12,15 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

INDEFINITE CLOSURE OF ALIGARH
MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER (Ghazipur): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Education and Social Welfare to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"Reported situation arising out of indefinite closure of Aligarh Muslim University."

12.16 hrs.

[Mr. Deputy-Speaker in the Chair]

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE (SHRI S. B. CHAVAN): 1. As the House is aware, the Aligarh Muslim University was closed sine die on the 31st January, 1981. According to the information received from the Vice-Chancellor of the University, the sequence of events leading to the closure is as follows.

- 2. A section of the students of the University had started agitation on the question of a Press Report of an interview given by one of the Professors of the University, which they considered "derogatory" to the University. They had demanded the suspension of the Professor pending enquiry. The Vice-Chancellor was not in a position to accept this demand.
- 3. Attempts to resolve the matter through pursuasion and dialogue did not succeed and on the other hand the student leaders intensified the agitation. The Action Committee of the students even demanded the Vice-Chancellor's resignation. On January 26, 1981, they gave a call for a total indefinite strike and complete gherao of the Vice-Chancellor and closure of all Departments and offices

of the University. This severely affected the working of the University. In an emergent meeting, the Executive Council of the University had decided to appoint a retired High Court Judge to enquire into the matter relating to the controversial publication. The student leaders. however, did not accept the decision of the Executive Council. As a result of dharna, gherao and total strike, the functioning of the University was seriously disrupted and the atmosphere became increasingly tense and surcharged.

- 4. The University had virtually been closed by the agitating students. In the face of the explosive situation, the Vice-Chancellor felt that the closure of the University was unavoidable, and accordingly closure was ordered on the morning of 31st January. The students were also asked to vacate the Hostels, which they did without any obstruction. The Police arrested 213 students from the lawns of Vice-Chancellor's house where they were on hunger strike, dharna and gherao.
- 5. Meanwhile, a One-Member Enquiry Committee comprising a retired Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court has been appointed to conduct an inquiry in connection with the Press interview of the Professor concerned. The Committee has reportedly started functioning. All the 213 students who had been arrested have The Schools of the been released. University have also been reopened and if all sections of University Community cooperate and a congenial atmosphere is created in the University, it should be possible to reopen the University, in phases, some time in the near future.

Hon'ble Members will agree with me that it should be the aim of all persons of goodwill to uphold the lofty ideals of the illustrious founder of this great University and maintain its glorious traditions. I appeal to the Members of this House to use their good offices in persuading all concerned to help the University authorities in restoration of normalcy in the Campus. I also appeal to all sections of University Community to cooperate with the authorities in their efforts to restore normalcy and have their grievances, if any, settled through normal channels.

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: I fully associate myself with the views and concern expressed by the hon. Minister of Education. It is very unfortunate that the University had to be closed.

The Muslim University at Aligarh always had a very fine tradition. It had been maintained discipline all along; and when a large number of Universities were in trouble, and were lagging behind in their educational schedule, AMU maintained discipline and schedule. Unfortunately, due to communal disturbances twice at Aligarh, the University had to face closure—of 2 to 3 months on each occasion; and now we find the University closed due to troubles which started in the University itself.

Why did this happen? We have to see the background of the trouble that started in January. We all know that Government had introduced a Bill to amend the University Act to provide a minority character to that University. There are certain elements in this country which do not like that that University should be provided this minority character. remember that during the time of Ali Yawar Jung who was the Vice-Chancellor, the students of the University were provoked by those elements; and trouble started in the University which led to the introduction of an amendment through which the minority character of the University was snatched away. I also remember that when Government was favourably considering amendment of the University Act again, to provide this minority character to that University, one Prof. Rais Ahmed issued a statement which provoked the students, and trouble started; and the move was dropped.

Now, again when Government has already introduced a Bill in the House; those elements again have taken a few steps to see that this move is also dropped. A professor of the University who is the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, gave an interview—in the Indian Express of 13th January—in which he made derogatory remarks against the students, against the management and against the concept of the University itself.

I appreciate and welcome the views, to enquire about the communal inciif anybody has them, against the minority character of the University, whether I agree with them or not. But you have no right to abuse anybody. That professor said that in every second room, goondas were living. It means that 50 per cent of the students are goondas. He was abusing the goondas. He said that the students of the Aligarh Muslim University were involved in communal incidents. Many journalists have gone to the Aligarh University, to Aligarh Town dents. Many representatives of different political parties have gone to Aligarh to enquire into the incidents. Government agencies have also enquired into the incidents. But nobody has accused the students of the University that they have in any manner participated or instigated the communal incidents at the Aligarh, Naturally, the students of the University were provoked and the trouble started.

The Vice-Chancellor, no doubt, handled the situation very well. He appointed a committee with the consent of the Executive Committee to enquire into the derogatory remarks of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences; and he tried to persuade

[Shri Zainul Basher]

the students by saying that let the report come, action will be taken. The Vice-Chancellor was also right in closing the University indefinitely. He controlled the situation very well.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You must come to the question.

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: a very serious situation. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister, the House through you and of the country as a whole to this aspect that those elements who claim that they profess progressive ideas should not be allowed to disturb the University's functioning. They have done it so for the last so many years. The Professor who had given an interview in the Indian Express was the man behind 160 strikes in the Aligarh University. During 1970-71, he organised a strike of the employees of the Medical Hospital which is run by the Medical College. Action taken against those employees who were illegally selling medicine of the That strike continued for Hospital. three months. What would have happened to the patients and the people at Aligarh you can well imagine.

Whenever, the Government tries to give the minority character to the University, this sort of incident always takes place; and the hon. Minister should beware of that The entire so-called progressive lobby of the country is issuing statements in the newspapers regarding the action taken against the Professor.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Except the speech of Mr. Zainul Basher, nothing will go on record. Please take your seats. In the Calling Attention, it is not allowed.

(Interruptions) **

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: In the House, they demand the minority character of the University and outside they organise their intellectuals and ask them to oppose it. They have demanded the minority character of

the University because they were thinking that the Government will not come forward with the amendment to this effect. They want to damage the reputation of the Government.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: What is your question? Please come to the question proper.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order, order please. Take your seats. These things will not go on record.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order, order please. Please take your seats.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please take your seats. Please sit down. These are all personal things. Please sit down.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing other than the speech of Shri Zainul Basher will go on record.

(Interruptions) **

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): You see the temper. You see, how sensitive the issue is.

(Interruptions) **

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Order, order please. When you give the demand it can be taken into consideration. Mr. Zainul Basher, Please come to the question proper. No more speech. I am not allowing you to make a speech. You must put your question.

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: I want to know whether the attention of the hon. Minister has been drawn to the Press interview of the Professor and Dean(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Put your question. Why are you making a speech?

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: I am asking the question.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Yes, yes, come to the question.

^{**}Not recorded.

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: I want to draw the attention of the Minister to the Press interview of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences published in the Indian Express of January 13th ask whether any inquiry has been conducted about the derogatory remarks made by him, or whether any report has been submitted, and if so, what action has been taken. I have learnt from the newspapers today that the University is going to re-open in phases.

AN. HON. MEMBER: I want to....
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let the Minister say....

(Interruptions)

SHRI ZAINUL BASHER: In view of the fact that there is no trouble in the University will the Minister consider that the University should be re-opened at once and not in phases?

AN HON. MEMBER: I want to....
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: No, no, you cannot. Your name is not here.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: The attention of the Government has been drawn to the statement which appeared in the Indian Express of 13th January, 1981. But as the hon. Members will appreciate, Government cannot appoint any inquiry committee and the Government on its own cannot do anything. It is for the University to take action and the Aligarh Muslim University Executive Council has appointed a one-man inquiry committee. A retired Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court has been asked to inquire into the matter and submit a report to the University. As things are, almost all the students have been released and slowly normalcy is being restored and in phases the University authorities feel that they will be able to re-open the University.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I would like to make it very clear that in the calling attention, no interruption and no side-talk or any other intervention is allowed. If it is again practised here in this House, I will say, it will

not go on record. The rules are very clear.

BAHADUR. HARIKESH SHRI (Gorakhpur): Aligarh Muslim University is a leading educational institution of our country. The entire country is. always of the opinion that this university is contributing to the building up of this country. Unfortunately, some incidents have taken place and the university has been closed down. The hon, member who spoke just before me was talking about the minority character of this university. We are the people who have been continuously demanding that this minority character should be preserved and we have been pressing for it. Let us look into the history of this institution and see who are the people who had sabotaged the minority character of the university. The people who are sitting on the treasury benches are the people who have really sabotaged the minority character of the university. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing other than what Shri Harikesh Bahadur says will go on record. Please come to the question now.

SHRI HARIKESH BAHADUR: I am only talking about relevant things. The Government of U. P. and the Government of India are always trying to get the sanctity of the universities destroyed by sending the police to the campus of the universities. It is not a question of Aligarh Muslim University alone. The sanctity of almost all the Universities has been destroyed. The students are badly beaten up. The Aligarh Muslim University was closed sine die and the students were arrested and tortured by the police. I would ask the Minister whether he is going to institute an enquiry into the episode which has taken place and the torture perpetrated on the students by the authorities and the Aligarh police. I would request the Minister to appoint an enquiry committee to look into all these things, because the students were badly tortured and this has been reported and told to us by many people. At the same time, I

[Shri Harikesh Bahadur]

would like to know whether the Minister is going to ask the university authorities to reopen the university within a week, because this closure of the university is ultimately harming the studies of the students. The students should not be made victims of the things which are happening there. The students are not interested in creating any type of trouble. This I would like to say with all the emphasis at my command. Therefore, I would request the Minister to ask the university authorities to re-open the university within a week.

These are my two points and 1 would request the Minister to give categorical replies.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: If the question is categorical, the reply also will be categorical.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: So far as the first part of the question is concerned, the reports that the Government has got both from the Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and from the U. P. Government do not corroborate what the hon. member was pleased to tell the House, namely, that the students were tortured by the police. Unless there is a Prima facie case, I do not think there is any case for instituting an enquiry.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. Nadar, you are very angry from the very beginning. You are not in your original mood.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: So far as the attitude of the Government requesting the University authorities to open the University is concerned, I can assure the House that the Government is equally interested in seeing that normalcy is restored and the students are allowed to carry on with their academic activities. The House will appreciate that the Government cannot give any directive. It is for the Vice-Chancellor and the University authorities to feel confident that conditions have been created to re-open the Univer-

sity. I feel that the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the Executive Council are having constant meetings. As soon as normalcy is restored, the University will be re-opened.

SHRI CHITTA BASU (Barasat): I appeal to all the hon. Members that I should be allowed to speak without being disturbed though some of my points may not be acceptable to some of my friends here.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let it be in the form of questions.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I just quoted your appeal. If they still want to disturb me, they are free to do so.

The Aligarh Muslim University is an institution of great distinction and has contributed immensely for the enrichment of the culture and tradition of India as a whole. But unfortunately, this premier institution in the academic field has been afflicted by many maladies. Of late, it has been passing through a crisis. It is necessary for us to understand the background of the present crisis. There are many factors which responsible for the present situation. It has got some long history behind it. . has got some long history behind it. I would like to draw the attention of the House to only a few factors which have contributed to the present situation.

Firstly, there exists a great clique which operates in diverse ways in the University administration itself. order to maintain its stranglehold over the University administration that particular clique continues to enjoy the gains out of irregularities in admissions, financies. appointments and examinations. These are the factors which are afflicting the great Aligarh Muslim University.

I think, it is necessary to know that anti-social elements have gained strength within the University campus. Unfortunately for us, for the country and for the academic world, the politics of gangster as a whole has been introduced within the campus with the patronage of some sec-

tions of the administration of the University.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: It would not be politics.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I do not say merely as a Member of a political party.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALA (Ponnani): Sir, if you can interfere, we can interfere also? That is a query. That is all.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mine is not interference but guidance.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: You can very well interfere.

MR DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I am not intervening, but I am guiding.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: This is not my allegation; this is not my observation of the situation, but I am referring to a news item published in Khair-o-Khabar, a periodical published by the Aligarh Muslim Students' Union itself, which in its 9th January issue has mentioned about the existence and operation of criminals within the University Campus. This is not my observation but the observation of a periodical run by the AMU Students' Union. They themselves agree that there are criminals and anti-social elements operating within campus.

It is also a matter of great regret that there have been intensive activities of the communal, anti-secular and obscurantist force within the campus. I would particularly mention about the Jamait-e-Islami can find out their main demands from the posters which have appeared "AMU the like campus, "Expel not Poland. Irfan Habib", "Muslims Awake". There are leaflets and posters by which they say that the Aligarh Muslim University has to be protected from the invasion of secularism. This is the way the obscurantist forces are operating within

the campus. That has to be understood.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now you can put the question, after giving the background.

. SHRI CHITTA BASU: The immediate provocation was the issue of charge-sheet and suspension of Prof. Habib. May hon, friend has referred. to the statement of Prof. Habib. which appeared in the Indian Express of 13th January 1981. I would not read the opinion of Prof. Habib, but the comment of Shri W. D. Mathur, who took the interview. In the preface he writes:

"The gherao and threat of physical harm to Dr. Irfan Habib, noted historian and Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences in Aligarh Muslim University by a group of students on December 17, last, is the talk of the University campus. By itself it is but a drop in the ocean. Other senior teachers and even the Vice-Chancellor have also been manhandled. But the new incident has certainly focussed the attention of the authorities on the problem, which according to Dr. Habib himself, is due to the presence of criminal elements in the campus and their ability to hold the administration to ransom whenever they like."

This is not the comment of Prof. Habib but that of Shri W. D. Mathur, the interviewer, which appeared in the Indian Express on the 13th January, and this is the immediate provocation. In this connection, I want to draw your attention to the editorial comment of The Statesman

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I want to draw your attention to the fact that you have to put a question. You are taking more time. We are not having a discussion. We are considering a Calling Attention. You are a very senior member.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: But you. allowed these things to be raised.

[Shri Chitta Basu]

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The Statesman in its editorial of yesterday mentions—

"Apart from the fact that the procedure followed in this exercise was questionable and the arrangement for inquiry suspect, what had emerged from the interview was no revelation and could not therefore be regarded as an attempt to "malign"

Professor Habib may have used strong language, but there was nothing to which specific objection could be taken."

I would also agree with this editorial. If you go through this statement, you will agree with me—nothing has been said which can be taken to be derogatory to the University community of Aligarh Muslim University. What has he done? He has simply narrated the situation existing within the campus and as a Professor and as an academician, he has every right to speak about academic freedom within the university compound.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I think you are very well informed. You do not require any question to be put to the Minister.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I am informed.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: That is why you are not coming to the question proper.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: I am coming to the question.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I think you know more than the Minister.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: The question now arises from the statement of the Minister—

"The schools of the University have also been re-opened and if all sections of University community—co-operate and a congenial atmosphere is created in the Univer-

sity, it should be possible to reopen the university, in phases, some time in the near future."

May I know from the hon Minis- ter whether he has in order to create the congenial atmosphere for the reopening of the University, as mentioned by him in his statement, advised the Vice-Chancellor to withdraw the charge sheet issued against Professor Irfan Habib? (Interruptions) Would he also advise the Vice-Chancellor to see that the enquiry is not proceeded with because enquiry cannot inspire confidence and cannot ensure freedom to the professors? Does the Government consider that they can do this for the creation of congenial atmosphere for the reopening of the university?

My second point is, does the Government propose to convene a tripartite conference consisting of the representatives of the Students Union, i.e. Teachers representation and the administration to see that a code of conduct is evolved for the smooth functioning of the university and creating a situation within the university so that the obscurantists, communalists and other reactionary university campus?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Sir, I would not like to comment on the observations made by the hon. Member. I will try to clarify the position so far as three or four points are concerned which were made by him.

He has referred to an editorial written by the Statesman and he seems to agree with me that it is not a question whether the Government agrees or not agrees but it is a question of university authorities taking a decision in the matter. If the unversity authorities feel what the Statesman has written is correct, they will themselves take a decision. Certainly, the Government would not like to interfere in the matter.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: You have no role to play? Use your good offices also.

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SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Unless it pleases this House to give certain powers to the Government which, according to me, are not with the Government. They are only with the university authorities.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: What reply can you give if you only say, you have no powers at all to do anything?

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: The hon. Members themselves should have considered that before tabling this Call Attention motion.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: He has asked, whether you will use your good offices or not.

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: Using good offices is a different matter altogether.

As to whether the Government would like to advise the Vice-Chancellor to withdraw the charge-sheet, I think, it is not within the powers of the Government. It is the decision of the Executive Council and I do not think that the Government can interfere in the matter nor can the Government ask the Vice-Chancellor to withdraw almost all the proceedings which have been started at the instance of the Executive Council

About having a tripartite Conference, I do not think it will serve any purpose at this stage. If the university authorities, students and teachers were to come together, I am sure, they will be able to find an amicable solution to this problem.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Baju Ban Riyan; not present.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: We also give notices alongwith other members. Our names do not come in the ballot; their names come in the ballot. But they remain absent. This is not just to us. Kindly find out some solution to that

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You discuss it in the Business Advisory Committee.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI (Bombay North West): The situation in the Aligarh Muslim University is a matter of great importance to this House. You kindly at least impresupon the Government that if they cannot restore the working of the University within 3 or 4 days they should come back to the House for a regular debate on this serious matter.

SHRI R. P. DAS (Krishnagar): Sir, under the statutes of the University, only the Executive Council can institute a disciplinary inquiry. The Vice-Chancellor cannot either institute such an inquiry or convert a fact-finding inquiry into a disciplinary inquiry. In view of this, how is it that a fact-finding inquiry which was instituted by the Executive Council on January 26, could be converted into a disciplinary by the Vice-Chancellor?

13.00 hrs.

Secondly, how is it that Mr. Khalil Ahmed, a prominent member of the Jamaat-i-Islami backed AMU Action Committee which has been agitating for the minority character of the University was chosen to make an inquiry against one who was opposed to it. Mr. Ahmed was an active participant in the meeting of AMU Action Committee at Lucknow on February 7 and 8. He spoke at length at the public meeting organised by the Action Committee where the demand of suspension of Prof. Habib was approved.

May I also know whether the hon. Minister is aware that the Jang of Pakistan, as early as on February 3, had reported that Mr. Khalil Ahmed would conduct the inquiry? How could it be?

Why have the corrupt clique in the University, which was dominating its affairs in the past, and the criminals

Indefinite Closure of Aligarh Muslim Univ. (C.A.)

[Shri R. P. Das] and anti-socials been allowed to hold the University to ransom?

I also want to know whether it is a fact that the University authorities, the Vice-Chancellor and the teachers were anxious to restore discipline and academic norms in the classroom and examination halls and also in the campus of the University: and whether it is a fact that Prof. Irfan Habib as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, sincerely wanted to implement the directive of the Vice-Chancellor and thus incurred the displeasure of a section of students who were agitating under the banner of AMU Action Committee

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: The hon. Member gave certain information about the conduct of the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences—that he was trying to implement the decision or directive given by the Vice-Chancellor. I can assure the House on the basis of the information which was given to me by the Vice-Chancellor, that discipline is definitely going to be enforced; there is no question of relaxing any discipline. Prof. Habib was trying to do certain things which according to the hon. Member seemed to be quite laudable. I would not like to enter into any kind of controversy on this issue because the Inquiry Committee is inquiring into the matter; therefore: Government would not like to give any opinion either way.

The University Executive, in their meeting of 26-1-1981, had authorised the Vice-Chancellor to appoint an Inquiry Commission, and in view of this authority, the ViceChancellor appointed Mr. Khalil Ahmed, who is the retired Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, to conduct the inquiry...

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: He has been publicly campaigning against Prof. Habib for a long time....

(Interruptions) What kind of an impartial inquiry will that be? (Interruptions)

SHRI S. B. CHAVAN: As far as my information goes, he was never a member of the Action Committee and he had never spoken in any public meeting as the hon. Member has referred to here. On the authority of the Vice-Chancellor and the local people, I am making this statement that he was never a member. he is not a member, and he never spoke in any public meeting. That is why, the Vice-Chancellor thought it fit that he should be made in charge of this inquiry, and he is proceeding with the inquiry. Unless he himself would take any other decision, the Government cannot interfere in the matter

DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The \mathbf{MR} House stands adjourned to again at 2.05 p.m.

13.05 hrs.

FEBRUARY 23, 1981

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for lunch till five minutes past Fourteen of the Clock

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at eight minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

(MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair)

LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL*

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES: (Muzaffarpur) The Finance Minister should be asked to be present when such an important issue comes up.

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FNANCE (SHRI MAGANBHAI BAROT): Hon. Finance Minister is coming. As far as the initial formality is concerned, your objecton is.....

GEORGE SHRI **FERNANDES:** We are opposed to the introduction of the Bill.

SHRI MAGANBHAI BAROT: me move.