

the competent person who can give it. Now I think this matter should be taken as closed because he is taking the responsibility of answering the Members from the right, the left and the centre... (*Interruptions*)...

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: I would like to make only one point... (*Interruptions*)... The Prime Minister has got up and I take my seat in deference to him.

SHRI E.D. DEVA GOWDA: I would like to say one thing in this connection. Mr. Chavan who is a senior Member of this House raised an issue. It is a heinous crime. So far as Assembly proceedings are concerned, you have already given the ruling that it cannot be discussed. The issue relates to a lady. A heinous crime is alleged to have taken place. I will get the whole matter, examined and if possible, tomorrow itself I will make a detailed statement on the floor of the House.

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: I would just like to set the record straight. I would like to submit that I share fully the agony of the Members and the truth about the alleged molestation should be brought out. I would also like to mention that I fully share the concern of my colleagues about the law and order situation in Delhi. The hon. prime Minister has promised that he would look into it and I welcome his assurance because this is what is needed.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The matter is closed so far as the crime is concerned. Regardless of whether it was raised in the Assembly or not, it is a crime and the Government should look into it. That part is over. We are not discussing the proceedings of any State Assembly. But a crime has taken place and the Prime Minister should inform us. If there is some misinformation, the Members from the rest of the country have a right to know the truth as to what is happening in Delhi.

## RE. REPORTED LEGISLATION TO RESTRICT THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

SHRI M.A. BABY (Kerala): Thank you very much, Madam, for having permitted me to raise this serious issue. Madam, there have been some reports in the media that the present Government is contemplating some legislation to restrict the freedom of the media, the Press. There have been some hints towards it and some senior Ministers, not the Prime Minister, made certain statements on the basis of which there have been many reports in the Press including some highly respected newspapers like the *Times of India*. Madam, one would not have raised this issue in this forum except for the fact that many a time, in spite of this being a healthy democracy, there have been occasions when the freedom of the Press has been tampered with. So far as the United Front is concerned, Madam, the position is very clear. The Common Minimum Programme, which can be considered as the *Bhagawad Gita* or the *Quran* or the *Bible* of the United Front, is very categorical... (*Interruptions*) I expect a denial from the Information and Broadcasting Minister. Madam, you may kindly permit me to briefly make my submission. The CMP has categorically stated that the freedom of the Press would be defended. It goes further to say that the Prasar Bharati Bill with sufficient modifications would be implemented so that even the electronic media could have full freedom of expression. Madam, we have had the experience of the Defamation Bill being introduced, but which had to be withdrawn thanks to a very strong opposition from the Press as well as from the political parties. We also have had the experience of what happened to the Fourth Estate during the Emergency days; I need not have to explain. Therefore, we are all very much concerned about it. Madam, we are thankful to the statements made by all hon. Ministers of this Government. But since the Prime Minister is present here, I hope that all

doubts and apprehensions will be cleared if a forthright statement is made. Thank you.

THE PRIME MINISTER (Shri H.D. Deve Gowda): Madam,...

SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI: Madam, I want to associate myself with the hon. Member.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: There are already three names with me... (*Inter-rptions*) Beyond that if we go, then the zero hour submissions and the Special Mentions cannot be finished. The Prime Minister wants to say something.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Madam, I would like to categorically mention here in this August House that there is no question of curtailing any Press freedom. The other thing is that the Government has never thought on the issue of bringing any Bill so far as defamation or making any amendments in the existing laws is concerned. There is no question of it. Madam, I assure this House that whatever freedom the Press enjoys, the same freedom will continue; there is no curtailment either by this Government or by future Governments of this freedom which we have given. I want to clear this issue to the whole nation through this House. The only one issue which I would like to reiterate is that the CAG has given a report; he has, in his opinion, found that in Doordarshan, in the various channels, financial fraud amounting to nearly Rs.5.9 crores has taken place. I have already directed the concerned department to look into the matter because nowadays, money-grabbing,—not just landgrabbing, but money-grabbing also—is also one of the arts in this country. In the name of serials, I do not know... I am not having that much taste in all these things. But the CAG has said that Rs.5.98 crores is the fraud or whatever money that has been swindled in the I&B Ministry with regard to serials and other things. We want to see that such things do not happen hereafter and we are taking this issue very seriously. I came to know several other scandals. So far as

I&B Ministry is concerned, we will try our best to prevent all these things. So far as freedom of the press is concerned, there is no question of any curtailment.

#### RE: THREAT POSED BY MURDOCH'S SITI CABLE AND OTHER FOREIGN CHANNELS TO DOMESTIC CABLE OPERATORS.

SHRI K.R. MALKANI (Delhi): Madam Deputy Chairman, I rise to draw the attention of this August House to many serious problems faced by cable TV operators as a result of the assault from multi-national corporations. Madam, this is a great small industry. This small scale industry with an investment of three to five lakhs of rupees each can serve hundreds and thousands of households. There are 70,000 cable operators throughout the country. As many as 1,700 are in Delhi alone. With a small investment of less than five lakhs of rupees they can give jobs to five to ten persons each.

Of late, some of the multi-national corporations and particularly Mr. Murdoch's SITI and Falcon's Home TV are trying to drive this small scale business out of existence. Madam, efforts are on to force them to sell their outlets or accept partnership. If they are unwilling, there have been physical assaults on these operators. In one case, Major Suresh Yadav, who is a recipient of Arjuna Award and Visisht Seva Medal, has been accused of cable theft by the SITI TV.

In another case, Mr. Jain was attacked with swords. He had to have 48 stitches. Madam, many serious issues arise. Number one, these foreign channels basically promote foreign interests whether they are Government run or run by business houses. Number two, they are showing movies, many times blue films, without going through the Censor Board of India. Thirdly, they are showing live interviews with Pakistan leaders, with Shah Nawaz and even the then President of Pak-Occupied Kashmir.