

can be implemented. But the experience of the special courts has also not been a happy one and he knows better about it than I do. I agree that the law and order situation in Delhi should be under control. But if any person in Assam says that because there is some law and order problem in Delhi, it should continue to be so in Assam, I think in howsoever high position that person may be, he does not deserve to be in that position. I know that there are certain slackness in Assam and we are taking measures in that direction. Very shortly, we shall do something to tighten the situation there.

[*Translation*]

Postal Tariff for Small and Medium Newspapers

*23. SHRI R.N. RAKESH:
DR. CHINTA MOHAN:

Will the Minister of PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Union Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Plea on Tariff for Small Papers" appearing in the 'Times of India' dated December 28, 1990;

(b) if so, whether the Government have since studied the recommendations made by the expert committee on small & medium newspapers; and

(c) if not, the time likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING (SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Report of the Committee is engaging the attention of the Government.

(c) Does not arise.

[*Translation*]

SHRI R.N. RAKESH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister towards the difficulties being faced by medium and marginal newspapers. These newspapers are published in those farflung areas, which don't have access to major newspapers. The newsprint prices are constantly on the rise. I would like to know whether the Government, proposes to provide newsprint by fixing a quoters cheaper rates to such newspapers?

SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, with reference to the question, the hon. Member has raised, I would like to say that the Committee which was constituted to look into this matter has submmitted its report in the month of December. Unions suggestions have been made by the committee and the Government is thoroughly examining the report. So far as the question of small and medium newspapers are concerned they are given excise duty concession for the import of newsprint and apart from this many other facilities are also provided to such newspapers. Subsidy amounting to more than twenty crore Rupees is also provided to them. Therefore, I believe that we can make available many more facilities to these newspapers, once the recommendations of the report are implemented along with the existing concessions.

SHRI R.N. RAKESH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, from the hon. Minister's reply, it seems to me that the recommendations made by the committee with regard to small and medium newspaper is in the interests of the latter. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, by to when these recommendations me likely to be implemented.

SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have already said, the committee submitted its recommendations two months back and it would be placed before the secretaries of the various departments for perusal because this matter is not related just to the Ministry of information and Broadcasting, rather, this matter is linked

to various other Ministries. A final decision on it will be taken after eliciting the opinion of all the concerned Ministries. However any decision in this regard would be taken, keeping in mind our main objective i.e to provide maximum facilities to the small and medium newspapers, as soon as possible.

[English]

PROF. K.V. THOMAS: Sir, ours is one of the biggest democracies in the world. If we look at the political scenario of the last three or four years, we can see the part played by the big newspapers. The big newspapers are controlled by the monopoly houses. They twist the media according to their choice. In this background, we should look at the small and medium newspapers as well as the regional newspapers which are run by small persons who have no interest in the big business. So, my request to the Government is that they should take steps to help small and medium newspapers, including the regional newspapers to provide newsprint at a subsidised rate and then provide suitable advertisements so that these small and medium newspapers can survive.

I would request you to provide lower postal tariff to small, medium and regional newspapers.

[Translation]

SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell the Hon. Members that the reports of the Expert Committee which had been constituted to consider all these issues has been submitted only two months back. And it covers all these points. With the implementation of this report, I think all these problems which the Hon. Members have raised would be solved.

PROF. RAM GANESH KAPSE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member has stated that the committee submitted the report only two months back and it is quite certain that its implementation will take some further time as the issues involved are related to different Ministries. Committee's report might contain

a number of recommendations. Immediate decision might be taken on some of the recommendations contained in the committee's report and decision on remaining recommendations may be taken later on. I would like to know whether the Government is willing to adopt this procedure? Is it going to provide any interim relief or seek any interim report as any further delay in the implementation of the committee's recommendations is not in the interest of the Press?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): It is not possible to take any interim stand on it. The hon. Member knows well that most of the recommendations are related to economic considerations. There is no control over the growing number of small newspapers. The Government will not take any decision which could not be implemented later on. Therefore, no interim relief or action can be decided without going in detail.

[English]

SHRI BHABANI SHANKAR HOTA: We all talk of ending control of the Press by industrial monopoly houses. Also, we are aware of the danger of cases relating to certain small newspapers going to the Press Council of India. It concerns some newspapers; I do not want to name them. Under these circumstances, will the Government please consider taking over the management of all the newspapers and handing them over to the working journalists?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: There is no such proposal. We believe in the freedom of the Press; and hon. Members say that the press should be given more freedom. So, I do not think there is any proposal to take over all these newspapers...

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Will the Prime Minister be kind enough to answer this question? This committee's recommendations came two months ago; and one of the constraints mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister is that there are hundreds and thousands of newspapers, and there is actually no control.

And so, they seem to grow like mushrooms. Is the Government thinking of having a full report of the circulation of these small and medium newspapers as at present, for fixing a cut-off date—? Secondly, in the recommendations, as I understand it, there are certain priority sectors mentioned by the Expert Committee; and, therefore, would the Government think of taking up this priority sector first, and give relief to these newspapers?

Coming to subsidies and other things, this question is going on for a long time, for the purpose of helping them. But really, money is being lost by such help. So, has the Government thought of take a priority decision on the priority sector mentioned by the expert committee?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: As I told earlier, it is not possible for us to take any decision at the moment, because we cannot have the cut-off date, because brilliant ideas originate every day. And you cannot fix it, that after one particular day, no more brilliant ideas will grow. So, we cannot prevent newspapers from coming into existence. So, that is the problem. The problem is much more complicated. So, we shall not take any decision without going into the whole details, and their consequential burden on the economy of the country.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, just now Shri Hota has asked an important question and the hon. Prime Minister by clubbing that issue with the issue of the Freedom of the Press has diminished the importance of that issue. In my opinion, that issue is in no way related to that of Freedom of the Press. It is a fact that some capitalists, not all, are trying to gain direct control on the Press. They are setting up Press with a view to indulge in blackmail. In this way they are dabbling directly in politics. Thus, with the help of their money power, they want to exercise control over politicians. I think, in such a situation, the Freedom of the Press may be maintained by encouraging

the working Journalists to run the Press. Will the Government consider this aspect?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree with the hon. Member's view that many complications and distortions do arise due to the capitalists control over the Press through their economic might and money power. But it is very difficult for us to decide as to which Newspaper is wrong or which one is right? As far as running the Press by working journalists is concerned, all possible help will be provided to them if they undertake the responsibility to run any such newspaper which is not being run properly. I am of the opinion that we shall be able to project social problems and the country's image in proper perspective if the newspapers are run by them.

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Freedom of expression has been mentioned in Article 19 in chapter 3 of our Constitution and today the Press has become good source of information for the people. But with the rising prices, the common man now finds it difficult to afford newspapers. Under these circumstances, it has become very difficult for the small newspapers to maintain their existence. As the hon. Prime Minister has stated that the report was submitted just two months back and all these things are mainly concerned with the financial or economic aspects. Sir, through you I would like to know the action taken on the report after its submission two months back as period of two months is not a very short period. How long would it take to implement the report so that some relief could be provided to them?

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have constituted a committee which is examining all the aspects. We cannot tell the exact time by which decision would be taken, but we will try to expedite the decision.

[*English*]

SHRI K.S. RAO: I have been hearing the answers of the Prime Minister with rapt

attention every time he gave a reply in some context or the other in Parliament. I felt extremely happy that his replies were very good. But today I am surprised to hear that to take a decision he was telling, that the cannot fix up a cut off date because brilliant ideas will be coming and coming and coming and all that and he cannot take a decision. I think if this were to be his view, because there will not be an end for brilliant ideas, he may not take a decision in the matter. I think he can never take a decision, not only in his period but in any coming further periods also.

Major newspapers do not have the time or it has become very expensive for them to reflect the local problems. So, the medium and small newspapers are playing a very key role particularly in setting trends and bringing to light the evils of the society trends and bringing to light the evils of the society in local areas also. So, keeping this in view I wish to bring tit to the hon. Prime Minister's notice that he has to give a lenient and sympathetic consideration to the needs of the small and medium newspapers and take a decision at the earliest without saying that he is waiting for some more time.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR I was just replying to a supplementary because another hon. member suggested that we should have a cut off date and we should provide facilities to the papers which were published before that date.

The problem of small and medium newspapers is not of a special postal tariff. The major problem is that of advertisements

and there are many problems relating to advertisements because there are certain norms. Unless and until we support them through advertisements and facilities, only postal tariff will not help them.

Special Investigation Group

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24. SHRI L.K. ADVANI:
DR. A.K. PATEL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) when the notified term of Special Investigation Group (SIG) is likely to expire and which were the cases that were to be investigated by it;

(b) the progress so far made in each case and the expenditure incurred thereon; and

(c) whether the term of Special Investigation Group is likely to be extended to enable it to complete the investigations; if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI KAMAL MORARKA): (a) and (b). The existing term of Special Investigation Group in Central Bureau of Investigation will expire on 28.2.91. The list of cases taken up for investigation by SIG is given in the enclosed statement. The total expenditure incurred on the Group so far is Rs. 19,09, 828/-

(c) Yes, Sir. The term of the Group has been extended upto 28.2.92.

STATEMENT

S.No.	Case No.	Present Position
1.	RC. 2 (A)/90-ACU.II (Airbus case)	Under investigation
2.	RC. 1(S)/90-SIU-I/SIC-I (Phone tapping case)	Investigation completed and report submitted