

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Members are quite understandably exercised over the reports that have appeared in the Press here based on a news-item which appeared in the United States about the attempt to locate a nuclear-fuelled power-pack on the heights of Nanda Devi. The failure in this attempt which has raised just apprehensions about the possibility of contamination of the water of our sacred river Ganga. I can assure the House that all of us share this concern of the Honourable Members as well as by the people at large at the possible hazards to our environment and people.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: What are you doing about it?

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: Will you have some patience? The House is aware that as soon as these reports came to our attention, we expressed our grave concern to the US authorities and have subsequently been in touch with them in New Delhi and in Washington. We have also made thorough enquiries at our end to obtain as complete details as possible in the last few days. In the light of international situation prevailing at that time and scientific developments which were taking place both far and near it was decided by the Government of India and the Government of United States of America at the highest level that a remote sensing device with nuclear power-pack should be installed near the highest point of Nanda Devi with the object of securing information about missile developments.

SHRI SHYAMNANDAN MISHRA: Which year?

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: It started in 1964.

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with a view to installing it at a height of 25,000 feet.

When the expedition was approaching the summit, it was overtaken by a blizzard which made further ascent impossible and facing fatal hazards to the party, they were obliged to retreat to the lower camp at a height of 23,000 ft. In the precipitate descent under very trying and exacting conditions they had to leave the power-pack securely cached. With the onslaught of winter, no attempt to locate and retrieve the device was immediately possible and had to be postponed. Another expedition was mounted in May 1968 that is in the following spring. With the intention of retrieving and installing the device, however the expedition party on arrival at the area discovered that a major avalanche had occurred around the area and the device could not be located. Every attempt was made by ground and aerial search aided by supersensitive scientific equipment to trace the power pack but these efforts proved in vain. After all such attempts the conclusion reached by our experts which included Scientists was that if the power-pack had broken, it would have been detected through these means and the likelihood was that the device got buried deep somewhere after having been smothered or carried into neighbouring crevice by the avalanche.

Searches both on the ground and by helicopters were organised every year over a wide area and continued till late 1968 but without the equipment being sighted or detected by scientific means.

Simultaneously samples of the water were taken up to 1970 and were under observation for some years but no trace of contamination was detected.

In 1967, a new device was taken to the same area and was duly installed on a neighbouring peak. This functioned normally for a while but was removed subsequently in 1968 and the equipment was returned to the United States. These operations as

I said, were apparently carried out predominantly by Indian personnel but under joint auspices and were in the know of and with the approval at the highest political level of the Government of India at that time.

After the news reports appeared a few days ago we have assembled relevant details and background of these expeditions with reference to available record and in consultation with both the US Government and the Indian Departments who were involved in this project.

We have tried to get as much technical information about the device as was possible. According to information obtained and published literature on the subject, the device comprises of a power system energised by 2 to 3 lbs. of plutonium-238 metal alloy which is contained in several doubly encapsulated leaktight capsules. The inner capsules enclosing the plutonium are made of 20 mm thick tantalum—refractory metal. The primary function of tantalum is to inhibit corrosive action of the Plutonium fuel. The outer capsules are of Nickel alloy having high strength and temperature resistant properties. The capsules are encased in a Graphite heat block which along with the thermo-electrical modules in turn is encased in a cylindrical aluminium casing which is 14 inches in diameter and 13 inches high. The total weight of the entire assembly was 38 lbs.

According to the records it is clear that at that time all aspects of safety, including the possible hazards to the operating hands and general public, were taken into account and conclusion was reached that no undue hazard existed. The tests, which have been carried out by the United States, indicate that even under extremely unlikely conditions of complete instantaneous fuel exposure to water, there is little, if any, possibility of pollution attaining unsafe limits. We understand that even in such an unlikely eventuality, a flow

of 5,000 gallons per day would itself dilute the dissolved material to safe drinking water levels. It is also believed by Scientists that the dangers of pollution on instantaneous exposure to air are also minimal. In brief they claim that the design details and protective systems are such as to ensure the maximum possible safety against splintering and consequential contamination and environmental hazards.

Notwithstanding the safety factor in the design and the results of physical search and scientific detection now that our Government's attention has been drawn to it, we are making renewed efforts to make ourselves triply sure. It is proposed to appoint a committee of scientists to study and assess the problem and with the help of all possible expert advice, to recommend such further action as may be considered necessary to safeguard against future hazards to the environment and to the people. We have taken immediate action to obtain fresh samples of the water from the upper reaches.

As I mentioned we have been in touch with the American Government. The US authorities had provided technical details, scientific cooperation and sophisticated equipment at the time when the search operations for the missing power-pack were being made in the summer of 1966.

Mr. Speaker, I can recall the critical situation with which we were faced during those days of concern, apprehension and anxiety. The authorities concerned in India at the highest level assessed the situation in terms of certain precautionary and effective devices to identify the various threats and contingencies and decided upon the measures which I have outlined above. It is clear from the records that as far as human agencies could provide against hazards they were taken into account. It is unfortunate that nature intervened to present for the future as we now find it a continuing source of apprehension and anxiety.

[Shri Morarji Desai]

However, as far as I see no cause for alarm on grounds of health or environmental hazards exists. The indirect evidence so far is that the safety precautions built into the pack may be as effective as has been claimed and if so pollution effects may not take place in the future. It is gratifying that none have been detected so far. I would also like to assure the House that to our knowledge, no other device of this kind exists on Indian soil and no such operations which carry potential national hazards would be permitted by us.

13 hrs.

श्री बलपत सिंह परस्ते : अध्यक्ष महोदय, हिन्दुस्तान की सारी जनता जिन पवित्र स्थानों पर एकत्रित होती है, चाहे वह गंगा का मुहाना हो, नर्मदा का मुहाना हो और चाहे ताप्ती का मुहाना हो, यदि इन पवित्र नदियों के उद्गम-स्थलों पर इस प्रकार के दूषित संयंत्रों को छोड़ दिया जाय, और इस प्रकार भारत के जन-मानस को शंका और बोखलाहट में डाल दिया जाये, तो इस पर सारी भारतीय जनता और इस सदन का चिन्तित होना स्वाभाविक है।

मैं आप के माध्यम से प्रधान मंत्री जी से स्पष्ट रूप से यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि क्या सी० आई० ए० के एजेंट दुनिया के सभी देशों में सक्रिय हैं? क्या भारत सरकार को सूचना होने में पूर्व अमरीकी राजदूत, राबर्ट एफ़० गोहीन, ने यह संदेश अमरीकी सरकार को भेजा है? क्या तेरह वर्ष पूर्व 1975 ईसवी में चीन के अणु-विस्फोट का पता लगाने के लिए यह प्लूटोनियम की शक्ति से चालित उपकरण नंदादेवी पहाड़ के क्षेत्र में गंगा के मुहाने पर छिपा दिया गया था? क्या यह सही है कि इस प्रकार के संयंत्र का जीवन एक से दस वर्ष तक का होता है और प्लूटोनियम के बिखर जाने से प्रदूषित जल का व्यवहार करने से कैंसर तथा अन्य रोग फैलते हैं?

अमेरिका की केन्द्रीय गुप्तचर एजेंसी बहुत बड़नाम संगठन है और जब भारतीय क्षेत्र में उसने यह बातक उपकरण रखा तो इस की जानकारी भारत की सरकार को उस समय थी या नहीं?

क्या अमरीकी केन्द्रीय गुप्तचर एजेंसी की मदद में भारतीय असाभाविक तत्वों तथा संस्थाओं का भी हाथ था?

गत सन् 1967 में गृह मंत्रालय का विशिष्ट निर्णय यह था कि अमरीकी और रूसी स्रोतों से आर्थिक सहायता ग्रहण देशों की आर्थिक सहायता की अपेक्षा अधिक बढ़े पैमाने पर मिलना लगातार जारी रहा है। गृह मंत्रालय ने सरकार के सामने यह सुझाव पेश किया था कि जिन संगठनों को सी० आई० ए० से आर्थिक सहायता मिलने का प्रमाण पत्र प्राप्त है उन पर पाबन्दी लगा दी जाये।

क्या परमाणु ऊर्जा आयोग पर गंगा तथा सहायक नदियों के जल की जांच करने तथा यह पता लगाने का भार सौंपा जायेगा कि जल दूषित हुआ है या नहीं?

श्री मोरार जी देसाई : सम्माननीय सदस्य ने मैंने, जो कहा वह गौर से सुना नहीं, ऐसा मानूँ होता है। इस में सी० आई० ए० को बीच में लाने की जरूरत नहीं है। यह हमारी गवर्नमेंट ने ही उन से पूछ के किया। हमारी गवर्नमेंट ने यहाँ से लोगों को भेजा था ट्रेनिंग के लिए वहाँ और सब ऐसा ही किया था। इसीलिए सी० आई० ए० को कहने का क्या मतलब है? दो गवर्नमेंट का मामला है। इस में कोई एस एजेंसी का मामला नहीं है। हाँ, एजेंसी तो बड़ी काम करेगी गवर्नमेंट के हुक्म के नीचे, मगर जो हुआ है वह गवर्नमेंट के हुक्म से हुआ है। इस के बीच में अनधिकृत रीति से कोई एजेंसी नहीं पड़ी है। और जो खतरा था उस के बारे में सावधानी के लिए

यह सब कुछ किया गया। ऐसी बबराहट में बर्ही करना चाहिए वा या नहीं करना चाहिए वा यह दूसरा सवाल है। मुझे करना होता तो मैं नहीं करता ऐसा मैं नहीं कह सकता। परन्तु जिन लोगों को बबराहट होती है उन को ऐसा करने में कायदा क्या है, उन्होंने सोच के किया, वह भी देश के हित में किया, ऐसा मैं मानता हूं और काफी सावधानी ली भी थी, यह भी मैंने कहा। इसीलिए मुझे इस में किसी को दोष देने का सवाल नहीं है।

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: (Tumkur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have carefully gone through the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister containing passing remarks about two Governments coming to an agreement for such a sophisticated operation of the plutonium device in the Himalayan region. I take this opportunity to say that the present Government has got an onerous responsibility to give not only a proper answer but also an explanation to the people of this country because of the manner in which it was reported in the press. Even today it has been reported in the press. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, has made a disclosure departing from the statement made by the hon. Prime Minister. I quote:

"Disclosures to be shocking.

Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee said here today that he would make a statement in the Lok Sabha tomorrow—not knowing that the hon. Prime Minister would be making a statement—in response to a Call Attention motion on the planting of a nuclear device by the CIA in the Himalayan region.

Talking to reporters, Mr. Vajpayee said that the revelations following inquiries by the Central Government in the matter would come as a 'bombshell'."

I do not know what is the "bomb-shell" which has been hidden in the mind of the Government. The hon. Prime Minister has said that there is no question of any CIA or CBI. For the last three days, we have been reading reports that the CIA has been operating in collaboration with CIB since 1960 regarding trekking system about this Himalayan expedition comprising of many people of this country. They are not only in collusion with US operation but are also completely assimilating the technical devices and other things which are experimental upon. (Interruptions)

The responsibility does not only vest on the Government but the Home Minister was also involved in this, I am not talking about the present Home Minister. There were a series of actions taken: first expedition second expedition and so on the Nanda Devi. The reasons are going to cause a great concern to this country. I do not find any of the statements in conformity with the statements or the reports he has made. Today, it is reported that there is a bomb-shell and sensational revelation of these things. Therefore, there is something that the Government of India is suppressing, because CIA is operating in this country.

(Interruptions)

The manner in which their relationship is being developed is also to be taken into consideration.

(Interruptions)

It is not only in the Ministry of External Affairs, but also in the Defence Ministry and other Governmental organisations that many officers are involved. Our scientists are also thinking on this issue. The scientists of this country are guided by the outside forces and the present Government has dismantled the operation: Therefore, a sort of situation has arisen out

[Shri K. Lakkappa]

of certain revelations; it may be from 1970. But it is a great concern to this country whether we should have an independent thinking, an understanding about the sophisticated science and technology that has been deliberated by our scientists.

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question. No, no. You have taken more than five minutes.

AN HON. MEMBER: This is a very important issue.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: This is not a small matter. This was brought to light because of the television interview programme in the "Today Show" of the National Broadcasting Company. Mr. Kohn's version, is to be printed in the May issue of "Outside" magazine, a new monthly publication from "Rolling Stone" publications. So, all these things are going to establish that certain outside forces are operating in this country. If there are no such things which he has stated—there is no alarming situation of contamination of sacred Ganga water; there is no health hazard—these are all not conclusive proof of the statement, because no scientist of our country has gone there and fully investigated the matter. And they have been operating throughout the Himalayan region....

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to your question.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: The conclusion drawn by the hon. Prime Minister is very premature. Therefore, I would like to pose this question. If according to the contradictory statement given by Mr. A. B. Vajpayee there are: sensational revelations—I do not know if there are—and if such things are investigated into by an impartial body consisting of our eminent scientists who will give their correct findings on these issues, then they will have to come out again and clarify and explain to the whole country. That responsibility is vested in them.

I would like to know what were the expedition teams involved in this at that time, the officers concerned involved in these things and the advice of the scientists on this issue. I want an impartial high level scientific body to go into all the aspects of this question, to give the ultimate analysis and conclusions and explanation to this country.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: My hon. friend seems to have taken a vow of not wanting to be satisfied by the fullest facts. That is what I see. I have given the facts in great detail. I do not know what has been kept back. And then he tries to compare it with what my colleague has said to some press. Well, I do not know what he has said to the press. Therefore, I cannot say anything about it. He will have sufficient opportunity to tell you when the time comes. What is the use of bringing in CIA. CIB? (Interruptions) When the decision is taken at the highest level of the Government in both the countries, then the agencies would certainly be agencies like those utilised by them. I do not say that they are not the agencies which worked. It is not only those two agencies, but there were scientific agencies too. I do not want to name all of them. But they were all under Government at the highest level, of the Prime Minister. There were three Prime Ministers involved, not one. It begins from 1964; it does not begin in 1966; it begins in the early part of 1964. Therefore, all the three were there, and they did it, as I said, because of the extraordinary situation that had arisen round about our country. That is why, they thought that they must have some protection from the consequences of that situation, and they tried to find out which danger's if any were involved. They took the precautions also to train the people here and not entrust the workers to other people. That is why, people were trained. Then it was taken up by our own people, kept there again. With their help, all enquiries were made; they were made continuously

for three years. He finds fault with me when I said that there are no health hazards. Would my hon. friend be happy if I frightened him to death by saying that he will be dead tomorrow by this contamination? Then if my hon. colleague has said that this will be a bombshell, what is wrong with it? I do not use this language (Interruptions). I know that I cannot compete with my friend in the matter of criticism or condemnation or things like that. I do not want to condemn anybody. But this is a serious matter, on which we ought not to be less than serious. This is a matter where the Government is concerned, where the country is concerned. It was under the instructions of Government that this was done—at the highest level. Therefore, what is the use of finding fault with other agencies? Nobody acted on his own here. It was done with the best of intentions, if I may say so; and, proper precautions were taken. But hazards are always inherent in it. Why do I say that I have nothing to do with atomic weapons and nothing to do with making of atomic weapons? It is because of these hazards. That is why I don't want to do that. That is why I don't want to take any risk. But everybody does not think like that. If it comes to that even my hon. friend will tell me that he will have atomic weapons: I am quite sure. Therefore, let us think about it rationally and properly and not doubt the bona fides of people in this manner. That is all that I say.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAHEY): Sir, if you will allow a point of personal explanation, Mr. Lakkappa referred to my statement reported in the Press. I did not tell the Press that I was to make a statement in the House because I had requested the Prime Minister to make the statement.

So far as the question of bomb-shell is concerned, I did say that the revelations are a bomb-shell because Mrs. Gandhi, who has been accusing America and the CIA and accusing us also of joining hands with America before and during the Emergency, herself joined hands with America when the situation demanded.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: The Prime Minister has stated that there are three Prime Ministers involved. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER. Shri Vaghela.

श्री शंकरसिंह जी बाबेला (कपड़वां): माननीय अध्यक्ष जी, मैं प्रधान मंत्री जी को बधाई देता हूँ कि तीन प्रधान मंत्रियों की जो बात छिपी हुई थी, उस को आज इन्होंने हमारे सामने धीरे देश के सामने खोला है। रोलिंग स्टोन प्रकाशन संस्था की ओर से 'माउन्टाइन् मेगजीन' में प्रतिष्ठित पत्रकार श्री एम. हावर्ड कोहन ने जो बातें अन्दर से बाँट दी हैं, उस के लिए इनको भी मैं बधाई देता हूँ।

ग्राप ने स्टेटमेंट में जो बातें बताई हैं, उस में यह भी कहा है कि गंगा के पानी में कोई तकलीफ नहीं होगी, लेकिन जिस देश में गंगा बहती है, जिस देश में गंगा की पवित्र जलधारा बहती है, वहाँ के लोग उस के पानी को प्रोषधि तैयार करने में धीरे दुब दुब की दूर करने के लिए इस्तेमाल में लाते हैं और जब उस पानी में प्लूटोनियम घा जाएगा, तो वह दुब दुब दूर करने वाला पानी कैसर भी कर सकता है और इस देश में कैसर पैदा करने वाले उस समय सत्ता पर बैठे हुए जो लोग थे, उन की बातों को ग्राप ने हमारे सामने पेश किया है, उस के लिए मैं ग्राप को फिर से बधाई देता हूँ। ग्राप ने अपने स्टेटमेंट में स्पष्ट रूप से कहा है :