

Madam, my information is that a single organisation in the North-East, the ULFA has a bank account of Rs. 400 crores in Dhaka. All this happened when Begum Zia was there. I hope that the present Government of Bangladesh would do something about it. I also hope that the Government of India would do something about it so that these disturbing noises, disturbing indicators, which are coming from both sides are taken care of. It is very important to note that in a situation like this it is not enough to deal with the Governments alone you have to deal with the people, you have to deal with the Opposition parties also.

When we negotiated the river waters agreement with Nepal, the latter had the wisdom to bring the leaders of the Opposition with them. Later on they wanted to wriggle out, but they felt honour bound to abide by it. So, the agreement went through. So, if you are having a joint celebration, with Pakistan and Bangladesh, I hope that the people in the Opposition there would also be contacted and persuaded to go along. That is all I have to say. Thank you very much, Madam.

RE: AUDIT EXERCISE BY WORLD BANK TO CROSS-CHECK INDIA'S UTILISATION OF WORLD BANK AID

SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN (Uttar Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chairman, I am grateful to you for permitting me to raise this important submission. I have heard and read in the newspapers that the World Bank has started auditing the Government of India's accounts and also State Governments' accounts as to how the Government of India and the State Governments are utilising their funds. It is something very serious. The World Bank teams have fanned out across the country quizzing senior Government officers, reviewing their projects and have started constituting their own audit team which has never happened in the past in this country. It is for the first time that the World Bank has gone to this extent in deputing their auditors to check the utilisation of their funds. This is clearly an infringement of our sovereignty. I see a threat to it because the World Bank have projects practically in all the

States. Now their auditors who are foreigners would go everywhere and check up the accounts and cross-examine the officers, which has never been done in the past. Perhaps this is being done because the World Bank do not have, faith in the statistics being provided to them by the Government of India or by the State Governments. I would like to know from the Government what the correct position is. After all, a sovereign country like India cannot be dictated to by the World Bank. Now, their auditors are coming to India and examining our accounts which has never happened in the past. In the last 50 years, the World Bank has not done anything like that. Recently the World Bank team has also visited States like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra where they have given large loans. And there, they have not only cross examined the officers but also told them that they should produce the accounts to show how their money has been spent. To that extent, auditing is being done which is of a very serious nature. I raise this point here and hope to get a clarification from the Government at the earliest.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI

(Uttar Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chairperson, thank you very much. I would just add that the normal practice has been for the donor agencies to request the Government of India and the Government of India to request the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, which is the supreme audit institution under the Constitution so far as this country is concerned—as in many other countries—and the audit is done by the Comptroller and Auditor-General and the information is supplied first to the Government and through the Government, to these agencies. It will be very odd if they separately appoint their own auditors and I think they will certainly be infringing the economic sovereignty and the working of our own system. So far as the officers of the World Bank are concerned, they do go to different places as also of the European Economic Union and other countries. But they only see how the things are on the field. I think when the United Nations itself has appointed the Auditor General of India as the Chairman of the Panel of Auditors, it will be something very disturbing if we really allow this kind of a practice to be followed. Thank you.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (Rajasthan): Madam, I am hearing it for the first time that the World bank or the IMF can appoint their own auditors in this country to audit the accounts of the various agencies which are carrying out the World Bank-funded projects. This is a very serious issue. The Government should be directed to come out with the facts as to the exact position. Really, under our law, it is the CAG's office which controls the whole audit. Nobody can audit like this. No World Bank or no IMF or no foreign agency can audit like this the accounts of our State Governments and the Government of India. It is very serious. I strongly protest and demand from the Government a statement.

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU (West Bengal): What is the exact position, Madam? Parliament should not be left only to the newspapers to collect this information. The Government should come out with an authentic statement about what is actually happening.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: When the Finance Minister comes here for the Budget, you can put questions also to him.

SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Madam, would you instruct the Finance Minister to make a statement on this?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I am not instructing him to make a statement. I am saying that we are going to discuss the Budget; the Finance Minister would be here; at that time, he can clarify the situation. And, meanwhile, I am requesting the Government to make a note and convey it to the Finance Minister so that he can make enquiries as to the basis of this news which has come in papers, whether it is true or wrong.

RE. PROBLEMS OF BEEDI WORKERS

SHRI E. BALANANDAN (Kerala): Madam Deputy Chairman, I am raising an issue of 90 lakh beedi workers in India, a majority of whom are women. The lowest paid lot are the workers in India. The previous Government had taken the step of reducing the excise duty on minicigarettes from Rs. 120/- to Rs. 60/-. It has adversely affected the beedi industrial workers. The work of many of them has been reduced to two days a week in many parts of the country. Mini-cigarettes have become popular and people are now using them. Now the Government of India has come forward to increase the excise duty by Rs. 30/- which is a welcome step. At the same time, I want that Rs. 120/- to be restored. Then only the beedi workers can be saved.

Also Madam, the beedi workers should be organised into cooperatives and the Government of India should help the State Governments to see that all the beedi workers are organised into cooperatives just like in Kerala where we are having one of the best cooperative systems in India. Also, the beedi workers require a minimum wage. They are not getting any minimum wage; especially, women are not given minimum wages in many areas. Therefore, the provisions for minimum wages should be implemented by all the States so that the standard of living of the beedi workers can be improved.

Today ten thousand beedi worker* have come to Delhi to demonstrate and demand that the excise duty on beedis should not be increased. Mr. Chidambaram has done another thing this time. He has increased the price of beedi by one paise. I don't know what the Government is going to save from this. Some amount may be there. Why should we do this kind of a thing to the poorest 90 lakh people of India? I, therefore, request the Minister to reconsider this issue, to withdraw this increase of one paise and the excise duty now imposed,