

12.14 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Reported assault by certain Army Officers on civilians including PTI Officials at Gauhati.

SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA (Kaliabor) : Sri, I call the attention of the Minister of Home Affairs to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon :

“The reported assault by some Army Officers on civilians including PTI Officials at Gauhati.”

SHRI D. C. SHARMA (Gurdaspur) : On a point of order, S.r. I want to know by whom the balloting of these calling-attention notices is done, how it is done, how many persons are present there and under what rule it is being done.

MR. SPEAKER; Unfortunately, your name is not there. Shri Hem Barua raised this question actually first but in the ballot his name also is not there. Anyway, I would suggest to Shri Sharma that at the appropriate time he should go and see how the balloting is done. Perhaps his name may come in the ballot by his luck if he is there.

SHRI D.C. SHARMA : I was asked to go to a temple and to pray to a goddess so that my name may come in the ballot.

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI Y.B. CHAVAN) : Mr. Speaker, Sir I am very sorry to inform the House that there was a most regrettable incident in Gauhati on April 14, 1968, at about 20.00 hours when an Army officer, along with a number of defence personnel is reported to have assaulted some civilians including women, Shri Manik Chakrabarty of the PTI is also reported to have been man-handled during the incident. The officer concerned was taken under civilian custody. A court of enquiry has been ordered by the Army authorities. The State Government are in close touch with the Army authorities. We are unhappy that an officer of the Armed Forces, with their tradition of disciplined conduct should have been in-

volved in such an incident. I may assure the House that persons found to be at fault will be dealt with severely.

SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA : While one is constrained to call the attention of this hon. House and the country to incidents concerned with the Army officials, one does it with a sense of pain. But silence may be more dangerous for the future of the country.

May I ask the Home Minister as to what happened to the promise of action given by the Army in regard to the incident on the 27th March and a few other incidents that happened at Gauhati in the course of the last month? On the 27th March also an Army driver defying traffic regulations knocked down a scooter rendering the occupant unconscious. They had some fracas and trespassed into the college hostels and educational institutions. So, I would request the Home Minister to consider this matter as a very serious one.

MR. SPEAKER: Please ask a question. You are asking him to consider it and are giving reasons for it.

SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA : The Gauhati incident itself, as reported in the *Assam Tribune*, is something very serious. The *Assam Tribune* reported :

“While tensions ran high outside in the street Shri Atam Prasad Barua, a member of the PTI staff, was trying to contact the District authorities over the telephone from his office. Some Army personnel then allegedly intruded into the PTI office and threatened him of dire consequences. At about 8.45 P.M. Shri Manik Chakravarty, Manager of PTI, who was returning home with his sister from attending Bihu function, was caught hold of by the Army men inside his office premises and was assaulted. Shri Chakravarty was dragged out of his office compound to the street by the military men who wanted to pull him up the army truck.”

When the DC arrived on the scene, they also assaulted the DC.

In view of the very important issues involved, it is a very necessary that the

Army takes a better view of the civilians in such delicate areas. Has the Home Minister asked the military authorities to consider the matter in a broader light and not only punish those officers concerned ?

The Army sub-area headquarters in Assam has been located in the compass of the Cotton College, Gauhati, the biggest educational institution in Assam and for a very long time it has been a source of difficulty. It has been unanimously suggested, including such local papers as the *Assam Tribune*, that this headquarters should be shifted. What has happened to that demand ?

Also, there is another demand that the unrestricted movement of Army personnel in the town of Gauhati should be restricted. May I know whether Government would consider this restriction of the very unrestricted movement of Army personnel ? I am not speaking about Army movement but about the movement of Army personnel in the town.

Then what other steps have been taken to evolve a machinery....

MR. SPEAKER : There should be some end to it at some time.

SHRI BEDABRATA BARUA :.....to bring about understanding between the civilian population and the Army ?

SHRI D. C. SHARMA : May I put the whole question in simple words ?

MR. SPEAKER : I will permit Shri Sharma to put it in one sentence.

SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN : The hon. Member has mentioned some other incidents also. Those other incidents also are being inquired into. As far as Shri Chakrabarty is concerned, it is a part of this very incident and it is being investigated by the police. This is certainly a very sad incident but I would make a request to him and to this hon. House that we should not try to Generalise from this incident that there is some strained relationship between the Army and the civilian people as such in Assam. In the background of the Assam situation, I think, we should be rather very careful about drawing any inference like this.

12.20 hrs

I am sorry that the thing has happened. I know that is not your intention. I am trying to remove any misunderstanding that possibly may be there. About removing the headquarters of the army, the location of the army, etc., that is a matter which has to be considered from different angles. I do not think we should rush to any conclusion of removing the location of the army unit for this particular thing. But this particular incident has been taken note of by the Defence Ministry and the Defence Minister and, I think, he will take all steps to see that such things do not happen again.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU (Diamond Harbour) : Frequent indiscriminate use of army for aid-police duty and presence of excessive number of army personnel for too long a time who need a restricted and abnormal life without any visible use of the army lead to this sort of things. In this very place Gauhati, these things have happened. Twenty years ago, I was myself in the army and I know about court martial inquiry and all that. I have faced all these things and I have plenty of experience about that. It is not the whole Indian army that is responsible but there are some erring officers. Under the circumstances, may I ask the Home Minister whether he will direct, through the Defence Minister, the persons concerned to handover this army officer's case to the civil authorities.

SHRI RANJIT SINGH (Khalilabad) : Certainly not. (*Interruption*)

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BASU : This case should be tried by a civil court. That is the first thing. Secondly, for future, indiscriminate use of army for aid-police duty should be restricted. I want to know whether he will consider that.

SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN : The hon. Member has his own experience about army because he said—I did not know; this is a very revealing information that he was in army. (*Interruption*) It is good that he left army. As far as investigation and trial is concerned, this is a matter which is normally adjusted between civil authorities

[Shri Y. B. Chavan]

and army concerned there. I can say from my own experience, in such incidents, even the army court martial inquiry takes very severe action. It is not a question of civil or army. Army also is an Indian army. Really speaking, they are a part of people.

श्री क० सि० ब्रजुकर (केसरिया) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, इस देश में औरतों की प्रतिष्ठा नहीं है, हरिजनों की प्रतिष्ठा नहीं है, ग्राम जनता की प्रतिष्ठा नहीं है और उस के ब्राह्मण पत्रकारों की प्रतिष्ठा नहीं है तो क्या सरकार कोई ऐसी निष्पक्ष जांच करने जा रही है इन घटनाओं की जो कि गोहाटी में घटी हैं और साथ ही आयन्दा से पत्रकारों की मान, मर्यादा और अधिकारों की सुरक्षा हो सके इस के लिये सरकार कौन सी ठोस कार्रवाई करने जा रही है ?

SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN : While replying to the first question, I said, certainly, steps will be taken to see that such incidents do not occur.

SHRI RANJIT SINGH : It seems that the Home Minister has received one side of the whole story. It is not a fact that previous to the army officer running amuck there, there had been a very minor jeep accident with a rickshaw and that nobody was hurt but the mob that collected over there started assaulting the army officer and dragged the driver out and kept on assaulting him ? Then, the army officer ran away with his jeep to escape the fury of the mob and then, to save the driver of his whom he thought the unruly mob might have finished, he came back with a large number of soldiers. Thereafter, whatever he did is totally unjustified. Why should we not condemn outright the mob behaviour which on several occasions has been responsible for these things ?

SHRI RANDHIR SINGH : He is correct.

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Indrajit Gupta,

श्री रसजीत सिंह : इस का उत्तर नहीं दे रहे हैं ।

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Randhir Singh has answered your question. He is supporting you. Shri Indrajit Gupta.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Alipore) : This is a very delicate matter and I do not think we can immediately start apportioning the blame here either to the military or to the civilian side because we are depending, for the time being, entirely on the press reports. Nevertheless, you will agree, I hope, that in view of the different types of clashes which are taking place between different sections of the people in different parts of the country, not the least distressing in an occurrence of this kind where the civilian population is embroiled with the military personnel, I would like to know from the Home Minister whether he has considered that these incidents which seem to be a part of the chain of incidents which have taken place recently, as mentioned by my hon. friend, Shri Bedabrata Barua, have anything to do with the general atmosphere which is prevailing in Assam for sometime, particularly in Gauhati, where there seems to be no law and order and where, even according to the press reports, neither the ordinary police nor, strangely enough, the military police seems to have put in any appearance for quite a considerable period of time during which this officer went away and came back with soldiers and so on. Even the press reports are silent on the question of whether the ordinary police or the military or anybody appeared there.

What I would like to know is whether, apart from this inquiry which is being instituted into this officer's conduct, he will bother to have any general inquiry or investigation made into what is the situation prevailing there about the general question of law and order in Gauhati ever since those incidents which took place in January. I want to know, pending this inquiry whether any positive steps are being taken or thought of to improve the relations between the civilian population in Gauhati and the military who continue to be stationed there.

SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN : He started his question that, perhaps, it is not the time to apportion the blame but latter he asked me whether I have gone into this

other question as to who was responsible for this. Naturally, we will have to make an assessment after the inquiry is completed. Personally, I do not think there is any strained relation between the army and the people as such. On this occasion, I find that, from the information I have received, immediately after hearing about this incident, the Deputy Commissioner himself reached the spot and he tried to take the matters in his hand and tried to arrest the person himself. So, that shows that the officers, normally responsible for law and order, are vigilant and they are going to the spot and taking action.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : What about the Governor there? Is he vigilant?

SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN : We will discuss the Governors later on. This is not the time for the Governors to come in.

As far as this general condition of law and order is concerned, I think, after the incidents in Gauhati in January last, the State Government have taken a large number of steps to see that things do not deteriorate.

12.28 hrs

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

Indian Telegraph (First Amendment) Rules

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND COMMUNICATIONS (**SHRI I. K. GUJRAL**) : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Indian Telegraph (First Amendment) Rules, 1968, published in Notification No. G. S. R. 524 (English version) and G. S. R. 525 (Hindi version) in Gazette of India dated the 23rd March, 1968, under sub-section (5) of section 7 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885. [Placed in Library. See No. LT-912/68]

Notifications under Essential Commodities Act and Annual Report of Food Corporation of India

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD, AGRICULTURE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (**SHRI ANNASAHIB SHINDE**) : I beg to lay on the Table a

copy each of the following Notifications under sub-section (6) of section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 :—

(i) G. S. R. 674 published in Gazette of India dated the 6th April, 1968 rescinding the Andhra Pradesh Coarse Rice (Maximum Prices) Order, 1964.

(ii) G. S. R. 675 published in Gazette of India dated the 6th April, 1968 rescinding the Madras Coarse Rice (Maximum Prices) Order, 1964.

(iii) The Gur (Regulation of Use) Order 1968, published in Notification No. G. S. R. 685 in Gazette of India dated the 3rd April, 1968.

[Placed in Library, See No. LT-913/68]

(2) A copy of the Annual Report of the Food Corporation of India for the year 1966-67 along with the Audited Accounts, under sub-section (2) of section 35 of the Food Corporations Act 1964. [Placed in Library, See No. LT-914/68]

Dock Workers (Advisory Committee) Amendment Rules

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, EMPLOYMENT AND REHABILITATION (**SHRI S. C. JAMIR**) : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the Dock Workers (Advisory Committee) Amendment Rules 1968 (First Amendment) published in Notification No. S. O. 1169 in Gazette of India dated the 30th March, 1968, under sub-section (3) of section 8 of the Dock Workers (Regulation of Employment) Act, 1948. [Placed in Library, See No. LT-915/68]

12.29 hrs.

RE. CALLING ATTENTION NOTICES

(Query)

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : Sir, before the discussion on U. P. starts, may I request the Home Minister to make a statement on the communal disturbances in Allahabad? (Interruptions)

SOME HON. MEMBERS rose—

MR. SPEAKER : Order, order.