no possibility of any collusion with any export or import houses as alleged.

The affairs of the Coffee Board are managed by a Statutory Board and its Statutory Committees, with adequate representation to all interests concerned including the two Houses of Parliament. The Board has been giving a good account of itself to the satisfaction of all interests concerned and has also taken adequate steps for proper development of the Coffee Industry in the future.

13.56 hrs.

STATEMENT UNDER DIRECTION 115

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO KERALA

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN (Idukki): On November 24, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh, Minister of State for Agriculture made the following statement in Lok Sabha:—

"We are not callous towards anybody. We will consider the case of Kerala also. But here is a situation that no request for Central assistance has been asked by the Kerala Government."

The statement by the Minister that the Government of Kerala had not requested for Central assistance was contrary to facts for the following reasons:—

"(i) The Home Minister of Kerala met the Prime Minister on 21st November at 2 PM and made a specific request for financial assistance to meet the cyclone situation in Kerala.

(ii) On the 23rd November, a wireless message was sent to and received at the Prime Minister's Secretariat at 1600 hours wherein the damages sustained in Kerala were assessed at 10 crores of rupees and a specific request was made for immediate financial assistance.

(iii) On 23-11-1977 a teleprinter message, being the exact copy of the wireless message to the Prime Minister, received at the Kerala House in New Delhi was sent to the Prime Minister's Secretariat and was delivered there at about 1800 hours. The messages above mentioned were from the Chief Minister of Kerala to the Prime Minister of India.

The Chief Minister of Kerala, with reference to the statement of the Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh, in a press conference at Trivandrum repudiated his allegation and had cited the above mentioned facts to establish that the Kerala Government had asked for financial assistance from the Centre."

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI BHANU PRATAP SINGH): Sir, my Honourable friend, Shri C. M. Stephen has said that in the course discussions in this House on the 24th November, 1977 on recent cyclonic storms in the South, I had stated that no request for Central assistance has been asked for by the Kerala Government. Shri Stephen has tried to prove that this statement was contrary to facts. In support he has indicated that on the 21st November, 1977 at 2 P.M., the then Home Minister of Kerala had met the Prime Minister and made a specific request for financial assistance. He has further stated that on the 23rd November, 1977, a specific request of immediate financial assistance was made through a wireless message said to have been received by the Prime Minister's Office on the 23rd November, 1977 and that on the same day a teleprinter message being the exact copy of the wireless message to the Prime Minister was sent to the Prime Minister's Office.

Sir,

When Shri Stephen had given a Notice of Breach of privilege on the ground that I deliberately by the aforesaid statement tried to mislead the House, my Ministry had given an elaborate clarification regarding the circumstances in which I had made that statement. It was explained at the time of making the statement that till then no message was received in my Ministry from the State Government specifically making any request for any Central assistance. I am placing the copies of the teleprinter message dated 22-11-77 from Special Secretary (Revenue Department), Kerala Govt. to Additional Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Union Government, of teleprinter message dated 23-11-1977 from the Chief Minister of Kerala to the Prime Minister as sent to us by the Office of the Special Representative of the Government of Kerala in Delhi [*Placed in library. See No. LT 1507/77.*]

Some confusion has arisen because of the fact that whereas the Chief Minister of Kerala in his wireless message dated 23-11-1977 copied on the teleprinter also, had asked for Central assistance on an *ad hoc* basis outside the Plan, on the copy of the teleprinter message sent to this Ministry by the Office of the Special Representative at Kerala House in Delhi, the last para containing demand of Central assis-

tance was replaed by a sentence stating that "no Central assistance has been made till now on the subject to this State Government." A copy of the telex message dated 23-11-1977 received from the Prime Minister's Office on 26-11-1977, i.e. after I had made the statement is also placed on the Table of the House. [*Placed in library, See No.* LT-1507/77]

The Speaker was pleased to appreciate the material difference between the copy of the Chief Minister's message to the Prime Minister received by us from the Special Representative of the Kerala Government in New Delhi and that received by the Prime Minister's office. This indicated that when I made the statement on 24-11-1977, no request for Central assistance had been brought to my notice or that of my Ministry. It still remains a mystery for me why the Special Representative of the Kerala Government in New Delhi sent two different versions of the same teleprinter message one to my Ministry and the other to the Prime Minister's Office.

Sir, on the above basis and against the background of his knowledge and experience as a judge, the Speaker on the 7th December, 1977 was pleased to decline to give his consent to the Honourable Member to raise the question involving the breach of privilege of this House under Rule 222 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha.

As regards the meeting between the Home Minister of Kerala and the Prime Minister on the 21st November, 1977 till now I have had no intimation about this meeting or what ttranspired during the discussions.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN : On the statement just now made by the hon. Minister of State, Shri Bhanu Pratap Singh, I wish to seek a clarification. This is a matter between the Government of Kerala and the Government of India. I want only one specific clarification.

There is no question of privilege involved in it. I appreciate that when the Minister made the statement, he said he did not have the knowledge. Therefore, no privilege arises at all.

The ruling is absolutely clear when it is stated so. Now, the point is that the Minister, may be, out of his limited information, informed the House and informed the country that the Kerala Government did not make a request for financial assistance to the Government of India whereas a communication from the Kerala Chief Minister to the Prime Minister is a comunication from the Kerala Governmenl to the Government of India and whereas the communication contained a special request for the financial assistance. I am facing the Government of India—not a particular ministry only. The question is: whether the Kerala Government requested our Central Government by a personal request and representation to the Prime Minister and by a wireless message to the Prime Minister and whether in this wireless message, a special request was made on the 23rd itself and whether the Home Minister of Kerala made a special request to the Prime Minister for such an assistance. After the 115 Notice, is it not the duty of the Minister concerned to check up with the Prime Minister whether the statements of facts are correct or not? I am not dealing with the Agriculture Ministry at all; I am dealing with the question as to whether the Government of Kerala requested the Government of India for financial assistance. My case is that by personal representation and by a communication the request was made at the highest level between the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister. The other ministries did not arise here at all.

SHRI BHANU PRATAP SINGH : Sir, I have made it repeatedly clear and I repeat again that a wireless message from the Chief Minister of Kerala was received by the Prime Minister. A teleprinter copy of that message was also simultaneously sent to the Prime Minister's Office and to my Ministry. The copy that was sent to my Ministry was different from what was sent to the Prime Minister's Office.

If the confusion has arisen and if any investigation is required, it should be investigated as to why the special representative of the Kerala Government sent two different versions. When I received that teleprinter message, perhaps, the Prime Minister's Office did not consider it necessary to forward the same to me because this message was transmitted to both the places.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : No, we cannot have a discussion on this under 115.

Now, personal explanation by Shri Kanwar Lal Gupta.