

श्री अनन्तराय देवशंकर दबे (गुजरात):
मैडम, गुजरात में भी धारा नहीं मिलता
है। वह पब्लिक डिस्ट्रीब्यूशन सिस्टम
के माध्यम से मिलना चाहिये।

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): Madam, there is some problem about the oil that is lying with the National Dairy Development Board. We have received some complaints from the Chief Ministers of Gujarat and Maharashtra. We had a discussion with the Chairman of the National Dairy Development Board. We are trying to find out what could be done. There is no need to get exercised over it. I assure the hon. Members that the public distribution system run by the State Government will be honoured and no other agencies will run... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: That is good.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: But what is the result of the Chief Minister's allegation? ... (*Interruptions*).

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think you should be satisfied with what he had said. Please take your seat. Let him finish.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: If any allegation is there we shall look into it. And if the Government has made any order, of which I do not know, I shall get it examined.

REG. THREAT TO SOME PRESS REPORTERS BY A DIPLOMAT.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Please permit me to speak. This is a very important matter... (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chairman has permitted Mr. Gurupadaswamy and Shri Gurudas Das Gupta to speak.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I would like to mention this point in the presence of the Prime Minister. Madam, Indian Press has been threatened by the members of the diplomatic corps in Delhi itself... (*Interruptions*). It is a very serious matter, Mr. Gurupadaswamy, please let me speak. Madam, the point is, Indian journalists have been threatened by

the members of the diplomatic corps in the capital of India because they are writing against the American, British and other forces invading Iraq and carrying on genocide. The article has appeared in *The Economic Times* dated 15th February. The writer was Mr. Praful Bidwal. The article was captioned "U.S. has opted for high-tech barbarism". Three days later, a letter was received by the journalist, signed by Mr. P. J. Fowler, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission. The letter is dated 19th February. I would just quote certain portions from this letter. In one part, it says: "It is with great regret, therefore, that I read your piece in the 'Economic Times' of 15th February, which, even with every allowance for the emotional impact of the tragic death of civilians in the Baghdad armoured bunker, can be described as outrageously biased and bad journalism." This is one part. In another place, he says: "Your theories about the West trapping Iraq into the invasion of Kuwait can only be described as silly" Then, the letter says: "You surely do no good to India, let alone credit to yourself, by spreading wild conspiracy theories."

Madam, this line "You surely do no good to India", is absolutely a veiled threat. It is a veiled threat. The point is, this letter could have been sent to the Editor of the journal and it would have been published in the 'Letters to the Editor' column. It seems this person, Mr. Fowler, has his own way of looking at things. Instead of writing to the Editor, to be published in the 'Letters to the Editor' column, he sent the letter privately.

I would say that, firstly, Mr. Fowler has been behaving in a most improper way. He has been behaving in an arrogant way. This is against all canons of decency and code of diplomatic behaviour. I am led to believe that the descendants of the colonisers of India do believe that India is still a colony of theirs. I wish the nation takes note of it, the Government takes note of it. Either Mr. Fowler should apologise, or, he should be expelled from India.

Madam, this not the first instance. There are many more instances where the Indian journalists are being briefed, threats

are held out to them and allurements are also being offered to them. The freedom of the Indian Press is sought to be silenced by those who are waging the war against Iraq. This is a war against the sovereignty of a nation. This is a war against the freedom of the Indian Press. We cannot tolerate this. I wish the Prime Minister speaks on this subject.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR): Madam, I have patiently heard Mr. Gupta. He quoted from a letter which has been written by some diplomat. I do not know whether he is a diplomat or some official.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: He is a diplomat. I mentioned. He is a Minister and Deputy High Commissioner of the British Embassy.

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR: There is nothing threatening in it. But the letter is not in good taste. I cannot pass any judgement until and unless I know what article the journalist wrote. In a free country, people are free to express their opinion. If the article is in the same way, the reply may be totally justified. This is not a matter on which a diplomat can be sent back.

The other remark which has been made, is unfortunate; our journalists being allured by any foreign mission. I have not that poor opinion about our journalists. If some people are making this attempt, it should be spurned. I have very high opinion about our journalists and I am quite sure, they will withstand any pressure; they will not be pressurised.

If there is anything which is out of the way, surely, the Government will take action, but not because certain people use certain types of language. Words do not catch anybody's tongue. I do not know what has been written in the article and what is the reply. Until and unless I see it, I cannot pass any remark. I am sure that our journalists will not be influenced. Threatening is a different thing. But in regard to influence, it is part of diplomatic work. They try to influence. It is for that purpose they are here. They must be try to influence them, but threatening is not allowed. If any threatening is there, we shall not allow.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA (Uttar Pradesh): I must say that our Indian journalist will not be influenced by anybody. They are strong enough. They have taken part in the freedom struggle. No outsider, no diplomatic staff can influence or succeed in bullying us or put us on the wrong path. There is no question like this. (*Interruptions*).

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now that letter is over. The Prime Minister has replied. I think it is closed now.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: The Prime Minister should have been more categorical. It is not a question of language, it is a question of audacity.

CBI REPORT ON BUGGING OF TELEPHONES

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY (Uttar Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chairman, I want to draw the attention of the Prime Minister and the House to a very important and serious matter. The CBI has submitted a report to the Government in respect of telephone tapping sometime past. All the leaders of the Opposition have sent a letter to the Chairman in this regard only two days back and we requested him that we want to raise this issue on the floor of the House.

AN HON. MEMBER: Let the CBI report be laid on the Table of the House.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: This is a serious, blatant breach and violation of the privileges and rights of M.Ps, leaders, M.L.As, Ministers political party headquarters, ex-M.Ps, cutting across all political parties and a part of it has been published... (*Interruptions*).

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Chairman has permitted him. I will permit you also. If your special mention is there, I will permit you also.

SHRI A. G. KULKARNI (Maharashtra): When?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: After he finishes, not together.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: Part of this report has appeared in 'India Today' and this has been going on for a number of years. Only sometime back when my friend, Shri Chandra Shekhar,