

SHRI CHARAN SINGH; I have no information about the Press reports to which the hon. Member refers but it is a fact that a group of Mizo hostiles, which had been trained in a foreign country, did enter India, did cross the border into India, some time in October or November of 1976. Whether any such group has entered India in 1977 is not known to the Government; I think it has not.

*344. [The questioner {Dr. V. P. Dutt} was absent. For answer Vide col.....infra].

Removal of untouchability

*345. DR. RAJAT KUMAR CHAKRABARTI:
SHRIMATI AMARJIT KAUR;
SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN
CHOUDHURY;
SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA
MENON;
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have chalked out a programme for the removal of untouchability in the country within the next five years; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI S. D. PATIL): (a) and (b) Government have undertaken various measures for the eradication of untouchability. The Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 as comprehensively amended in 1976 is the legal measure to deal with the offences of untouchability. The State Governments have been requested to enforce the provisions of the Act vigorously on a priority basis. Several State Governments have set up separate machinery in the form of Committees or Cells to watch over the working of the Act. Services

fThe question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr. Rajat Kumar Chakrabarty.

of mass-media machinery and voluntary organisations are being utilised for propaganda and publicity against the practice of untouchability in order to bring about a change in social attitudes amongst all sections of society.

An Inter-Ministrial Working Group has been constituted in the Ministry of Home Affairs to go into the problem of untouchability in all its dimensions and suggest a framework of action.

SHRI K. K. MADHAVAN; Sir, may I know from the hon. Minister _____

MR. CHAIRMAN; Dr. Chakrabarti has to put two supplementaries. Wait till your turn comes.

DR. RAJAT KUMAR CHAKRABARTI: Sir, the practice of untouchability is a social evil, which cannot be eradicated simply by passing a law. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government and all the political parties will give a directive to all the Ministers, M.Ps. and M.L. As. to the effect that that whenever they go tour they should make it a point to take at least one meal in the house of an untouchable in order to show that they are not practising untouchability and are instead opposing it. Sir, I am trying to make my point very clear. Will all the political leaders and political parties give a directive to their Ministers, M.Ps, and M.L.As, that whenever they go out to any villages they should take at least one meal in the houses of these untouchables so that others may also know that it is a social evil and it should not be practised?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is a very good suggestion.

SHRI S. D. PATIL: Sir, it a very laudable suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next supplementary.

DR. RAJAT KUMAR CHAKRABARTI: Sir, my next supplementary

is this. I understand that in all the the schools, especially at the primary level, there is a prayer before the schools starts. I would suggest that in this prayer this one sentence should be recited every day, namely, "All men are equal and they are the sons of God", so that there is no question of untouchability and, secondly, the term 'untouchability' should be removed from dictionaries.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is another good suggestion,

SHRI S. D. PATIL: Sir, this is also a constructive and laudable suggestion.

SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN CHOUDHURY: Sir, the Minister in his statement has said that they have to adopt a certain programme for removal of untouchability but both the Home Minister and the Prime Minister in their public statements have said that they are going to eradicate untouchability within a span of five years and I want to know how they have fixed this time of five years. How will they be able to eradicate untouchability within 5 years with this programme even if it is implemented?

SHRI S. D. PATIL: Actual plan for the eradication of untouchability within five years will be adumbrated and placed before the House.

SHRIMATI LEELA DAMODARA MENON: If the Government is sincere about removing untouchability, is it also equally sincere in removing the big gap and also in trying to prevent indictments against the Harijans? May I ask about the 17 persons who were arrested a few days ago, including an hon. Member of our House, as to why are they not released? Why have they been taken as criminals? Is it the way that untouchability is removed in this country?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI): I do not understand what the hon. Member means by saying that 17 persons were arrested. They were arrested for

breaking the law. What has that to do with untouchability? I do not understand

(Interruption).

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: That is the achievement of the Government.

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: If that is what you consider as an achievement of the Government, you are welcome to do so. The question of untouchability has been with us for many many years now. We have said that we are determined to remove it within five years. It was asked, what the plan is. The plan is that all steps are being taken to see that there is no harassment of them. Officers have been directed to see that this does not happen within their jurisdiction and if anywhere it happens, action will be taken against the officers. On the other side, all national parties should also join together and meet the situation arising out of their social disability wherever it is and see that they are encouraged also to fight it and others are discouraged from doing anything, which is unjust. It is the only plan which can be effective and I hope it will materialise within five years.

SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI: There is no denying the fact and even from all accounts, from the newspapers, we do hear that this is an acute problem and atrocities on the Harijans are really on the increase. Even though there have been atrocities all along, they are on the increase now. The Minister has spelt out a programme which is not new of the present Government and which has been there because laws have been legislated long ago for the removal of untouchability. The Janata Government has said that in ten years, unemployment will be removed and in five years illiteracy will be removed and the hon. Prime Minister says that in five years untouchability will be removed. These are very big and laudable announcements. But, Sir, the legislation came almost thirty years ago against untouchability and the experience has

been that these rules and regulations which the Minister has spelt out are not implemented even though you have sent circulars to the officers or you ask for public co-operation. That is not enough. I want certain concrete steps to be spelt out by the Government in view of this acute problem and harassment to millions of people in the country. What are the concrete steps that will be taken to resolve this problem in five years? The period is so short compared to the enormity of the problem.

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: It is very difficult to satisfy the hon. Member. That is all that I can say. When she says that this was there for 30 years, it was not so. I had proposed to Jawaharlalji and afterwards in 1967 to the then Prime Minister and again in 1969 when Gandhiji's Centenary was observed, that this directive should be issued to all officers, but it was not done. Now we have done it and the hon. Member will see the results soon. The problem is acute, no doubt. But it is not true that the incidents are increasing. They only appear to increase to friends like the hon. Member. . . . (Interruptions) .

SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS No, no,

SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI: That is how they are saying. Making a row like this shows a guilty conscience. But it is a fact that the incidents were far larger before than now. But we do not want to feel that the incidents are less. I had said earlier and I say it now that as long as there is one incident, we will consider that the problem is there and we have to remove it. That is how we have applied urgency to it. My hon. friends never did it before. (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will you please resume your seats?

SHRI K. K. MADHAVAN; Sir, I would like to ask a supplementary.

MR. CHAIRMAN; No.

SHRI K. K. MADHAVAN: Why not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is not your question. It is the discretion of the Chair. Question Hour is over now.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Publication of Science Journals by CSIR

*336. SHRI YOGENDRA SHARMA:
SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA:
SHRI JAGJIT SINGH
ANAND ;

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has decided to bring out its science journals in three languages under the administrative control of its Publication and Information Directorate;

(b) whether it is a fact that a series of irregularities are alleged to have been committed by the Chief Editor of the Hindi science journal "Vigyan Pragati".

(c) whether any enquiry has been conducted into these irregularities; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof and what action Government are taking in this regard?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI R. DESAI): (a) No, Sir. A proposal to transfer the administrative control of the Indian Languages Unit, which publishes Vigyan Pragati, to the Publication & Information Directorate of the CSIR, is, however, under consideration.

(b) A complaint containing certain irregularities alleged to have been committed by the Chief Editor of the Hindi Science Journal "Vigyan Pragati" was received in the CSIR.