

12 hrs.

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE****REPORTED CUTTING OF TELECOMMUNICATION
SERVICES BETWEEN SHILLONG
AND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY**

SHRI SWELL (Autonomous Districts): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Communications to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon:—

Reported cutting of telecommunication services between Shillong and the rest of the country by saboteurs on the night of the 24th July, 1968.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS (DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH): On the night of 24/25th July, two pieces of cables, each about 20 feet long, connecting the microwave system to the Trunk Exchange, Shillong were found cut about 5 Kms. from the Trunk Exchange, Shillong. One piece of a cable was missing while the other was lying nearby. Similarly, on the 14th also, 90 feet piece of cable had been dug up and stolen.

The interruption to the circuits caused by this did not completely cut off the communications between Shillong and the rest of the country, as there were alternative overhead lines. The number of channels available were, however, reduced as the overhead lines had a limited number of Channels.

The theft has been reported to the Police authorities, who are investigating in the matter. Until the investigation is completed, it is not possible to attribute the cause of the cutting of the cable to sabotage. The latest reported received from the P.M.G. Shillong states that the Police have apprehended 3 persons who are usually connected with such thefts of telephone

wires, cables etc. The last report that I got this morning indicates that eight persons have been arrested.

SHRI SWELL: The statement of the Minister confirms that this incident of the cutting of telecommunication cables has occurred twice. He has not said whether it has taken place in the very same place as reported in the papers. I find the statement a little confusing.

Reporting from Shillong the PTI on the 25th stated that a senior official of the Posts and Telegraphs Department told newsmen that he definitely considered it an act of sabotage. Then, the very next day from here in Delhi a spokesman of the Posts and Telegraphs Department described as baseless reports from Shillong that the telecommunication lines were cut off through an act of sabotage.

He says:

"Preliminary police enquiry has revealed that about 20 ft. of telephone lines were cut out by a labourer in an attempt to steal wire."

Now, I would like to know whether these officials of the P&T Department in Shillong and in Delhi, speaking in contradictory terms, have been authorised to make these statements by the Ministry. If the Ministry has not authorised them to make these conflicting statements, I would like the Minister to explain how he can reconcile the conflicting statements of these two officials and what he has said here. The Minister says that it is not clear whether it is a case of sabotage. One of his officials says that it is a clear case of sabotage, a local official in Shillong, and another official, overnight, obviously without going into the case, comes forward and says that it is not a case of sabotage. I would like him to enlighten the House about these conflicting statements.

DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH: I have made it abundantly clear that the matter has been reported to the police and, until the report is submitted by the police, we cannot, definitely, say whether it is a case of sabotage or not. What the P&T official at Shillong might have said to the press correspondent, as the hon. Member says, was corrected. But I do not say what he said has been correctly reported nor do I deny it because we shall have to find out whether he said that or not. Anyway, whatever has been said by me here is the final thing.

SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI (Bhubaneswar): So far as different news items coming from Assam are concerned, the indications show that there is going to be a large-scale sabotage activities in the eastern region including Assam. May I know whether Government is keeping a strict watch for the coming 3 or 4 months because some news items and reports coming from foreign press show that, perhaps, by October, there is going to be a large-scale sabotage activities in that region? In view of that, may I know whether Government have any such indication and, if so, whether they are taking strict measures?

DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH: I do not want to say anything regarding this sabotage. I might mention to the House that we will take all precautionary measures needed in that area and we have already deployed suitable personnel to watch that line.

श्री बलराज मधोक (दक्षिण दिल्ली) :
अभी मंत्री महोदय ने जो वक्तव्य दिया है उससे लगता है कि या तो उनके पास जानकारी ही नहीं है या यह जानकारी की जानबूझ कर छिपाना चाहते हैं और या फिर वह जानबूझ कर जनता को धोखा देना चाहते हैं । सारी दुनियां जानती है कि इस समय असम की स्थिति साधारण नहीं है, एबनार्मल स्थिति वहां की है । शिलांग वहां की राजधानी है ।

उसके एक और तो द्राइवल् एरिया है जहां पर काफी गड़बड़ चल रही है और दूसरी और पाकिस्तान की सीमा उसके निकट है । वहां से यह आवाज उठ रही है, यह जानकारी मिल रही है, यह सन्देह प्रगट किये जा रहे हैं कि वहां पर लार्ज स्केल सैबोटैज होने की सम्भावना है और गड़बड़ होने की सम्भावना है अगले ही कुछ दिनों के अन्दर । किसी मजदूर ने ये तारें काटीं शुगल के लिए या चोरी के लिए उस को और सामान नहीं मिलता था , क्या आप इसको सच मान सकते हैं क्या सरकार इस बात का इन्फ़ेस नहीं निकाल सकती थी कि इस दस दिनों के अन्दर दो बार जो तारें काटी गई और उस का सिलसिला बाकी देश से काटने की कोशिश की गई, उसके पीछे कोई राजनितिक या दूसरी बात भी हो सकती है ? यह सोचना कि सारा पुलिस हाउस बुझू है और जो आप कहें वह मान लेगा, मैं समझता हूं ।

It is taking too much of liberty with the intelligence of the House.

पुलिस क्या कहेगी क्या नहीं कहेगी इस बात को आप छोड़ दीजिये । आप बतायें कि आपका क्या इन्फ़ेस है । आप क्या समझते हैं कि दस दिनों से अन्दर दो बार जो तारें काटी गई, यह क्या केवल मात्र चोरी का मामला था या आपको लगता है कि इस के पीछे कुछ और चीज भी है? क्या आप को यह लगता है या नहीं लगता है कि जो कुछ शिलांग में हो रहा है यह एक प्रकार की रिव्हर्सल है जोकि अगले दिनों के अन्दर बार-बार और स्थानों पर भी हो सकता है ?

SHRI SHIVAJIRAO S. DESHMUKH (Parbhani): On a point of order. The hon. Member should not say anything in disrespect of this House.

SHRI BAL RAJ MADHOK: I have not said anything in disrespect of this House. I only said that the Minister should have more respect for the intelligence of this House—I said, the Minister and not the House.

डॉ० रामसुभग सिंह : श्रीमान्, मुझे जान-बूझ कर धोखा देने की आदत नहीं है और जब धोखा देने की आदत की बात कहने की क्षमता माननीय सदस्य महोदय को नहीं थी, तब भी हम लोग स्पष्ट रूप से सारी बातें कहा करते थे। यह भी है कि यह सदन ऐसा नहीं है कि जो माननीय सदस्य की ही बातों को माने। अगर हमारी बात को सदन नहीं मानेगा तो वह माननीय सदस्य की बात को कभी भी नहीं मान सकता है। माननीय सदस्य ने सैंडोटेज का प्रश्न उठाया है। मैं भारत के प्रत्येक नागरिक की अटूट देशभक्ति में विश्वास करता हूँ और इसलिए मैं किसी की देशभक्ति में सन्देह नहीं कर सकता। ये तार क्यों दो बार कटे, इस की जाँच पुलिस के सुपुर्द कर दी गई है और जैसे ही वह रिपोर्ट देंगी, हम उस को सदन में रख देंगे।

श्री प्रकाशवीर शास्त्री (हापुड़) : यदा-कदा आसाम के सम्बन्ध में जो तोड़-फोड़ और विध्वंस की कार्यवाहियों की सूचना मिलती रही है, उ में अब तक मुख्य रूप से चीन प्रेरित तत्वों अथवा पाकिस्तान प्रेरित तत्वों का हाथ रहा है। अभी आसाम के पुनर्विभाजन के सम्बन्ध में वहाँ एक नया एलिमेंट और खड़ा हुआ है। जैसा कि संचार मंत्री महोदय ने कहा है, यह सही है कि जब तक पुलिस की पूरी रिपोर्ट न आ जाये, तब तक इस बारे में अधिकृत रूप से कुछ नहीं कहा जा सकता है। लेकिन अभी तक जो जानकारी है, उस के आधार पर, प्रारम्भिक जानकारी के आधार पर, क्या मंत्री महोदय कुछ कह सकते हैं कि इस तोड़-फोड़ की कार्यवाही के पीछे इन तीनों में से किस तत्व का हाथ है ?

डॉ० रामसुभग सिंह : मैं इस सम्बन्ध में अपना व्यक्तिगत अनुमान देना उचित नहीं

समझता हूँ। जैसा कि मैंने अभी बताया है, मेरे पास जो लेटस्ट रिपोर्ट है, उस के अनुसार आठ व्यक्ति गिरफ्तार हुए हैं। जब पुलिस की ओर से कोई और रिपोर्ट आयेगी, तो उस के बारे में सदन को सूचना दे दी जायेगी।

SHRI R. BARUA (Jorhat): I addressed the question to the Home Minister because this is a matter which should be replied by the Home Minister. Anyway, the Minister of Communications has taken upon himself the responsibility of answering this.

From the reports it is very apparent that the disturbance took place at a strategic point on two different dates. Attempts have been made to disrupt the connecting link between the microwave system and the trunk exchange. In the statement of the Minister also an attempt has been made to bring out a difference between 'theft' and 'sabotage', which is very marginal. I want to know whether this act is in the line in which the entire disturbed area, that is, the eastern region, is likely to get involved in the near future unless some suitable action is taken.

DR. RAM SUBHAG SINGH: I am not having such an apprehension because even if there is some difficulty, we are not supposed to lose our hearts. As I have said, we have already made suitable arrangements to guard that line and, I think, there will not be any difficulty. There might be some theft or anything of that type anywhere in the country. But there we are taking precautionary measures so that such incidents may not recur.

12.12 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

FINANCE ACCOUNTS OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE YEAR 1966-67

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): I beg to