

12 hrs.

MOTIONS FOR ADJOURNMENT**REPORTED RESIGNATION OF CHIEF OF
ARMY STAFF**

Mr. Speaker: I have received notices of some adjournment motions, one from Acharya Kripalani, one from Shri S M Banerjee, then from Shri Prakash Vir Shastri, Shri Mahanty, Shri Supakar, Shri Sadhan Gupta and Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri. The one tabled by Acharya Kripalani reads:

"The serious situation arising out of the reported resignation of the Chief of the Army Staff to be followed by the resignations of the other service chiefs"

Shri Raghunath Singh (Varanasi): This is a very serious matter

Mr. Speaker: It is no doubt serious

Acharya Kripalani (Sitamarhi): Mr Speaker, you know that in all these twelve years, I have never moved an adjournment motion. This is a very important issue. The news has been published in one of the important dailies of Delhi, which is not known for giving sensational news. Even if this were not so there were recently rumours afloat that something disturbing is happening in our armed forces. In the Rajya Sabha, there was a question asked about the promotions that had been given. It was said that the promotions were disturbing the Defence Services, that the promotions were not guided by longevity of service or merit but by certain preferences. I am sorry to say—and the Defence Minister will excuse me—that it was held that those preferences were based upon political considerations which have never been brought into the Army, and that the Minister has some political preferences.

Mr. Speaker: What does he mean by 'it was held'? He means it was alleged?

Acharya Kripalani: I mean it was held by the public

Mr. Speaker: He must have some authority to state it. I am a lawyer and therefore when it is said 'held', I take it as held by a Judge or some authority.

Acharya Kripalani: We are living in a democracy. What the people feel and what the Press feels is of considerable importance.

Mr. Speaker: I do not deny it. I thought it meant 'alleged'.

Acharya Kripalani: The ideas about political preferences have been accentuated in the public mind. When our Canberra jet Plane was shot down in Pakistan the Defence Minister kept denouncing that act of aggression repeatedly from day to day. But there has been aggression on our borders from other quarters, about which he is very significantly silent.

Mr. Speaker: How does the hon Member assume that?

Acharya Kripalani: I feel he does not consider that that aggression is as important as the other aggression. This raises an important issue.

Mr. Speaker: We are not going into other matters.

Acharya Kripalani: If such rumours and such notices in papers, that are not known for publishing sensational news, go on, they will have a very demoralising effect upon our armed forces. Not to talk of our armed forces, they will have a demoralising effect on the public. We want the public now to be very careful and also to be very alert, because we are faced with certain difficulties which arise on our borders—which have been admitted. The attitude of some of our neighbouring countries is inimical to us.

Therefore, both for the sake of the morale of the people and that of the

[Acharya Kripalani]

Defence forces, it is necessary that we take immediate notice of this matter. The most disturbing thing at this critical time is that our Defence Minister has taken up an assignment in the UNO which will take about three months time. I really wonder how a Defence Minister could take up this assignment. (*Interruptions*).

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): I want to say something.

Mr. Speaker: Order, order

Acharya Kripalani: Therefore, I feel that this is a matter of immediate importance. Hence, I have tabled this adjournment motion. You will allow us to discuss it

Some Hon. Members rose—

Mr. Speaker: All other motions relate to the same matter.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: My motion is different.

Mr. Speaker: I believe all hon Members have seen the front-page news in the *Statesman*. Evidently, these motions have been tabled on the basis of that. When the hon. Member mentioned about the occupation in the north and in the east, I think he merely wanted to refer to it, and not to discuss it here. Just now the matter before us is limited

Shri S. M. Banerjee rose—

Mr. Speaker: Order, order. Why is he in such a hurry? It is reported that a senior officer, the Chief of the Army Staff, has resigned and the others are likely to follow suit. Evidently, Acharyaji wants to say is that whatever be the reason, if they want to resign, in any case, this is not the propitious occasion, when there is disturbance here and there. Therefore, he feels anxiety when all of them jointly try to resign or resign one after the other. I am

sure it is a very serious matter. But I do not know how we can proceed on the basis of such information. If perchance it is all false, I do not know if it will be right for the newspapers to give publicity to such matters as this, creating alarm in the country. If it is true, it may be a service to the country. Therefore, whether it is true or false, let us hear the hon. Minister.

The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Shri Satya Narayan Sinha) rose—

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I have a submission to make.

Shrimati Benu Chakravartty (Basis-hat): Let him answer one or two points also

Acharya Kripalani: May I submit that there is no attack on the Communist Party? (*Interruptions*).

Mr. Speaker: Does Shri S. M. Banerjee want to explain anything relating to his adjournment motion?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I was equally surprised to read this alarming news.

Mr. Speaker: That is all right. What is it that he wants to know?

Shri S. M. Banerjee: My adjournment motion is something different. Let me have one minute to explain. (*Interruptions*)

Shri Tangamani (Madurai): When an hon Member who has tabled an adjournment motion wants to place before you the facts, I humbly request that he may be given an opportunity to do so. If he is pulled up by the Chair, how can he make his submission?

Mr. Speaker: At this stage, I am only interested in seeing whether it is an urgent matter, a matter of public importance and a matter which ought to be discussed or not. I heard

Acharya Kripalani. I read out the names of other hon. Members. *Prima facie*, this is a very serious matter, if the information is correct (*Interruptions*).

Acharya Kripalani: I am sorry the Communists do not think like that.

Mr. Speaker: They also thought like that. Otherwise, Shri S. M. Banerjee would not have tabled that motion.

Shrimati Benu Chakravarty: I would beg of you to consider one thing. On all previous occasions, when an important matter has been placed before us, everybody has been allowed to have his say. I think Acharya Kripalani forgets that the Communist Party is the leading Opposition in this House. We can certainly make our submission before the hon. Minister replies. Surely, we can ask that he should also take into consideration certain questions which are in our mind. What right has the hon. Member, Acharya Kripalani, to get up and say that this is no attack on the Communist Party and Communists are not being attacked? Communists have every right to place their point of view before you, Sir. (*Interruptions*) Of course, he gets much more indulgence. That is true. We only want to say that when the hon. Minister replies, we should like him to say whether there is any significance in the fact that General Ayub is coming today, this gentleman, Thimayya, offers his resignation today and there is a whole scouting of the affairs by Cariappa. We should like to have an answer (*Interruptions*)

Mr. Speaker: I have heard sufficiently.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: Give me an opportunity, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: What is the opportunity for? Is it to explain what was appeared in the newspaper? (*Interruptions*). Before hon. Members proceed further let me hear the hon. Min-

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ister also. Then I will give them an opportunity.

Several Hon. Members: Order, order.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: What is this order?

Mr. Speaker: The order is that when I get up the hon. Member, apart from any other orders, will kindly resume his seat and thereafter he will get up with my permission and tell me what he wants to say.

At this stage, the news in the newspaper is alarming. Hon. Members have no further information than what has appeared in the newspaper. Therefore, let me hear the hon. Minister, immediately, and then hear other hon. Members also. I am not going to dispose of it before hearing other hon. Members.

Shri Nagi Reddy (Anantapur): Acharya Kripalani was bringing in extraneous matters. That was the whole trouble.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: Mr. Speaker, Sir

Shri Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri (Berhampur): When the hon. Minister of Defence is here let us have a statement from him and not from the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: Order please. I have called the hon. Minister who has stood up first.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: As perhaps you are aware, the Prime Minister has gone to receive a very distinguished visitor at the Palam aerodrome (*Interruption*). Therefore, I would request you to defer the discussion of this motion till tomorrow or the day after tomorrow when the Prime Minister will be available. He has asked me to convey this request to you and to this House through you. (*Interruptions*).

Shri Asoka Mehta (Muzaffarpur): This is a matter which has exercised the minds of all of us here. News of this kind cannot be allowed to remain uncontradicted or uncorrected or whatever it is for 24 or 48 hours. The Defence Minister is here, and I think the House is entitled to hear from him as to what the situation is. I realise the Prime Minister is absent from here because he cannot help it. We know with what courtesy the Prime Minister always treats this House. But this is a matter which affects the Minister of Defence. The Defence Minister is here. I do not think the House can be allowed to remain here in a position of complete inaction when he is here without satisfying the House as to what the position is.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: My submission is this. In the newspaper it is also said that the Prime Minister has been apprised of the situation. If this news is correct that the Prime Minister has been apprised, it is for the Prime Minister if he feels so to make a statement.

Shri Mahanty (Dhenkanal): Mr Speaker, Sir, from what the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs has stated, we understand that the Prime Minister wants this to be postponed for a day or two when we can discuss it. We are not considering the merits of the adjournment motion, we are not considering the merits of the point at issue. What we are trying to discuss now is the admissibility of the motion. You have been pleased to observe that the matter is of serious public importance. Our minds are greatly exercised over this bit of news. The hon. Minister of Defence is here. He cannot keep silence over the matter. It is of such great importance. After listening to him it will be for you and for the House to decide whether the adjournment motion should be admitted or not. To start with the hon. Minister of Defence can say whether the news report has any basis or not.

Shri Jaipal Singh (Ranohi West—Reserved—Sch. Tribes): I think, Sir, there is one particular issue also other than what is reported in the newspaper and which Acharya Kripalani has also mentioned that it is not merely what has appeared in the particular paper. In fact, I think this matter has appeared in two papers, one here and one elsewhere. But it is the other thing that has led to this. I think Acharya Kripalani's emphasis was on that—all the talk that has been going on. It is not merely fixed down to what has appeared in the Press. We have to take it in two parts. Supposing a statement dispenses with the first part the second part still remains.

An Hon. Member: However, the country should be taken into confidence with regard to the whole affair.

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: I may add a word in connection with what the hon. Members have said just now. The Prime Minister told me that he would very much like that he should deal with it himself and therefore his request is there. I do not know if the Prime Minister will be available here at 1 p.m. (Interruptions)

An Hon. Member: Why not the Defence Minister tell us?

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: I say it is the definite request of the Prime Minister, that it is a very serious matter and that he would deal with the whole thing himself. I think it is ordinary courtesy that the House should concede. He is the Head of the Government, Sir. (Interruptions.)

An Hon. Member: Why not the Defence Minister state facts?

Shri Mahanty: Why not the Defence Minister go to Palam?

Shri Satya Narayan Sinha: The Prime Minister has made a definite request. The House should concede that. What is all this action?

The Minister of Defence (Shri Krishna Menon): Sir, it is not discourtesy to the House that I am not participating in this debate. I have discussed this matter with the Prime Minister this morning and it was considered desirable—as it has been put by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs—that he should deal with the matter himself because it is not in a narrow sense—as the purport of the motion seems to be dealt with by the Defence Minister only. There are all kinds of things along with it. After all, we function as a Government and it is for the Head of the Government to decide how it is to be dealt with.

Shri Ranga (Tenal): I would like to make a small submission. If you are pleased to admit the motion it is still open to the Prime Minister to be present here in this House today when the motion can be taken up. We all know that all that goes on between the Defence forces and the Minister and the Ministry has been kept as a kind of *purdah* from this Parliament as well as other countries also. It is not usual that this kind of news comes up at all. When it has come we would like to know, we would like to be assured that no hasty action would be taken. We would like to know whether resignation had been submitted at all, whether it has been accepted, whether it is going to be accepted and all that. We would like to have an assurance that before anything is done, no untoward action is taken by the Defence Minister or by the Government. (*Interruptions.*)

Mr. Speaker: I have heard both sides. Now, the only point is the request of the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs or the Defence Minister that we should not go into this matter now. It is a matter of very serious consequence. Nobody objects to this House being fully informed of all that has happened. And, this House will only be too glad to know that this rumour is not true; and, if the rumour is correct, to be apprised of what all steps are being taken to avert any possible

mishap in this country, particularly when there are rumours of some territories being occupied here and there and trouble somewhere.

But the House will also appreciate that the hon Prime Minister should have his say in all such matters as this when all sorts of allegations are made. Reference has been made by Acharya Kripalani to the fact that on account of some steps taken by the Defence Minister all this has been brought about. It is his right to make promotions, appointments etc. (*Interruptions*). Therefore, I do not think any purpose will be served by rushing this matter through. It is not as if there is an invasion today. There is a threat of resignation—of a possible resignation. If we adjourn it to day after tomorrow, this matter might also be settled by then. I, therefore, think that in view of the fact that the hon Prime Minister is absent—he is also the Leader of the House—and the hon Defence Minister saying that it is a matter which has to be collaborated with the Prime Minister who is absent due to unavoidable circumstances this may be adjourned. I hope and trust that everything will be clear by day after tomorrow.

Shri Frank Anthony (Nominated—Anglo Indians): Why day after tomorrow? (*Interruptions*.)

Mr. Speaker: In the meanwhile.

Shri Nanshir Bharucha (East Khandesh): Why not by four o'clock today?

Shri Asoka Mehta: If the Prime Minister is free it should be taken up today?

Mr. Speaker: On the other hand, if there are serious developments, I hope the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister will come to the House, and give us full facts. If in the meanwhile there is any difficulty. (*Interruptions*.) After all, they are the persons who are in possession of facts. They will have to ascertain some facts

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also. Therefore, I will give them time till day after tomorrow. I leave it to them to come to this House tomorrow in case they apprehend anything serious so that nothing is lost. So, I hold over this motion with this reservation that in case any serious development happens, they will come here or if I find any serious development happening I would have no hesitation in bringing it up tomorrow.

Shri Asoka Mehta: This is a serious news; it should be contradicted at least, if it is wrong. It does not take 24 hours or 48 hours to contradict a news like this. .. (Interruptions.)

Shri Frank Anthony: On a point of order, with due respect to you. This is something quite extraordinary and unprecedented that an adjournment motion which is posited on some kind of information which is presumably within the purview of the Government should be postponed, not for 24 hours but for 48 hours. It involves a privilege of this House. Are we not entitled to information which is presumably with the Minister in charge of this portfolio immediately, on a matter which is admittedly of the most urgent, vital, public importance? 48 hours will make this House *functus officio* and will bring us into contempt with the rest of the country. Are we not entitled to immediate information which is presumably in his possession? We may not take a decision on this matter. The Prime Minister may come and set it in the proper perspective. But what is the right of this House? Here is an adjournment motion. We are asking for certain information. Presumably, the Minister who is in sole and exclusive charge of that Ministry has that information. Are we not entitled to get it immediately?

Acharya Kripalani: We should also know what is happening in the army now. The army is very sensitive... (Interruptions.)

Shri Banga: Sir, it may be within your discretion to say: we are going to wait for 24 hours or 48 hours. But that discretion has to be used in a wise manner. We would like you to use it with the greatest possible wisdom.

Shri Nanshir Bharucha: Sir, the purpose of the adjournment motion itself is defeated because it means that the business of the House must be interrupted to discuss that matter and if you put it off for 48 hours, what is the use of having adjournment motions?

Mr. Speaker: I have heard the point of order.

Shri Mahanty: Sir, I have a point of order. It is very simple. With the complicity of the Prime Minister in these matters, it is now going to be established in this House that the Defence Minister is not responsible for his portfolio but the Minister of External Affairs is responsible for Defence. That creates an impression that there is an honorary Defence Minister, also there is another genuine Defence Minister. It is misleading the House to say that the Prime Minister will come every time to defend his colleague. That is a breach of privilege of this House. While the Minister is here, he remains silent. Why does he not go to Palam to receive General Ayub Khan..... (Interruptions.) How can he be here and yet refuse to answer?

Shri Jaipal Singh: I desire only to mention a point of procedure that crops up. I support the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs; I do not often support him but this time I feel that I ought to. After all, it is a special request from the Leader of the House. He is on duty. Otherwise, he would have been here. If he is asking us that he may make a statement tomorrow, I do not think that heavens will fall..... (Interruptions.) The

question of procedure is this. When an adjournment motion is raised here and no reply is forthcoming from the Government, I want to know whether you, Sir, in the Chair, automatically accept the adjournment motion. Or, what do you do?

Mr. Speaker: I do not accept or I do not reject. I do as I on the facts placed before me. An adjournment motion is tabled. The answer may not be forthcoming for the reason that they are not able to answer, in which case, if it is serious, I will allow the adjournment motion. Or, they may not like to answer because it is such a trivial matter and I myself will dispose of it or reject it. Therefore, the mere absence of an answer does not force me to decide one way or another. I have to decide myself. There is no doubt that this is a serious matter. In all these matters, the hon. Members never seem to be very short I have rejected a number of motions for adjournment which were merely based on some newspaper report. The only difference between them and this is that this relates to a very serious matter; if it is true, it will affect the entire fabric of our country at this critical juncture when we are threatened about our security on various sides. The question is whether, that rumour is true and whether we should not pursue that matter and try to rectify it, if it is true, before it is too late. Certainly I appreciate the difficulty. All the same it is a newspaper report. The hon. Minister does not want to avoid in this House. The Prime Minister would be the first here even in regard to matters relating to others on account of the serious responsibility that he holds as the Prime Minister. There is a joint responsibility. As a matter of fact, it is he who distributes the portfolios to various Ministers. He is responsible to this House as much as the others. We take not any individual Minister to task but the Cabinet as a whole to task.

The hon. Members are very particular and it is also a serious matter. I would request the hon. Prime Minister to come to the House tomorrow

and tell us... (Interruptions.) Order, order. I cannot allow this. We have done this sort of thing very often. The Prime Minister is absent here. If I adjourn this House, I am adjourning this House till 4 o'clock, if I accept this suggestion. How can I accept it without any further information as to how far it is in the public interest to decide this matter here? We are merely proceeding on a report. Is it a report from one of the Ministers of the Cabinet? I am really surprised that I should be forced to come to a conclusion based merely on a newspaper report, and if we go on discussing, it may be too late to repair the damage... (Interruptions.) Order, order. I think the hon. Prime Minister's request through the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is a reasonable one. Under normal circumstances, if the hon. Prime Minister has said 'I will look into this question; I am not yet apprised of it', I would hold over the motion. So, this will stand over till tomorrow. Let the hon. Prime Minister and also the Defence Minister come and let us hear further as to what should be done. I will take a decision tomorrow regarding the adjournment motion. It will stand adjourned till tomorrow.

Acharya Kripalani: Sir, I accept your ruling but the country is entitled to know today what is happening in the Army.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry I cannot force him to do so. Now, the House will proceed with its other business.

FOOD SITUATION

Shrimati Renu Chakravarty: Sir, we have tabled some adjournment motions. It is a question affecting the people of Bengal. There is a huge mass upsurge and three lakhs of people are affected. They have been demanding that the food policy should be changed. 500 people are in jails. We should like to know whether we can discuss these matters.

Mr. Speaker: Some hon. Members have tabled adjournment motion on the food situation in Bengal or the food situation in the country.....