

Mr. Speaker: No statement is needed now.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Members of Parliament are laughing.... (*Interruption*).

give your consent to the Privilege Motion.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: This is wrong. I will read out the proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Let us hear him.

12.56 hrs.

COMMITTEE ON ABSENCE OF MEMBERS

SEVENTEENTH REPORT

Shri Khadilkar (Khed): Sir, I beg to present the Seventeenth Report of the Committee on Absence of Members from the Sittings of the House.

Shri Asoka Mehta: As there have been some rumours and misunderstanding in the matter, and as announced by the Leader of the House yesterday, I wish to clarify the position.

Mr. Speaker: I have asked Shri Banerjee so many times to keep quiet.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: They enjoy an immunity.

12.56 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: PRESS REPORTS ON PLANNING MINISTER'S VISIT TO USA AND CANADA

Mr. Speaker: Statement by Shri Asoka Mehta.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): Sir, I rise on a point of order about this statement.

Mr. Speaker: Let me hear the statement first.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I have got this statement.

Mr. Speaker: Let me hear it first.

The Minister of Planning and Social Welfare (Shri Asoka Mehta): Mr. Speaker, Sir, yesterday, some Honourable Members referred to certain press reports to the effect that I was awaiting clearance from Washington to the statement that I propose to make to the House tomorrow on my recent discussions in the United States and Canada. Some Honourable Members had also given notice of a Privilege Motion in regard to a PTI report that before leaving Washington I met the President of the World Bank to get from him an agreement on the statement which I would make in this House. You, Mr. Speaker, have already declined to

Shri Asoka Mehta: At the outset, I should like to deny that the statement that I propose to make tomorrow has been agreed upon with the President of the World Bank, Mr. Woods, or that I am waiting to get clearance to the statement from Washington. The statement that I propose to make tomorrow on my visit to the United States and Canada is being finalised. I undertook its preparation only after reporting my discussions in Washington to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. There could be no question of my having obtained the agreement of the World Bank President to it or having sought the clearance of Washington to it.

As the hon. Members are aware, the purpose of my visit was to hold discussions with Mr. Woods, the President of the World Bank, and the President and senior officials of the United States Government. The object of my discussion was to ascertain the nature of support that could be expected for the Fourth Five Year Plan from the countries of the "Aid-India Consortium", of which the World Bank President is the Chairman, and the U.S.A., which is one of the most important countries of the "Aid-India Consortium". Owing to the important nature of these discussions, it was necessary to seek confirmation from them