

nearly one lakh tonnes? Has the Government any proposal in mind to import in excess of the requirements at the moment so that the supply can be continued and this absurdly higher price charged not only by the manufacturers but by the State Governments clandestinely is brought down to the level of demand and supply situation?

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: So far as caustic soda is concerned, before 1979, far two or three years, we used to export to other countries— not that we are using the total capacity in the country. Whatever we were producing, we were also exporting to other countries. But production has been less in 1979 because of the power cut . . .

SHRI KALYAN ROY: Also in 1978.

SHRI VEERENDRA PATIL: Yes. When we knew that production has gone down, immediately we took action to import to the extent of shortfall in order to meet the demand in full. We have imported already and we are going to import another 25,000 tonnes. I would like to assure the hon. Member that if further demand is there, I would not hesitate to import more.

Guidelines on Press Censorship

♦303. SHRI K. C. SEBASTIAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to issue any guidelines on Press Censorship in the light of disturbed conditions prevailing in Assam and other border areas; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI RAM DULARI SINHA): (a) and (b) There is no

Press Censorship. As such the question of issuing of any guidelines on Press Censorship does not arise,

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: The hon. Minister has said that there is no press censorship. But is she aware of the fact that there has been a very strong indication...

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Can he ask supplementaries when the questioner is absent?

SHRI V. P. SATHE: The questioner is present and he has put his question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Goswami.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: The question has been put by Mr. Sebastian, but he is not asking any supplementary. But I am asking a supplementary. (Interruptions).

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Sir, are you allowing any supplementary on this ? (Interruptions).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sebastian did not want to ask any question. But Mr. Goswami wants to put a supplementary. Yes, Mr. Goswami

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: It is a very rare occasion when a Member is not putting any supplementary and that is why some confusion has arisen.

Sir, the honourable Minister has said that there is no censorship and, therefore, the question of issuing any guidelines does not arise. But Sir, is the Honourable Minister aware that there has been a very strong allegation that the Gauhati Station of AM India Radio has not only imposed censorship, but also it has allowed some manipulative news? And, Sir, if there are no guidelines from the Central Government, may I know from the Honourable Minister whether it is not a fact that this censorship and manipulative news have become possible because of the local

authorities there? Will the Minister agree to a probe by a Parliamentary Committee to find out whether the allegations are true or false? I say this because, Sir, as far as my information goes, a large number of participants of the All India Radio did not participate because of the deletion of various items so much so that they had to rush from here persons to broadcast Jews. Therefore, in view of this situation, will the Minister agree to a probe by a Parliamentary Committee so that the confidence of the people in the media is not lost?

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Sir, the allegation that the All India Radio had in any manner imposed censorship is not correct. Sir, actually, the complaints were the other way round.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: That is right.

SHRI N. K. P. SALVE: Absolutely.

SHRI PILOO MODY: What can that be? When you say that it is the other way round, what can that be?

SHRI V. P. SATHE: The allegation is that the people there were trying to put loaded news on the side of the agitation which was factually not correct.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: You failed to check it.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: The allegation is that we did not check it.

SHRI KALYAN ROY: That is right.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Therefore, we had sent officers from here to see that this imbalance is removed and balance was properly restored and factually correct news was presented on the All India Radio and, now, Sir, this has been done.

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: Sir, I asked whether he is agreeable to a probe by a Parliamentary Committee.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: The question of parliamentary probe does not arise.

SHRI NARASINGHA PRASAD NANDA: Sir, the Honourable Minister said that the imbalance has been restored. What is the imbalance that has been restored?

AN HON. MEMBER: He said that balance was restored.

SHRI ALEXANDER WARJRI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to ask one thing about the All India Radio Station in Shillong. I would like to know from the Minister whether it is functioning as the Gauhati Station and also I would like to know whether they have issued any guidelines to the effect that they should give news as desired by the State Government. For example, Sir, on the 2nd, there was a demonstration by 3 small children and the children were beaten up and it was not broadcast like that. According to the Deputy Commissioner, the children got hurt while running. This was the news. I would like to know from the Minister whether he is aware of the fact that this news was given on the 2nd and the 3rd. I feel he should not say that he is not aware, because, on the 16th, I had written a personal letter to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister is supposed to know all these things. So, I would like to ask the Minister whether he is aware of this and, if so, whether any action has been taken against the News Editor or whoever it is in the All India Radio Station, Shillong.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Sir, I am not aware of the allegations that my honourable friend is referring to. If they are brought to my notice, I will inquire into them and will see that necessary action is taken.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Zakaria...
(Interruptions)

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI: How is he saying that there is no censorship? If the hon. Minister is not aware of the fact, how is it that he is saying that there is no censorship?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Goswami, I cannot be addressed a supplementary? ... (Interruptions)

SHRI MANUBHAI PATEL: It has already been brought to his notice on the floor of the House.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Just now I said that I will look into it and enquire. What more do you want?

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: While from the Minister's side there may be no censorship and therefore no question of giving guidelines, it has been our experience in the past that whenever such exclusive situations arise, somehow or the other the media is being made use of—maybe by persons who are directly concerned. The Minister himself has said that this has been the allegation in regard to the Gauhati situation also.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: The other way round also.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: That is what he said; I am not concerned whether it is one side or the other. In view of this experience, is the Minister considering some method of bringing about a more objective use of the media which has to be done at the lower level and specially what we saw during the Janata regime, how it was misused, whether he has taken any steps that this misuse and distortion at different levels are stopped and that some guidelines are issued in this manner which will not be in the way of censorship so much as to see that an objective picture is presented?

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Sir, the Government is of the view that as far as the Government is concerned, we should not in any manner interfere

with the freedom of the Press and no guidelines should be issued by the Government whatsoever. This is a matter entirely for the Press.

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: I was talking of the All India Radio and TV which are under his control, not the Press.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: He said the whole media. If you want...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Freedom of speech, all along the line.

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Therefore, as far as the Press is concerned, section 13(2) (b) of the Press Council Act already provides this. It says:

"To build up a code of conduct for newspapers, news-agencies and journalists in accordance with the high professional standards..."

So this code the Press Council has to evolve. We hope it will do so and we will try to take up the matter. As far as the All India Radio and TV are concerned, I have already said that we would like to take an objective view. If a distortion took place in Assam, I said it is pertinent; it was the other way round. It was at the local level. Therefore, our guidelines have already been there that the All India Radio and TV must give an objective, fair and balanced picture on facts... (Interruptions)

DR. RAFIQ ZAKARIA: Sir, I am satisfied. This is a general statement, I asked specifically...

SHRI V. P. SATHE: I have already said, Sir, that I will look into it. My office is going to see that the wrong is corrected.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Last question; Dr. Bhai Mahavir.

DR. BHAI MAHAVIR: In view of the very unequivocal assurance he has given about the independence of

the media, will he kindly tell us why he thought it advisable to drop the idea of giving autonomy to the All India Radio and TV? And in this context, has he noticed the Press Commission he has formed, whether the compliments that have been paid to him are considered flattering by him or he will give second thought as to the way in which he is going to fulfil his assurance of keeping the Press free?

SHRI V. P. SATHE: Sir, as far as the question of autonomy is concerned, I have already stated before that we do not think that the Government will be fulfilling its objective of serving the people mainly in the rural areas by giving autonomy to organisations like the AIR and the TV. As far as the Press Commission's personnel is concerned, I have seen the newspaper reports. Sir, as the freedom of the press is there, the newspapers are free to give their comments. As far as I think, Sir, the personnel of the Press Commission which we have nominated are very well-informed and knowledgeable people in their respective fields. (*Interruption*) This is the freedom. You may differ, some people may differ. So, if they differ, I defend their right to differ with us.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Conference of the Ministers in charge of
power

"304. SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA:
SHRI S. KUMARAN: SHRI
BHUPESH GUPTA:

Will the Minister of ENERGY AND
COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether a conference of the Ministers
in charge of power from 483 RS—2.

various States was convened by the Union Government to discuss the power crisis and remedial measures;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) whether the question of taking over the sick power plants run by the State Electricity Boards was also discussed at the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF ENERGY AND
COAL (SHRI A. B. A. GHANI KHAN
CHAUDHURI): (a) to (c) A statement is laid
on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main objective in holding the Conference of Power Ministers of States was to give a new direction to State Electricity Boards to reorganise their operations on modern management concepts. In the Conference, consensus was arrived at to introduce certain new ideas such as setting up of betterment-cum-renewal teams for each of the Power stations, comprehensive implementation schedules and cash flow projection for each of the new or 'ongoing' projects, development of a long term power plan for the country, professionalisation of various disciplines, and adoption of commercial approach in financial management and dealings with suppliers etc.

A general consensus was also reached to regulate short term and long term measures in the power sector. While short term measures envisage improvements in capacity utilisation of thermal stations and earlier commissioning of "on-going" projects, long term measures cover mainly planning for additional power generating capacity.

(c) While this was not a formal item for discussion on the agenda for the meeting, references were made on the subject during the course of proceedings. -