

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Reported sale of precious Nehru letter to an American Collector

SHRI SYED NIZAM-UD-DIN (Jammu and Kashmir) : Sir, I beg to call the attention of the Minister of Commerce to the reported sale of a priceless Nehru letter sent for International Exhibition, to an American collector.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA) : Sir, . . . Some Hon'ble Members have drawn Government's attention to "the reported sale of a priceless Nehru letter sent for International Exhibition, to an American Collector.

A letter written by Gandhiji to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru in October 1935 along with the photostat copies and some other exhibits were borrowed from the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for display at India Pavilion at Expo '67, Montreal. While the other exhibits were received back in India after the closure of the Expo, the original letter of Gandhiji was not received back. An enquiry about the loss of the letter has been entrusted to Central Bureau of Investigation.

SHRI SYED NIZAM-UD-DIN : Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, the statement of the Minister has made nothing clear than the Press report which appeared in the Hindustan Times of 16th December, 1974. Perhaps the hon. Minister is ill-informed about the whole affair. Now, basically, Sir, the allegation is that when it came to the knowledge of the officers that such and such letter is not available and it has not come back home, they wanted to hush up the whole matter, but, unfortunately for these people, some other Ministries were involved in the matter. They could not hush up the matter because some other Ministries were after it. So I would like to know from the hon. Minister if it is a fact that in the beginning

the matter was just being hushed up by some people? Will he please look into the matter?

Secondly, this inquiry has been going on for the last so many months, as I understand. By now what is the result of the inquiry? The hon. Minister has not informed the House about this. What result have they arrived at up to this time?

Thirdly, Sir, this is a fact that at the time of packing the letter was available here. It is only at the back journey that the letter has been misplaced. Besides this, as reported in the Press, the Nehru Exhibition which has been taken round the world has incurred a loss of one lakh rupees in demurrage and damages to the exhibits because of bad training and poor management. It is also reported that the letter has been sold for Rs. 6 lakhs. What is the information of the hon. Minister with regard to this matter and what action the Government propose to take against those officers who will be held responsible for this sale as a result of their connivance and complicity?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, the hon'ble Member has enquired about the possibility of the letter in question being sold. Whether it has been sold or not is not known. He himself in his question also has used such expression as "misplaced" or "disappeared" He himself is not also definite. So we are also not definite whether it has been sold. So the question of the price being Rs. 6 lakhs or otherwise does not arise at this stage unless we can be sure of what has happened to the letter. Our enquiry reveals some minimum facts, namely, that the letter was packed for despatch to India from Montreal and the package was sealed, that the seal was there when this package was received at this end. So, Sir it is really a very difficult position, the officers who were in charge of despatching things properly packed and sealed it. Those who have received at this end, the Customs people, certify that it has been received at this end and the seals were intact. But on opening the package it was found that the letter in question was not there. So, Sir, the question of sale does not arise at this stage. it requires further investigation, the depart-

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 mental enquiry that we have held reveals this fact that it was despatched, that the seal was in tact but it was not received at this end. So what happened to this letter is now a matter of investigation.

Sir, it is true that the matter has not been followed up, perhaps, as expeditiously as might be. Now we have decided that this matter deserves more thorough investigation and that is why it has been handed over to the C.B.I. If the C.B.I. investigation reveals that some officers are responsible for the disappearance or selling or whatever it might be of this very priceless letter, then certainly they will be properly dealt with

श्री जगदीश प्रसाद माथुर (राजस्थान) : जैसा कि आपने कहा कि इस मामले के बारे में विभागीय जांच की जा रही है, लेकिन मेरा कहना यह है कि जब यह मामला समाचारपत्रों में छपा चुका था और इस सदन में आ चुका था, तब आपने इसको सी. बी. आई. को सौंप दिया। मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि इस प्रकार जो बहुत अच्छी कलाकृतियाँ देश के अन्दर हैं, चाहे वे पत्रों के रूप में हों या मूर्तियों के रूप में हों, इस तरह की चीजों को चुरा कर इस देश से बाहर स्मगल किया जा रहा है विशेष तौर पर अमेरिका को। आप कार्गो मिनिस्टर के नाते, क्या अमेरिका की गवर्नमेंट से यानी गवर्नमेंट टू गवर्नमेंट लेबल पर, इस तरह की बात करना चाहेंगे या नहीं कि हिन्दुस्तान में जो इस तरह के प्रेसंस डॉक्यूमेंट्स हैं कलाकृतियाँ हैं, मूर्तियाँ हैं, विशेष तौर पर जिनके अच्छे दाम अमेरिका में मिल जाते हैं, जिन्हें अमेरिका के प्राइवेट सिटीजन्स खरीद लेते हैं, गवर्नमेंट नहीं खरीदती है बल्कि वहाँ के प्राइवेट सिटीजन्स खरीदते हैं, इस तरह की चीजों को खरीदना अपने यहां अपराध है, तो क्या सरकार इस संबंध में अमेरिका की सरकार से बातचीत करेगी कि इस तरह की चीजों को वहाँ के जो नागरिक खरीदेंगे वे भी इस तरह की खरीददारी को अपराध मानेंगे? जिस तरह से नटराज की मूर्ति थी जिसकी कीमत करोड़ों रुपये में अंकी गई थी, उसको वापस लेने के लिए गवर्नमेंट ने एक मुकदमा भी दायर किया हुआ है और मैं

यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि वह मुकदमा किस स्टेज पर इस समय है? क्या इस प्रकार से गवर्नमेंट, जिस तरह से नटराज की मूर्ति के सम्बन्ध में उसने कार्यवाही की है, इसी तरह जो अन्य कलाकृतियाँ हैं, पत्र हैं उनको बूढ़ निकालने के लिए वहाँ की सरकार तथा इन्टरपोल की सहायता लेगी तथा इस प्रकार के जो अपराध होते हैं उनको वहाँ की सरकार से एक आफ़िन्स करार देने के लिए कहेंगी।

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA :
 The hon'ble Member has raised questions at a different level and in a very general way, if I may say so.

He said that lot of our precious goods and antiques are being smuggled out of our country and sent abroad particularly to the USA. This information appeared in the press and we had the privilege of discussing it on the floor of the House. It is a known thing. In the case of Natraja Murthy, Government is in active touch with the concerned authorities to get it back. But now we are concerned with a very limited subject, namely, the missing letter to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I have submitted that the letter was sent back, but it was not received at this end. That it has been sold to somebody is a matter of conjecture. Unless the investigation confirms that it has been sold to the USA and unless the owner is identified, the question of making efforts to get it back from them does not arise. When the investigation reveals that this letter has been sent or sold to some people either in the USA or elsewhere, certainly we will make every possible effort to get it back.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Niren Ghosh.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH (West Bengal) :
 I will speak after Shri Bhupesh Gupta speaks.

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI (Uttar Pradesh) : Will the Minister oblige the House by reading the letter? We want to know what was the content of the letter . . .

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA (West Bengal) : I raised the matter in this House . .

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI : This is an important matter. We want to know what is the content of the letter.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I raised the matter on the 11th of September this year. But I was given to understand some action would follow and we are told now that the matter is still under investigation. First of all, I should like to know why so much time should be taken for investigating a case of this kind and whether investigation is directed at the other end in foreign countries and in what manner and who are responsible for the investigation in order to find out whether there is any truth in the allegation or the charge that the letter has been sold abroad to the United States of America or may be somewhere else, I am not concerned with it. What has been stated is rather interesting that it was despatched in safety and at the receiving end the seal was in tact, but the letter was missing. Normally, what would you conclude ? If you receive a sealed packet in which certain thing was supposed to be sent and if that thing is not in the packet, the presumption is that either the seal has been tampered with and it has been taken out or at the despatch and from where it has been sent, it has not been put in. Has there been any investigation in order to satisfy the Government that there has not been tampering with the sealed cover or sealed packet or sealed parcel ? If that is not so, should there not be the presumption which has some meaning in law that this letter has not been put in the parcel ? If it is so, who was responsible for the despatch—which officers ? Who actually put the seal ? Had the Government found out the names ? We should like to know them. This does not require so much of investigation. A note from here to the other end will get the information as to who was responsible for making the parcel and who owns up that he had put the letter in it. I should like to know the names. The presumption is that in the sealed parcel, this letter was not put should be the starting point of

investigation. It should not be done in a namby-pamby way. The starting point of investigation should be that the letter has not been put in the parcel and a false claim has been made that the letter has been put. Is the investigation proceeding on this basis ?

Sir, I made it very clear that day that it was Mr. K. S. Luthra, Deputy Secretary in the Exhibition Division of the Ministry of Commerce who did this. He took this thing and did this kind of a thing. Now it is well-known. I should like to know whether, pending an inquiry, this gentleman has been suspended or removed. Where is he now ? Sir, it is a very serious matter. Suppose I send from here something, I send something abroad from here and then it is not found there. Then, it means that something is missing and you suspect. Well, there is a suspicion at least. Then, should I continue in the same place ? I do not know, therefore, why he should be left like that. Why has Mr. Luthra, Mr. K. S. Luthra, Deputy Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, not been removed or suspended, if not removed ? Give an explanation. It was his duty to bring back the letter which he took. He has failed to do so, for whatever reasons it may be. That itself should be strong enough a charge to make him responsible for it and at least for dereliction of duty he should have been removed from there.

Now, Sir, his continuance in the Ministry is again prejudicial to a fair and proper inquiry. The CBI will not be able to function in India in this case. The CBI has to get hold of the documents and such other things. How can it be done in this Ministry or by the Ministry which still harbours the same gentleman against whom there are allegations ? Sir, there are allegations against him that he has made a lot of money by selling curios and other things. Not only that, Sir. There is another thing. I would not like to name the person. I would like to know why a condemned Information Officer was brought to the Commerce Ministry. Now, Sir, to keep him in that Section, a Deputy

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.]

Chief Executive Director's post has been created in the defunct International Trade Fair ! Why ? Why this gentleman, who was brought in from somewhere, was not reverted to his original position ? Why has he been ordered to be accommodated in the defunct India International Fair ? Why has the post been created ? Who is responsible for it ? How could it happen ? Sir, there is an Exhibition Directorate and there is a regular Directorate in the Commerce Ministry and they can look after the residual work of the Fair. So, why has this post been created ? Why this new officer ? An officer on deputation has been kept here. If he is not here today, we should like to know where he has gone. Sir, it would seem that the matter is serious, too serious.

Now, Sir, there is a Special Assistant. Again, I would not like to name the person. Many allegations are against him. Sir, one chit has been passed on to me now. However, I am not owning it up in the sense that I am completely convinced. But I would like to read it out. Have you received any such information ? I will just read out the relevant portion:

"Recently, he got his room in Udyog Bhavan renovated and made it a sort of hotel room with bathroom attached, where he brings . . ."

Sir, I do not like to mention what—

" . . . to his room. Then, on the side-walls under the planks, currency notes are kept. One should visit incognito and see this room".

Sir, this is it. I am not saying this. But it is here. Have you received such allegations against that officer ? I am not saying whether this is right or wrong. If it is right, has there been any investigation ? When you have been advised by somebody to visit that room incognito and find out these things, have you done that ? Has there been any such investigation ? Sir, I am told that this officer is building a very big house in New Delhi also. That

may also be there . . . (*Time bell rings*) . . . I am just finishing, Sir. Now, Sir, these are some of the facts. Now, about the Luthra affairs: This is a clear thing. Are you aware of the allegations against him?

"Shri K. S. Luthra sold the original letters of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Tagore in the USA and also some curios and amassed money and if a raid is organised in his house, the truth can be found out. Why is he being kept and protected ?"

Now, if the Government had any information, when did they get it ? Have you asked the CBI to investigate into this ? Sir, this is a very important matter. The CBI should raid his house. Sir we know that for opposing the issue of a licence to Mohan Meakin Breweries, an officer's house was raided on the alleged ground that he had passed on something and it was found that he was not at all guilty. This was discussed in this House and an IAS officer's house was raided on false grounds in order to persecute and penalise him—and he is still under penalty—because he did not sanction the illegal expansion of M/s. Mohan Meakin Breweries. His house was searched. The CBI raided his house. Mr. C. Subramaniam, later on, exonerated him. There was nothing against him. Why should not this be done in this case ? I should like to know whether any instruction was given at any time to the effect that the residence of Mr. Luthra should be searched by the CBI ?

1 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, you will have to wind up now.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I am winding up. Many things are being wound up. The . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: At the moment you must wind up.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: The Nehru Museum will be wound up by the pilferages of this kind. Before every thing is wound up, let us say a few things.

Therefore, the Government should tell us about the nature of the investigation, the circumstances of the case. The material that has passed on to the Government and to Members of Parliament would indicate that the person is guilty, as there is a strong suspicion that he is guilty and that he should not be in this position. He should be suspended, and certainly removed from that position, when the investigation is on. Nothing of the kind has been done. And, therefore, the Government is open to the charge of protecting an official. When this Nehru letter is missing, still some officers get away. But when Mohan Meakin Breweries case is there, officers are persecuted. This is the double standard that you have allowed. Well, I should like to know why the CBI has been advised to deal with this gentleman so softly and kindly, when in the interest of Mohan Meakin Breweries the CBI was commissioned against certain officers ?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, I shall ask the Minister to reply.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, I have already stated that some delay has taken place. It is not that no investigation has been made. Some investigations have been made, and it is on the basis of these investigations that we have derived the information that I am placing before the House.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : What is that ?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : The information is that this exhibit was packed from Montreal under the supervision of the officer in charge of technical cell. The officer in charge of the technical cell at Expo' 67 at Montreal has testified that the exhibits were packed under his supervision. Now, the Customs surveyors have said : "The case, in which the exhibits were packed, was outwardly intact in all respect, with seals being perfectly in order. The caption box was opened in our presence . . ."

So there is an anomaly and, as the hon. Member has rightly pointed out, there is room for doubt that something has taken place somewhere— at this end or at the other end or in between. These are the three possible hypothesis.

AN HON. MEMBER : How can it be?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : I do not like to comment on this because the matter is being looked into. The question is that these matter are being looked into. The question is that these doubts have to be removed. The informations which have been revealed by the investigation are there, but are not good enough to satisfy ourselves. That is why we have entrusted the matter to the CBI for further investigations.

Sir, he has mentioned the name of a particular officer. Our preliminary investigations suggest that some negligence has taken place in respect of two or three officers. But so far as this officer is concerned, nothing unfavourable has come to light as yet. I do not like to pre-judge the issue, whether in respect of those officers or this officer. I can only repeat what I said earlier that in such an important thing, whosoever is found negligent in handling this, however highly placed he may be, will be punished. I can say that we are not taking a very lenient attitude. Unless, Sir, . . .

SHRI RABI RAY (Orissa) : How long will it take ?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : We are trying to expedite it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : On a point of order. I am not questioning your way of handling it at the moment. Sir, the hon. Minister himself has stated that some negligence has taken place and he has some officers in mind.

In the circumstances of the case, has this officer been removed ? I am putting it very mildly. He should be suspended.

[Shri Bhupesh Gupta.]

He should be removed from the position which he is holding. His place is not in the Commerce Ministry. I want to know whether that step has been taken. You remove that officer from one Department to another without prejudging the case which may be pending against him.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He has already said about that. He said that nothing had been done against that officer as yet.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: Is it his contention that there is nothing at all ?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : He did not say that. He says that he does not want to prejudice.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA: I would ask you not to be a lawyer for him. It is not a question of prejudging. I am not saying that somebody has been guilty. All that I ask him is whether there are reasonable grounds for suspicion against him.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : I have not much to add. I would like to say that I have received no allegation about this officer in this respect. I assure the House that if some of the officers in charge of different sections have to be shifted for proper and smooth investigation, that will be done.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : He said that the case was packed under proper supervision at Montreal. I would like to know who is that officer at the other end. Then he said that some officers had been found wanting. Who are those officers? Give us their names. Since you said that some officers have been found doing *gar bar*, what are the names of those officers? Shri Bhupesh Gupta made a specific allegation about the room of Luthra in Udyog Bhavan. I would like to know whether that room would be searched in order to investigate whether the allegation made by Shri Bhupesh Gupta is correct or not. Then, have we

not got a copy of this letter that has been lost? If there is no copy and we cannot regain that letter, then that letter is lost to India. Is there any microfilm available or not? He wanted to know the contents of the letter and why it is called priceless. There must be some reason for that. Our difficulty is that some writings of Maulana Azad are to be published very soon '25 years after'. That time is approaching. If documents can disappear in this way, then the entire thing which has been kept secret from public so long, that is, Maulana Azad's writings about India's struggle for freedom, may disappear and we may not know about it.

SHRI RABI RAY : That is called "India Wins Freedom", Second Part.

SHRI NIREN GHOSH : So, our suspicion has been roused in a big way. Since the Commerce Ministry is concerned with so many things and big business magnates in India and outside the country, there is a suspicion of many shady transactions taking place either with the knowledge of the Minister or without the knowledge of the Minister. That is another thing. That is why I said that he should also give a date so that in the next session he may place the full facts of the CBI Report before the House if the letter concerned is supposed to be priceless. Every letter is not priceless. This letter is a priceless one.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, the hon. Member has asked about the name of the Officer in charge of the Technical Cell, who testified that the exhibits were packed under his supervision. His name is Shri Samanth. Now, Sir, as I have said before, our internal departmental inquiry has revealed that on the part of some officers, some negligence has taken place. The names of those officers are: Shri Samanth, Shri Rathi and Shri Ganesh. Some negligence does not mean necessarily gross negligence. But some negligence has taken place on their part. But so far as Mr. Luthra is concerned, in this respect, Sir, his negligence has not been

established by the departmental inquiry that we have carried out. Sir, I have not seen Mr. Luthra's room. Generally, I do not have any occasion or any reason to see the rooms of my officers. But, Sir, if the investigating authority feel that the officers' rooms or files or whatever they need in the course of the investigation have to be looked into, I am sure, they will look into them.

Regarding the third question whether a photostat copy of that letter is available, yes, Sir, it is available though I have not had the privilege to look into the photostat copy. But the letter written by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Mahatma Gandhi in itself is a very important letter. Whether it is priceless or not, it is a matter of opinion.

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI : Sir, my only question is, what are the contents of that letter. Because the letter has received importance now, everybody will be anxious to know what the contents of the letter were. Sir, the fact that the letter has been stolen means that there is something very important in that letter. And I request the hon. Minister to just lay copy of that letter on the Table of the House. I know that for every letter that has been presented to the Museum, always a photostat copy is taken, and that is also made public. So, I don't think there would be any objection to its laying on the Table of the House. Sir, the hon. Minister has just mentioned that the envelope was sealed and that the seal was quite intact. But after the seal was opened, it was found that there were no contents, and the letter was missing. Was it immediately reported? Was immediate action taken? Or, was it kept secret for some time? Sir, I would like to know that at the moment it was found that the envelope did not contain that letter, whether action was taken immediately. If any action was taken, what was it? Sir, there may be a similar case with regard to other letters, equally important letters, Mahatma Gandhi's letters and other letters. If the other letters were also sent, I would like to know whether they were received

back safe. That is also a problem before us. If a transaction of that nature is going on, other more important letters also might have been sold away. So I want to know whether all the letters that were sent out were received back intact. These are the only simple questions I wanted to ask. I would again request that a copy of the letter be provided.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, I have already said that there was some unfortunate delay in pursuing the matter after it was . . .

SHRI BANARSI DAS (Uttar Pradesh) : Sir, I want a clarification. The question is whether the officer immediately reported the matter then and there when the letter was missing, or after some time. I want to know this so that the responsibility can be fixed.

AN HON'BLE MEMBER : Why there was delay?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, as I said, some negligence has taken place. I have also submitted that delay has taken place. So the people responsible for this are being questioned. The matter is being investigated.

SHRI RABI RAY : When did you come to know about it?

SHRI BANARSI DAS : Did the officer who opened that envelope immediately report it?

MR. CHAIRMAN : This is what he says that there has been a delay.

SHRI BANARSI DAS : He is not categorically replying to the question.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, I am answering the questions on the basis of my knowledge. Sir, I cannot be more categorical than what my information warrants. As I said, delay has taken place. I have also said that negligence on the part of certain officers has also taken place. I have also said that further investigations have been ordered. And I

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have also said—and I repeat—the officers found guilty for neglecting their duty and loss of this letter will be punished. But the point is Mr. Tyagi asked whether a photostat copy of that is available. It is available.

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI : Could you place it on the Table?

MR. CHAIRMAN : There is no question of laying it on the Table.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Tyagiji, I will give it.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : I think the photostat copy of the letter should be put up in a vacant place in Nehru Museum saying that the letter is missing due to some officer's negligence, there has been delay on the part of the Ministry, the matter is being investigated. That thing could be put up there. This should be done. It is a good suggestion.

MR. CHAIRMAN : You give a copy to Mr. Tyagi.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : I will give it, Sir. I have already said that a copy of the letter is there since it is an important letter from Gandhiji to Jawaharlal Nehru. So I will send a copy of that, with your approval, as you have kindly directed, to Tyagiji.

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI : My other question was whether another letter was also sent outside.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Not missed.

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA : You should not have it lightly because a letter which was considered to be of sufficient national importance has gone. Therefore, a photostat copy should be stalled there stating why a photostat copy is being kept there. As I have suggested, in a sort of note you should give it out—that way in many museums it is there—that due to the incompetence of the officer, due to the negli-

gence on the part of the Ministry, the letter is lost.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मैं सरकार से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि श्री जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने जो खत गांधी जी को लिखा था और जिस खत का जवाब गांधी जी ने दिया था, क्या यह वही खत है जिसको मैं बतला रहा हूँ। पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने गांधी जी को एक चिट्ठी लिखी थी। जिसमें उन्होंने अपनी आर्थिक स्थिति का वर्णन किया था। तो गांधी जी ने उस पत्र का जवाब दिया था कि तुम मेरी यह सलाह मानना कि तुम अपने पिता के ऊपर कभी बर्दन मत बगना। क्या तुम चाहते हो कि तुम्हारे लिए कुछ पैसे की व्यवस्था कर दी जाय? अगर नहीं तो क्या तुम प्रोफेसरशिप ले सकते हो? अगर नहीं, तो क्या फिर किसी अखबार के संवाददाता बन सकते हो? इन तीनों में से किसी एक को चुन कर लो और किसी भी प्रकार अपने घर वालों के ऊपर बर्दन मत बना। मैं चाहता हूँ कि सरकार द्वारा बारे में स्पष्टीकरण करे कि पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू और गांधी जी के बीच जो पत्र-व्यवहार हुआ था और जिस खत के बारे में मैंने अभी जिक्र किया है कि पं. जवाहर लाल नेहरू ने गांधी जी को एक चिट्ठी लिखी थी और उसके जवाब में गांधी जी ने लिखा था कि तुम को संवाददाता बना दिया जाय या तुम को प्रोफेसर बना दिया जाय या तुम चाहो तो तुम्हारे लिए आर्थिक व्यवस्था कर दी जाय।

श्री उपसभापति : आप फिर वही बात दोहरा रहे हैं।

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि जिस खत के बारे में हमने अभी जिक्र किया है, क्या यह वही खत है?

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, this letter was written in 1935. As I have confessed my ignorance about the contents of the letter, I had not had the privilege to go through it. I hope, Sir, you and my friend Mr. Rajnarain will forgive me.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : When he sends that letter to Mr. Tyagi, he can read it.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मेरा एक व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है और वह संसद की मर्यादा का प्रश्न है। कल श्री गोखले जी यहाँ देर तक बैठे थे। उन्होंने लोक प्रतिनिधित्व (संशोधन) विधेयक, 1974 के संबंध में जो कुछ बोले, वह तो बोले ही। मगर आज उन्होंने सदन के बाहर एक बयान दिया है जो कि अखबारों में आया है कि बगैर डिलीमिटेशन कराये बिना भी चुनाव कराये जा सकते हैं।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : It has nothing to do with it. Mr. Rajnarain, we are discussing Calling Attention.

श्री राजनारायण : श्रीमन्, मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है कि जब सदन चल रहा है, तो क्या मंत्री जी सदन के बाहर इस तरह का बयान दे सकते हैं? मेरा कहना है कि मिनिस्टर—इस तरह का बयान नहीं दे सकता है। यह एक बहुत बड़ा सवाल है।

श्री उपसभापति : आप बैठ जाइये और इस तरह की अव्यवस्था न चलाइये।

SHRI MAQSOOD ALI KHAN (Karnataka) : Sir, I would like to know certain details about this matter . . .

SHRI MAHAVIR TYAGI : Mr. Go-khale, you have been mentioned by Rajnarain.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : He may mention anybody but we are now on the Calling Attention. Yes, Mr. Maqsood Ali Khan.

SHRI MAQSOOD ALI KHAN : It is a matter of gratification that you have said that the letter would be got back in due course after the enquiry is over. I do not know what means would be adopted but anyhow it is left to the Government. Sir, the Minister said that the Government would look to it that the letter is got back. Sir, if he has not said so, I plead that he gives an assurance to this House

that the original letter that was missing, would be got back to India. We would like to have that assurance.

My second point is, the press report says that the letter was sold for a sum of Rs. 6 lakhs and the Minister has pleaded his ignorance because the enquiry is not yet over. Sir, I would like to know for how much this letter was insured in transit. Whether it was insured separately or the whole package was insured and if the whole package was insured, for how much money it was insured?

The third thing that I would like to know from him is having known that these pilferages do occur, why is it that the Government was not vigilant in sending only the copies for this Exhibition rather than sending the original document. Sir, today, we have electronic devices, electronic instruments from which we get copies better than the photostat copies. Why is it that resort was not had to such copies only? Whether in future the Government will see to it that such documents are always kept safe in their custody and only their copies are sent for placing in Exhibitions? I would like to hear the Hon'ble Minister on these three points.

PROF. D. P. CHATTOPADHYAYA : Sir, I share the hon. Member's anxiety to get back the original letter. You will appreciate my inability to assure you and through you to the House that we will get it back, every effort will be made to get it back but it is not just possible to give that assurance.

Sir, the second question also I have already answered that we do not know at this stage whether it was sold and if sold, whether it was for Rs. 6 lakhs.

Sir, about the third point I understand that this letter was insured for Rs. 500 in transit. And his suggestion that in future when we send some such important things, more care and caution should be taken. Sir, we have already started taking more care and caution in such matters and this suggestion is well taken.