

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Thank you, Mishraji. Shri Tara Charan Majumdar.

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: अब तो सवा हो रहा है।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री सनातन बिसि): इसको बीच में खत्म कर दें क्या? क्या करें कई नाम तो इसमें एंजोसिएट करने वालों के हो गए।

श्री चतुरानन मिश्र: अगर सभी भोजन उपवास रखना चाहते हैं तो हम भी रख लेंगे।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री सनातन बिसि): इसको खत्म करने के बाद लंच कर देंगे।

श्री सुन्दर सिंह भंडारी: अब तो सब लेना पड़ेगा मिश्र जी।

#### SPECIAL MENTIONS

**Handing over of BRPL—A profit earning PSU and other such PSUs to private companies on sale**

SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR (Assam): I thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to draw the attention of the Government on a situation arising out of an attempt of the Government to sell out to private companies.

Assam has the distinction of having the first oil refinery in the country. The Digboi refinery was established more than a hundred years ago. Britishers did not go in for further exploration and extraction of crude for their own interest and it was after Independence that there has been a large scale activity to find more oil in Assam and the area near about Assam. The grievance of the people of the region has been that the Central Government in consonance with its policy of keeping the region in a state of underdevelopment is depriving the people of their legitimate right to the benefit of its natural resources. A huge refinery was established at Barauni, in the State of Bihar which is not an oil producing State. And a pipeline was constructed at a cost of thousands of crores of rupees to pump out crude oil from the

oil—fields of Assam to this refinery and thereby depriving Assam refinery scope for further expansion and improvement. The people of Assam built up a strong mass movement demanding refining of crude extracted from its oil-fields in the State itself by establishing refineries and as a result of mass agitation, two toy refineries were established, one at Guwahati and the other at Bongaigaon with a refining capacity of 1.37 million metric tons per year. The Bongaigaon refinery and petrochemical complex has been registered as a separate company in 1974. The BRPL started its commercial production in 1978 and also entered into competitive market in fibre and petrochemicals in addition to a range of products of a conventional refinery. Its products are LPG, ATF, MS, SKD, diesel, LSHS, RPC, petrochemicals, etc. The refinery has been making spectacular strides in refining production of petrochemicals and it earned a profit of Rs. 50.70 crores in 1992-93, Rs. 60.71 crores in 1993-94, Rs. 85.25 crores in 1994-95 and Rs. 120.20 crores in 1995-96. The BRPL also paid Rs. 27.06 crores to its shareholders as bonus and also paid Rs. 74.91 crores to the Government treasury as tax, etc. The BRPL was rated 'excellent' amongst the MOU-signing PSUs for several years. Taking into consideration the overall performance of the BRPL and taking into consideration the projected availability of oil in the N.E. Region, it was allowed to increase its refining capacity from 1.35 MMT per year to 2.35 MMT per year and the company installed necessary mechanism, machinery and other infrastructure for the execution of enhanced refining capacity. The insincerity of the authorities became evident when refining of enhanced capacity had to be stopped after four days of operation as supply of crude was abruptly stopped to the refinery. The Disinvestment Commission has recommended selling of the BRPL to a private company on grounds of non-availability of crude, geographical location and for want of marketing facilities. All these

reasons are not at all convincing. Since some years especially during the Congress regime in the State, there had been a concerted effort to transfer profit-making PSUs to private companies at throw-away prices for obvious reasons and the people of the State are not convinced of the *bona fides* of the Central Government in selling a profit-making PSU to a private company. The Government has decided to run the Barauni Refinery on imported crude and Haldia-Barauni pipeline is in the process of completion and Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemicals may be supplied with imported oil from Barauni to Bongaigaon by reverse pumping through the existing pipe line. They say that Assam and other areas of the North-East are floating on oil. There is no reason why operation for exploration and extraction of oil cannot be carried out on a massive scale to feed the existing refineries and also Numaligarh Refinery which is coming up. The company which is to take over the refinery shall have to be under the same disadvantages as pointed out by the Disinvestment Commission while justifying the transfer of refinery to a private company. There is no justification in selling this profit-making PSU. The Planning Commission Group under the chairmanship of Shri L.C. Jain recommended setting up of an aromatic plant in Assam based on raw materials available from the refineries in Assam. Taking into account this recommendation, the BRLP put up a proposal for Benzene Plant and submitted it to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in June 1994. But the matter is pending with the Ministry since then.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Please conclude. ...*(Interruptions)*... Please conclude as early as possible.

SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Sir, I am completing. ...*(Interruptions)*... I am concluding.

Sir, B.R.P.L. is in petrochemical business for more than a decade and during this period it has gathered sufficient experi-

ence in production and making of petrochemical products and as such it would be easy for B.R.P.L. to implement the proposed Benzene plant. By setting up such a plant in the North-Eastern Region, we can have vast employment potential and there would also be scope for industrialisation in that region. We have now come to understand that this project has been handed over to Reliance Industries, a private concern, by depriving B.R.P.L. of its legitimate claim to operate the project.

The Government is also preparing to sell Bongaigaon Thermal Project which is not progressing well due to defect in management. Things would have improved had the authorities been sincere to remove the causes standing in the way of its smooth running. The Thermal project, as reported, is to be sold away to a private foreign company at a low price.

The above attempt of selling the profit making PSUs to private companies, runs counter to the assurances given by the two successive Prime Ministers of the U.F. Government that a special package programme will be introduced for rapid industrialization and development of the North-East Region...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Mr. Majumdar, you give the substance. Later on the Minister concerned will give the necessary answer.

SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Okay, Sir. I will finish in 'one minute. The decision of the government of India to sell a profit earning PSU situated in a backward area is nothing but a conspiracy to save some sick industries situated outside the region and the people will resist it by all means.

Refinery employees, trade unions and students organisations have expressed their strong sense of resentment against the proposed sale of the PSUs in this region to the detriment of the peoples' interest. They are determined to build up a massive mass movement to compel the Government to desist from such an anti-people act.

Through this Special Mention, I draw the attention of the Government to the great sense of resentment generated in the region due to the decision of the Government to sell PSUs to private companies and request the authorities concerned to desist from such act in the interest of the people of that region. Thank you.

**Sugar shortage and expensive sugar import due to faulty sugar policy**

SHRI K.R. MALKANI (Delhi): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of this august but near empty House to a very clear aspect of India's Foreign Trade Policy. In the same year we export wheat and import wheat and in the same year we export sugar and import sugar. A policy like this can help importers, exporters, insurers, shippers and foreign sugar-lobbies but not the Indian consumer. Sir, the Government itself has admitted that as on today it has a stock of 65 lakh tonnes of sugar but it is afraid that we might be short of sugar during next year so, they have decided to import 20 lakh tonnes of sugar this year. Who are they trying to help? Whom are they trying to fool? Sir, their argument is, they may not have enough sugar for the PDs. Why should there not be enough of it? They themselves say that free sale quota of mills has been raised from 60% to 72%. Who asked them to do it? Apart from the sugar lobby, how was it in the interest of the Indian public or the sugar consumer that free sale quota for the sugar millers should be increased from 60% to 70%? They have another argument. They say that the new mills which have come up are exempted from levy sugar. The point is, new mills or bigger mills or better mills or more productive mills naturally invest more and earn more profits. Why should they be exempted from the levy sugar? We all know that there is a big premium on sugar mill licences. The hon. Minister who is sitting here knows very well and everybody

knows that people who get this licence pay tonnes of money, not in terms of lakhs but in terms of millions and crores. Why should a small section that kind be exempted from levy sugar? This Government is supposed to be wedded to liberalisation. It is supposed to be against permit-licence-quota *raj*. It must be explained to the country as to why, to this date, it has not de-licensed the sugar industry? The suspicion is, they want this control because they want to continue making money—hundreds and thousands of crores—on sugar. Thank you.

**Kidnapping of forest officials by Veerappan in Tamil Nadu**

SHRI R. MARGABANDU (Tamil Nadu): This subject is relating to forest brigand, Veerappan, in Tamil Nadu. It is the most biggest, most expensive man-hunt in the history of independent India. He has become a challenge both to Tamil Nadu and to the Karnataka governments, similar to that of terrorists in the other parts of the country and like dacoits of the Chambal valley. He has committed hundreds of murders including the forest and police officials both from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. But, so far, Sir, that man could not be arrested. From the reliable sources it has come to be known that he has only four companions.

But he is capable of terrorising both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. On many occasions, he had taken many officials as hostage and had made ransom demands. Sometimes, it was accepted; sometimes, it was not accepted.

The latest incident was the one in which he kidnapped nine forest officials of Karnataka. About two days back, one official from out of these nine hostages was released by Veerappan. This person appeared before the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and explained the position.

Now, Sir, today's newspapers carry the report that he has demanded a ransom of Rs. 5 crores for the release of the remaining eight forest officials. He says