

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRA-KANT BHANDARE: Again this will go on.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No. no. No comments no clarification, no discussion on it. Yesterday there was a meeting in my Chamber and today he wants to make an announcement. It was an assurance to the House. He is going to abide by it.

**REG. GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO
REFER TO THE ISSUE OF EXCISE
REFUND TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
COMMITTEE**

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): Madam Deputy Chairman, I had informed this august House yesterday that in the meeting of the Leaders of the various groups held in the Chamber of the Deputy Chairman yesterday. We had unanimously come to the conclusion that an enquiry was called for in the matter relating to the refund of excise duties. I had also informed the House that while there was unanimity regarding the need for a probe, there was no unanimity about the nature of the probe. The issue was left to be decided by the Government. The Government have carefully considered the matter. We have decided to accept the unanimous views of the Leaders of the various Groups that a comprehensive enquiry relating to all aspects of this issue should be made. In deference to the wishes and sentiments of the Leaders of the Parties in Opposition in this House, we have decided to refer the whole question to the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament for an enquiry. The Congress (I) Party has also accepted this decision of the Government even though the Party had demanded the constitution of a JPC to enquire into this matter.

I have discussed the matter with the Chairman, Public Accounts Committee. It is hoped that the PAC will take up this enquiry on an immediate basis and submit its report on the first day of the

Budget Session of Parliament. The PAC will be given all co-operation by the Government in its task and all papers and documents will be made available to them. The PAC will also be free to examine any witnesses it chooses to examine. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No discussion on it. Nobody is going to mention...

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Freedom of the press is being strangled. *(Interruptions)* I want the Leader of the House to respond. The Prime Minister gave a solemn assurance on the floor of the House that he would take special interest to see that the publication of 'India Today' is resumed. I would like to know..

(Interruptions)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That is 'India Today' issue, not this. Nobody is speaking on this. *(Interruptions)* You have been heard.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: The workers are beaten away...

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRA-KANT BHANDARE (Maharashtra): Madam, you have called me and I am not yielding.

(Interruptions)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No discussion now. Hon. Member is not asking anything on what the Minister of Finance has said. He is referring to another commitment. Mr. Jaipal Reddy, the Government has heard it and I am sure they will take a decision. But now, no discussion.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I am referring to the assurance given by the Prime Minister in the house, Madam, it is a very important issue. There is need for the Government to respond. *(Interruptions)*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Jaipal Reddy, I heard it; the Government heard it. The Prime Minister gave

[Deputy Chairman J the assurance. I am sure they will take some immediate action. Now please take your seat.

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR (Uttar Pradesh): But he assured the House...

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Prime Minister himself assured; now please sit down.

SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: He assured that the publication will be resumed the next day... (*Interruptions*).

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: May I point out one thing. Mr. Jaipal Reddy, I only want to say that, perhaps, you do it without knowing that once the ruling is given by the Chair, it is not becoming of a senior Member like you, saying no, no, no. I do not understand 'no' is for what! Is it for my saying that Prime Minister gave the assurance? Is your 'no' to mean that you do not agree to what the Chair says? If you say 'yes' then please sit down. I hope that you would understand the seriousness of the price-rise in the country. Let us discuss it. You can do it after the discussion on price-rise.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN (West Bengal): Government is taking a loan from the IMF ...(*Interruptions*). Finance Minister is here. Parliament should be informed....

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We are discussing Appropriation.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN:...Whether it is affecting the independence of the country, whether it is affecting the interest of the people. It should be known to Parliament. I want the Finance Minister to tell us...(*Interruptions*).

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I will-not let you speak on it now because we are going to discuss Appropriation and that will be the appropriate time to refer to any financial matter, and not now. Now only the price rise, and nothing else. Please take your seat.

Mr. Bhandare.

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Re. Price Situation in the Country

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRA-KANT BHANDARE (Maharashtra): Madam, I am really not surprised because those who have been guilty of taking the country for a ride and putting it into the flame of this high inflation, are now resisting a discussion on the price rise... (*Interruptions*)

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: No arguments, please. For the last 4-5 days we have been postponing it, and during these last few days, the prices would have gone up still further.

SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRA-KANT BHANDARE: And by the time I finish, it would have risen still further.

Madam, I rise to raise this discussion on the price rise when the shadows of the Gulf war have lengthened. The Geneva talks have failed between Mr. Baker and Mr. Tariq Aziz. The question no longer is whether there will be a war. The question is, which Friday after the 15th of January, will the war break out. The situation is, indeed, grim because one shudders to think of the devastation it will cause in the theatre of war. But coming home, I shudder to think as to the untold misery it will cause not only in other countries but, particularly, in our country also. The situation will reach such a stage that even today's discussion will become irrelevant. Therefore, let us keep that in mind and proceed with the discussion on price rise. This hurts every common and poor man across the country.

This is the most important and serious issue in the country today. Madam, every day—in fact, every moment—when one is either eating or drinking or taking medicines or shopping, one feels the pinch of inflation. No amount of money is really enough to meet even the reasonable needs of the common man.