

Title: Regarding alleged tapping of telephone and threatening calls to member of parliament.

12.29 hrs.

RE: ALLEGED TAPPING OF TELEPHONE
AND THREATENING CALLS TO MEMBER
OF PARLIAMENT

[English]

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (Raiganj): Sir, I want to draw the attention of the House....(*Interruptions*) Why do you like to do this every time?...(*Interruptions*) Sir, through you I would like to draw the attention of the House to a serious matter. Besides being a Member of this House, I am to discharge a serious obligation being the Chief Whip of the principal Opposition Party, on the mandate of my Party, from time to time on different issues.

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, a few days before, to get out of the impasse, with the joint cooperation of the Treasury Benches and us, and on the reply of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition replied to the hon. Prime Minister listing out certain business items, like the stock scam, telecom scam etc. Being a Member of the House, I tried to discharge my responsibility by referring the matters relating to telecom on 17th before the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee's Report placed on the Table of the House yesterday says, "The whole process seems to lack transparency."

After the Demands for Grants were disposed of in the House, I went back to my house around 7.30 p.m....(*Interruptions*)

[Translation]

SHRI C.N. SINGH: I have to raise an important issue regarding the farmers of Uttar Pradesh.

[English]

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, after discharging my duties as a Member, I went back to my house....(*Interruptions*) It is the issue of prestige for all the members. Threatening call started coming from the corporate Mafia. I am staying alone in my house. My wife and my son are in my constituency. The threatening caller enquired, "Where is your son?" Then, I started observing the calls. The tone was harsh, and the phone was tapped.

[Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi]

At 7.00 p.m. in the evening, just like *Tehelka* episode, a man approached the gate of my house with a thick packet load, as if it is loaded with notes or something else. The CRPF *jawan* at the gate said, "Whom are you searching for?" He said, "We are searching for Shri Munsu." The CRPF *Jawan* said, "He is in Parliament." Then, he said "Okay, take it, and give it to him." The *jawan* said, "I cannot take it; you have to open it." They kept it there. Two or three persons were there. One could not be identified because it was difficult for the *jawan* to identify who were all there. A packet was kept there. I went back to my home at 7.30 p.m. The CRPF *jawan* told me, "This is a packet lying for you." It is a huge packet. I just tore the corner and I found hundreds of letters with various bogus names threatening me, cautioning me, and questioning me. I presume, Sir, there was a camera, as if something was being handed over to me. Instantly, within ten minutes, I sent it to the Speaker's house with a letter and a copy marked to the police station. Soon after that, up to 3.00 a.m. in the morning, there were not only threatening calls, but also they said that they know where my son was staying at that moment and in which village. They knew everything. That was the kind of pressure put on me.

I am not questioning or making an allegation against an individual. Sir, if the Chief Whip's telephone is being tapped in this way, if I take up an issue in the Parliament and if pressure is being mounted in such a manner, then it will be difficult not only for me, but also for any Member of Parliament to function in this House. Therefore, Sir, I instantly sent the whole folder to the hon. Speaker. If forensic testing is done, fingerprints could be found and we can come to know who came and delivered this. I gave the whole of lot to the hon. Speaker yesterday in the night. I wrote a letter to the hon. Speaker instantly, within half-an-hour. I presume, Sir, they came with a design, with a camera. The security *jawan* told me that they stayed there for two minutes, and they started smiling and said, "A lot of things are here; your MP will be happy." This is how they did it. In the letter which I wrote to the hon. Speaker, I enclosed a copy of their letter. The name could not be traced anywhere. The computer-printed name on the main and inside envelopes is similar. So, it was orchestrated and operated from one centre.

This is the fate of the Members of Parliament. Yesterday, after the tabling of the Twenty-second Report on Telecom, these things started mounting.

Sir, I do not like to waste the time of the House. I desire, the Government through their appropriate agencies

should inquire into this matter. If an MP talks on telecom and his phone is tapped, if an MP raises an issue and he is threatened by the organised Mafia, everybody knows it then it will be very difficult for the Members of Parliament to discharge their obligations here.

I think, this matter should be taken up and inquired into. I am grateful to the hon. Speaker for allowing me to raise it in the House. I have sent a copy of my letter to all the concerned.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Miryalguda): Sir, this is a matter of serious concern — I am sure, the Members of the Treasury Benches and the Government also will appreciate the gravity of the situation — if the Chief Whip of the principal Opposition, for having raised the issues relating to telecom, could be threatened in this fashion. Sir, the Government also should make a statement, and the Chair should come to the rescue and have the entire matter inquired into. At this rate, none of us can raise our voices in this House.

[Translation]

DR. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (South Delhi): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Shri Dasmunsi ji has raised a very serious issue. It creates a big hurdle in the freedom and functioning of Members of Parliament. The matter should be taken seriously. If Member belonging to any political party is threatened in this manner for having raised the issues in the House and is restrained from doing his work, I think it is a serious blow to this House and to our democracy. The Government should conduct a probe into the matter and persons involved should be punished stringently...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI CHANDRA SHEKHAR (Balija, U.P.): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue raised by Shri Priyaranjan Dasmunsi is a very serious one. Government and especially you Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, should take it with the same seriousness. Government should order an inquiry into the matter. It has happened not for the first time. A very peculiar situation has come up in the country that pressures are mounted by the big industrial houses. There was a family in 1968 which used to mount pressure and there was another family doing so in decade of 70. However, these days another industrial house has emerged which pressurise the Government, the House and even the financial institutions. Everybody feel helpless against him. Attention should be paid towards the point raised by Shri Dasmunsi because it seems that our political life, our Parliamentary conventions are being controlled by a few people. I would like to request the

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to discuss the issue with hon. Prime Minister and Home Minister. I do not know how the matter will be investigated but the issue raised by Shri Priyaranjan Dasmunsi does not pertain to him only rather it is the question of future of the nation and the question of Parliamentary convention...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV (Jhanjharpur): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Shri Chandrasekhkar and Shri Malhotraji have put forth their views on the issue raised by Shri Priyaranjan Dasmunsi. The matter should be taken up seriously. An hon. Member has a privilege to discharge his duties. Why a Member is being threatened while discharging his duties. It was happened in 1993 also. You were also a Member of the House. I was threatened for raising an issue of electing a big industrialist as M.D. by making fake members. Even my car was chased up to the gate of Parliament House. Investigations were held in this regard. I had raised the issue of privilege. Why such things are happenings? I request the Government to take the matter seriously, so that the matter could be resolved and Member are not pressurised by the industrial houses in performing their Parliamentary duties. Not only the probe should be conducted but hon. Members should have the full freedom to raise any issue. If such pressures will continue to be mounted on the Government, how the Parliamentary democracy will survive in the country. It would be impossible for the Members to discharge their duties properly.

It is not a question of the Government only but it relates to the entire House. I have heard hon'ble Chandrasekharji, he is a highly respected person. The House too, should consider it. I would like to submit that it is a very important matter for the House. My submission is that since it is not a question of any party or any individual, therefore, the entire House should sit together and discuss it. The House should take it seriously....*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAJESH RANJAN alias PAPPU YADAV (Purnea): Let us not play into the hands of capitalists. Members should not become tools in the hands of capitalists....*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Pappu Yadavji, you comment on everything.

[English]

DR. S. VENUGOPAL (Adilabad): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi is a very senior Member

of this House. He has explained how he received threats up to 3 a.m. last night, and how he had requested the Prime Minister and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs...*(Interruptions)*

Sir, after receiving the packet, the hon. Member has handed over it to the hon. Speaker.

We request the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and also the hon. Prime Minister to kindly immediately intervene in the matter and enquire about it. The full protection should be given to the hon. Member, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi, to his son and all the other family members. It is a very serious issue and we all the Members associate with it.

SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM (Thanjavur): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the issue raised by the hon. Member, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi is a very serious and sensitive one. The person behind the scene should be brought to book. The House should give full protection to Shri Das Munsi and his family members.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Hon. Minister, before you react, I would say that you must have seen the sentiments expressed by the House. Such incidents will be a direct threat to the fabric of our democracy. The threat given to his son and also the entire family may kindly be taken serious note of. Whatever appropriate inquiry the Government intends to do, that can be done. But I would like the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to react to this.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi has raised this issue today though yesterday night itself. He had written a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker about the incident immediately after the incident took place. Late in the night he despatched a copy of that letter to me also so that I could take action on it. As Shri Chandasekharji has said that we raise a point in the House according to our intellect and discretion which we feel is appropriate, over which we hold discussion in the House. It is the fundamental right of a Member of Parliament to raise any issue in the House which he feels is appropriate. It may benefit some and harm others. Whatever Shri Dasmunsi said here must be based on his information. Consequently, someone has threatened him and his family. I, on my behalf, and on behalf of the

[Shri Pramod Mahajan]

Government, agree with the concern expressed by the House over this issue. If any person affected by our discussion in the House threatens us, then, an impatient and aggressive M.P., may take up the cudgels with him and if an M.P. feels scared then it may affect this freedom of thought and expression. So it is a very serious issue from the point of view of functioning of the Parliament and its freedom of speech and expression because the Constitution provides that whatever we speak here cannot be challenged in any court of law. Freedom of speech is our fundamental right bestowed upon us by our Constitution. If anyone challenges it outside the House or tries to prevent us from discharging our duty, it is condemnable and we should resist such attempts. Priya Ranjan ji has handed over all relevant documents to hon'ble Speaker. He has reported to the matter to the police also. Just now, Shri Chandrasekhar has asked him to meet the hon'ble Prime Minister and the Home Mjnister and he has suggested to provide a security cover for his family. I want to assure him that without waiting for dispatch of documents from the hon'ble Speaker, I would myself collect all the documents from him. I would myself handover the letter of Shri Dasmunsi to the hon'ble Home Minister and request him that this matter may be thoroughly investigated so that no Member of Parliament faces such sort of problem in future. We will contact the Government of West Bengal, keeping in view, the gravity of threat to his family, and take precautionary measures.