintained by two persons to see that the various equipment in the plant function properly. On this occasion, however, these two persons were reported to be not seen at their posts."

This is the report of a very responsible newspapers and the hon. Prime Minister made a statement that he was looking into it. In this case, even the telephone exchange lines were cut; the persons required to be at their duty were not in their post. The entire incident suggests that there are certain elements which are bent to put a reverse gear and push-back to the normal functioning of such plants. It would take many years now to be able to get results from this plant.

I feel that this Government is not taking this House into confidence and they are making an impression to the country and to the people that everything is all right, but the fact is that they are taking these very serious matters very lightly.

Now, with regard to the blast at thermal plant in Ukai, the Minister made a statement, but he had not the courtesy to say what the Collector has stated in this connection. According to the newspaper report, the Collector did not rule out the possibility of sabotage behind the blast.

Such explosions have become the order of the day, in railways, power plants and other places.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): I am only saying, let him better confine his observations to the Energy Ministry because there is none to reply if he touches other Ministries.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: It looks that he is so responsible nowadays. He is unnecessarily taking up the brief of the Janata Party all the time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We are already short of time.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: I would like to ask a question to the hon. Minister.

What are the concrete steps you are taking to protect the different power stations in the country in order to prevent recurrence of such things?

Further, how is that the CID is enquiring into it. There is a report and you also said that. Will you take this up yourself—this is a very serious matter and also a technical matter—instead of leaving it to the local CID and entrust this matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation?

These two point—will you please clarify?

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: The hon. Member made a number of suggestions. With regard to the lost part of his question, the State Government has taken every step to inquire into the matter not only through their CID but also they have taken assistance of forensic experts and other people required because the detonators which were found probably should have caused the explosion. That is the information that we received. But before the investigation is completed and a report is received, we cannot categorically say whether it was due to sabotage or any other reason....

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Why cannot you entrust it to CBI?

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: After all the State Government is also taking steps to get it investigated in the best possible manner. It is only when the State Government comes with a report and if necessary, the Central Government also will stop in.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: What is the protection to our plants?

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: After the various incidents that have taken place in various parts of the country, the Home Ministry has drawn the attention of the various Ministries who

are handling these power stations and other things and the Power Ministry has given a sort of instructions or guidelines to the various State Electricity Boards to observe certain norms for taking security steps and those guidelines are being put into practice in the various Electricity Boards.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vasant Sathe. Please try to be brief.

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Akola): Absolutely brief.

In view of the fact that there is a serious damage to the whole country's vital links and installations, a situation of total break-down of law and order and vital installations may be created because if you see the chain of events, you will find that it is not a coincidence but such explosions are taking place in railways, in vital installations like atomic plants and in power plants. It is not taking place in any other ordinary factory or private buildings—mind you—

But they are happening in government installations. Kindly see the most surprising part. Why I say that the government of India appears to be taking these things lightly is that you will yourself be surprised if you see the newspaper report which says:

"Prima facie one live detonator and a dozen dead detonators and some wires were recovered from the conveyor belt".

You have mislead in your statement itself. You do not know. You say that the explosion was in the coal bunker. It is not in the bunker. It is in the conveyor belt. It further says:

"...recovered from the conveyor belt by the security staff at the plant".

Further the detonator exploded after it had reached, because the theory appears to be that this detonator was in the bunker. So, the damage was not done to the plant. It could have exploded there. The fact is:

"Had the detonator exploded after it had reached the boiler, it would have been a major disaster".

and the report says:

"The detonator appears to have been planted on the belt along with the coal only after it emerged from the crusher...."

because otherwise the detonator itself might have been crushed causing a bigger blast. So, it is obvious that it was not with the coal when it came out of the crusher. It did not reach the boiler. Fortunately it got detected on the conveyor belt where it was planted. Please see the seriousness. Therefore my question is this. Are you at the Government of India level, along with the Home Ministry, taking cognisance of the magnitude of the seriousness of this sabotage? It is *prima facie* a case of sabotage and it cannot be anything else. You say that the State Government is investigating. You say that the Police will find out and then let us know. Can you tell me a single case till today where the authorities have been able to detect even one single case of sabotage, to find the links etc? Therefore, I would urge upon the Energy Minister not to dismiss what we say by statements like these. I would like to know from him as to what are the measures which are being taken by him in consultation with the Home Ministry and his own staff to ensure that the power plants of the country are protected. This is what I want to know.

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: As I explained earlier, all steps are being taken after these incidents have taken place. In fact, now the security measures have been tightened in various power plants in the country. These power plants are segregated from the other parts of the power stations and nobody can enter the power stations without properly being checked. That is one of the steps which we have taken. Another is with regard to the investigation. The hon. Minister was explaining about the detonator which was found there. He must be knowing that the coal comes in wagons and they are put in the conveyor belt. First, it is being crushed. Then it goes to the bunker. Then it

[Shri P. Ramachandran]

goes to the boiler to generate steam. Regarding the first detonator, if it had exploded, it would have been something else. Unless these are properly investigated and some truth is found, there is no point in our saying that there was sabotage.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Do you know the method? From the crusher via the conveyor belt, it goes to the boiler and not first to the conveyor belt. It could not have been in the crusher. Otherwise it would have exploded there. How would it come automatically on the conveyor belt?

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: First it has to go to the crusher and then it goes to the bunker where it is pulverised. All these processes are there. This detonator was found there. Anyway, unless the police gives a correct report we will not be able to come to any kind of conclusion and it would be uncharitable for us to come to any sort of conclusion unless we have got detailed report about it.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I is a very important power project. This is basically a hydro electric project. But, because the water level does not remain a constant factor, they had to put up this thermal power project. Ukai Stage I project, I am told, was completed with 110 M.W. Capacity. In the meantime, advantage was taken by the foreign firm, the Associated Electricals. They are extracting money as fast as they can in taking advantage of our technical backwardness for which, of course, Mr. Sathe's party owe an explanation to this House.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Madam, why should a Congress Party be attacked in the House

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Madam, let me ask you what is a detonator? A detonator is a narrower and smaller thing in diameter and if you open up the grenade and release the lever, release the spring and take out the detonator,—it is a small thing—it begins to blast. A live, and dead deto-

nator is found. We are very happy to hear that the workers took the initiative and they had found out some of the detonators. If anybody put the blame on any worker, his mouth can be shut out on the argument because only if the live one is carried in a conveyor and if it enter the crater of the boiler, then it becomes disastrous. The boiler would have been considerably damaged and 110 mw power house would have been out of commission for some time. That means adding fuel to the fire—power crisis. We are trying to understand that the coal passes through the crusher and if the detonator had passed through the crusher, then the detonator would have exploded instantly. You require only a ten pound precious strike—not more than that. The crusher's pressure can be a few thousand pounds. Therefore, if the detonator has passed through the crusher, that would have exploded and the crusher would have been damaged beyond repair that is taking place. Therefore, this detonator has been put after the coal which got crushed came out of it and was put on the conveyor belt.

Madam, you might remember, that some time ago, we lost an hon. Member of the other House in the Railway accident. I have been told this is subject to confirmation or denial or correction—that a very important person who had been very close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, one Mr. Kapur—I am told had a hand in this matter. Let the Home Minister deny if it is not true. 1

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Madam, I rise on a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your point of order?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: My point of order is this. The hon. Member made an accusation against Shri-mati Gandhi. He is making an allegation that somebody had his hand.

He has made a very serious allegation against the person who is not present and who cannot defend himself against this allegation. He cannot

make such an allegation. Madam, it is very unfair.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Have you finished with your point order?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Can anybody make such an allegation without any evidence or proper record? Is he ready to take up the responsibility to prove it? That is my point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now my opinion is that it is not right to make allegations of a serious nature on the floor of the House unless and until one has in his absolute possession foolproof evidence that the charge is correct. If one has only a suspicion and some vague evidence, then that should be passed on to the Minister outside this House. I request the hon. Member, Shri Bosu not to refer to any person by name or make any such serious allegation because the tradition of this House has been that the people who cannot answer the charges are not to be mentioned and charges of serious nature are not to be made against them on the floor of this House.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Madam, I suppose, if I may say so, you do not quite apply your mind the way you usually do.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you please drop this point and then proceed with the rest of what you have got to say?

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: Madam, it is a very serious matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Then you pass it on to the Minister outside.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I have not said anything incorrectly. Let the Home Minister contradict that or confirm it.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: You can go and tell that outside this House—not here. Madam, this gentleman goes on making such wild allegations like this.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN (Madras South): Rule 353 of the Rules of Procedure makes it clear that no allegations of a defamatory or incriminatory nature shall be made by a Mem-

ber against any person unless the Member has given previous intimation to the Speaker and also to the Minister concerned so that the Minister may be able to make an investigation into the matter for the purpose of reply, provided that the Speaker may at any time prohibit any Member from making any such allegation if he is of the opinion that such allegation is derogatory to the dignity of the House and no public interest is served.

SHRI KANWAR LAL GUPTA (Delhi Sadar): You have been making allegations like anything.

SHRI R. VENKATARAMAN: You should have then, taken recourse to this rule. Under rule 353 you cannot make any allegations of this character against any person unless he has given intimation to the Speaker, if it is a matter in which the Minister is involved, he should inform the Minister so that he may reply. Making wild charges of this kind against any person is contrary to the rules of procedure and it is clearly out of order.

श्री कंबर लाल गुप्त : सभापति महोदया मेरा आपसे यह निवेदन है कि आपने जैसा कहा कि किसी के खिलाफ वाइल्ड एलीगेशन नहीं लगाये जाने चाहिए, तो इन्होंने वाइल्ड एलीगेशन नहीं लगाये हैं। आपको पता ही है कि देश में सेबोटेज के केसिज हो जा रहे हैं इसलिए इन्होंने मांग की है कि इसके बारे में होम मिनिस्टर इन्क्वायरी करें। यह किसी के खिलाफ एलीगेशन नहीं है। अगर यह किसी के खिलाफ एलीगेशन है तो यहाँ आनन्द मार्गियों का नाम भी नहीं लिया जा सकता है क्योंकि उनका कोई प्रतिनिधि यहाँ नहीं है जो कि डिफेंड कर सके। मान लीजिए यहाँ पर जनता पार्टी और कांग्रेस पार्टी के बारे में किसी को शूबहा है तो उसका नाम लेने में क्या एतराज है? अगर बासु जी को शूबहा है और उन्हें मालूम है कि इस तरह की बड़बड़ होने वाली है और श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी के कुछ कार्यकर्त्तियों

[श्री कंवर लाल गुप्त]

की ओर से उन्हें शुभहा है और वे इन्वायरी की मांग कर रहे हैं तो इसमें कोई वाइल्ड एलीगेशन नहीं है।

सभापति महोदय : आपने जो कहा, वह मैंने बड़े ध्यान से सुना है। आप कांग्रेस पार्टी के खिलाफ़, आनन्दमार्गियों के खिलाफ़ कुछ कहना चाहें तो कह सकते हैं लेकिन इसका मतलब यह नहीं है कि आप किसी व्यक्ति विशेष का नाम ले कर यह सब कहें। मेरी रूलिंग यह है कि आप किसी ए० बी० सी० व्यक्ति के खिलाफ़ अगर यह कहते हैं कि वह इस प्रकार के एक्सप्लोजन में इन्वाल्ड है तो यह सीरियस क्रिमिनल एलीगेशन है और इस तरह के एलीगेशन लगाने का रूल्स में प्राविजन नहीं है। इसलिए आप ऐसे चार्जिज किसी व्यक्ति के खिलाफ़ यहां नहीं लगा सकते हैं जो कि यहां अपने को डिफेंड करने को उपस्थित न हों।

Therefore, I request Shri Bosu to proceed with the rest of his points and say whatever he has to say and ask his questions.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: All that I said was that there were numerous cases of sabotage and the intention as we see it is primarily to discredit the Janata Party at the Centre and other Congress-opposed governments in the States.....

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: He cannot go on like this. He is the tail of the Janata Party and he is repeating, he is making allegations against the Congress Party.....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. He has not named any person.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: He cannot make allegations like this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. He is within his rights to make such statements as he thinks are correct and if that goes against the Congress Government or any other government, it cannot be helped. He should not make statements against individuals.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I am very sorry to see here that my hon. friends on my right have called the members of the Janata Party as quadrupeds and they have called me as tail. Which variety of creature's tail? This is also very unparliamentary.

SHRI HITENDRA DESAI (Godhra): Let the discussion be relevant.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I repeat that the derailments and other cases of sabotage that we come to know of, that we hear and that we are experiencing are being engineered by a particular set of political people who are out to discredit the Janata Party at the Centre and certain State Governments. There is no question about it. The other day an important "leadership".....

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please be brief and put your question.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: There was a talk about fishplates. I know the person who said that the fishplates are found to be broken has never seen what a fishplate looks like. I can assure you that. Now the talk of Anand Marg is coming. Anand Marg has been made a scapegoat. I am saying it on my own responsibility that Anand Marg had been continuously financed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her party. I have got documentary evidence to prove it. Therefore, it is no use making a scapegoat of it. Mr. Ramachandran is a sober, cool person. He is representing the government as far as replying to the calling attention motion is concerned. I would earnestly request you to give up this 'forget and forgive' attitude and this Jain muni attitude. If you do not strike at the root of it, it will be too late. Strike at the root of it and all these things will be over. Thank you, no question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No reply is called for.

SHRI HITENDRA DESAI: I am really sorry certain extraneous matters have been brought into this very important matter. Ukai project is a major multipurpose project in Gujarat. next only to Narmada. It provides

irrigation facilities and gives power also. Therefore, anything wrong in that plant or even any suspicion of sabotage should be considered as very serious so far as Gujarat is concerned. From the Ahmedabad edition of the Times of India. I have got certain information which we do not find in the Delhi papers. It has been said there:

"Two days ago the district authorities issued an order prohibiting the assembly of more than four people within a radius of 100 metres around the Ukai power project on December 26th. The order had been issued because of the apprehension of staging of violent demonstration by 700 workers of an engineering company who were engaged in constructing a new thermal power station in the project."

The workers were demanding the reinstatement of 123 of their fellow workers who were retrenched by the employers.

The paper goes on to add that Shri T. M. Patel, Home Inspector said that the police suspected the hand of some of the retrenched labourers, behind the explosion.

I am not suggesting that workers had a hand; but this is the story of the people who are conducting the investigation in Gujarat. I am sorry to find that almost without any basis, allegations are being made against the Congress Party. There were, in November, 4 rail accidents, of which 2 have been proved to be cases of sabotage, 2 of suspected sabotage. And there was an accident in the gas turbine plant on 20-11-1977 in U.P. Then came the fire in Akashvani on 25-11-1977, and then the explosion in the heavy water plant on 3-12-1977; and now we have this Ukai explosion. Ukai explosion occurs in a State known for its law-abiding nature and for its law and order situation. It was alleged that behind this sabotage, some men of the ex-Prime Minister were there. It makes us very sad. That allegation is without any foundation whatsoever. In fact, this question was raised in the Consultative

Committee only yesterday; and I am glad to say that the Home Minister emphatically denied that any person or groups of persons have been responsible for this. The Home Minister categorically stated in clear terms that Government has absolutely no evidence whatsoever to come to any conclusions, even with regard to any groups of persons or groups engaged in violence. If, in spite of that, some allegations are made here, it is very unfortunate. So far as the Congress Party is concerned, all know that we are wedded to democracy; and any person who has some amount of patriotism in his heart will denounce any such sabotage very clearly. As far as our party is concerned, if Government comes forth with any suggestion, we are prepared to cooperate with them. The Minister should say what he has to say about these allegations of sabotage against some persons, or parties, and whether there is any evidence for it, and whether he has taken precautions to see that the vital installations, including the one at Ukai are properly guarded.

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: All precautions are taken in various power plants, for their protection. With regard to the question of sabotage or otherwise, I have explained already that unless the police investigation is over and the report is received, I will not be able to give a categorical reply, saying that there is either sabotage, or that it is not there, i.e. unless we are in possession of all details. (Interruptions) In fact in Ukai, they have taken all precautions already. The power plant is now very safe; and there is no cause for anxiety. I can assure the hon. Members that all precautions are being taken.

SHRI HITENDRA DESAI: Have you got the slightest suspicion against any group of persons in the matter of violence?

SHRI P. RAMACHANDRAN: It is likely, because of the way the detonator was found. I would not say that it is from the workers; but there is some

[Shri P. Ramachandran]

labour unrest in that area, as the hon. Member knows. But I would not blame any group of people or the workers. I am not interested in finding fault with workers. Sabotage might have been from other people also; not only from workers. Unless the police investigation is over, I will not be able to say anything.

17.50 hrs.

CONTEMPT OF THE HOUSE

MR. CHAIRMAN: As the House is aware, one person, who has given his name as Shri Bhagwan Bux Singh, who is a Lecturer in Modern Vocational Inter College, Lucknow, shouted some slogans from the Visitors' Gallery at about 12.40 P.M. today. He was immediately removed from the Gallery by the Watch and Ward Staff and interrogated.

In a written statement, he has expressed his regret for his behaviour and for shouting slogans from the Visitors' Gallery and requested that he might be excused for his action.

If the House agrees, his regret may be accepted and he may be let off with a warning.

HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: So, the House has accepted it.

17.52 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

SEIZURE OF ORNAMENTS FROM PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN OF J.K. SYNTHETICS LTD.

श्री कंबर लाल गुप्त (दिल्ली सदर) :
सभापति महोदया, जो आधे घण्टे की बहस में उठा रहा हूँ

श्री ब्रजभूषण तिवारी (खलीलाबाद) :
सभापति महोदया, इस हाउस का समय बढ़ा दिया जाये, और हमें भी प्रश्न का मौका दिया जाये।

सभापति महोदय : समय बढ़ चुका है, हाउस ने पहले ही स्वीकार कर लिया है कि आधे घण्टे की चर्चा के बाद श्री शांति भूषण का बिल पास करने तक सदन बैठेगा, यह स्वीकृत हो चुकी है।

श्री कंबर लाल गुप्त : सभापति महोदया, यह जो बहस मैं उठा रहा हूँ, एमजैसी के जो बहुत बड़े-बड़े स्कैंडल हुए हैं, उनमें से यह भी एक स्कैंडल है। जैसा कि प्रश्न से आपको ज्ञात होगा कि सीताराम सिधानिया काकस के बहुत नज़दीकी लोग हैं, जिनका सम्बन्ध भूतपूर्व प्रधान मंत्री इंदिरा गांधी और संजय गांधी से है। मेरे पास इस बात का सबूत है कि "गीतों भरी शाम", जो 11-4-76 को दिल्ली में की गई, जिसमें 22 लाख रुपये आमदनी का आया, वह विद्युत् संघ, जिसके सिधानिया साहब कैशियर हैं और संजय गांधी अध्यक्ष हैं, उनकी तरफ से किया गया था। ये लोग 8-10-76 को एयर इंडिया के हवाई जहाज से मारीशस गये। उसी दिन, प्रधान मंत्री इन्दिरा गांधी, बंसीलाल और उनके काकस के लोग भी मारीशस गये। ये लोग एयर इंडिया के प्लेन से गये और वे एयर-फोर्स के प्लेन से गये। वहाँ जाने के बाद इनके दो बक्से जिनमें डायमण्ड, ज्वैलरी और सोना भरा हुआ था, वहाँ टैग देने के बाद दोनों बक्से इन्होंने अपने हाथ में ले लिए। उसके बाद जब ये कस्टम में आये तो कस्टम वालों ने इन्हें पकड़ लिया। इनमें ज्वैलरी वगैरा करीब 20 लाख रुपये का माल निकला। इनका बयान लिया गया। इस के बाद अफसरों ने इनकी रिपोर्ट की और एफ० आई० आर० दर्ज की गई। इन पर केस चलाया गया। जब इन्दिरा गांधी वहाँ पहुंच गईं, तब उन्होंने मारीशस सरकार पर दबाव डालकर यह कहलवाया कि यह बक्से हमारे नहीं हैं।