

The Lok Sabha met at 5 P.M.

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

RE. INFORMATION ABOUT THE HEALTH OF SHRI JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO (Mor-mugao): Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have been made a laughing stock of the whole world to-day. We must have an explanation and apology of the Prime Minister (*Interruptions*); nothing less than that... (*Interruptions*) an immediate explanation for this blunder.... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI SAUGATA ROY (Barrack-pore): Sir, we have given notices of privilege motion against the Prime Minister; he has misled the House. This is a very serious matter. This august House has been put to shame. My notice is already there with you for adjournment motion, privilege issue against the Prime Minister. This House cannot be taken for granted.... (*Interruptions*) Before the Prime Minister makes a statement, we should be permitted to ask certain clarifications because this House is sitting specifically to correct a mistake we made in the morning. Before the Prime Minister makes a statement, we should be entitled to ask certain clarifications .. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO: Nothing short than resignation of this Government will do.... (*Interruptions*). He is responsible; this Government must resign; nothing short than this will do. The Home Minister must resign..... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI A. C. GEORGE (Mukandapuram): Sir, before the Prime Minister speaks, let the whole House record its happiness and gratitude to God that JP is alive.... (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: I am on my legs. Certain adjournment motions have

been given notice of. I am admitting the adjournment motion. I shall fix up the day either tomorrow—tomorrow the only difficulty is that it is a Private Members' day—or Monday, which ever is convenient. I will look into the matter.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: I am pleading for matter of courtesy. Let the whole House record its thanks to God that JP is alive. This is the first thing. I insist on this... (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: I have told you that I am admitting the adjournment motion.

SHRI A. C. GEORGE: Before the House takes up anything, let the whole House join in conveying our thanks to God that JP is alive.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I deeply regret and apologise for the mistake that has been committed in the information that was conveyed to the House in the morning, but it was not done thoughtlessly or casually... (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: Do not record.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: If my hon. friends think that this is a matter on which the Government should resign, I am not going to oblige them. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Lakkappa, please..

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: If they do not want to hear me, what am I to do? (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: The House wants to hear the Prime Minister.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN (Idukki): Let us hear the statement. Let us hear.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: If they don't want to hear me, I cannot say

what happened, and how it happened. I should like to explain. For the last 2 days. I have been hearing, and getting reports every few hours, about the health of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan. And it was all the while reported that his condition was critical. I was told that his heart had ceased to function 42 hours ago. But again I was told that he had revived.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN: Who gave this information?

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: I am talking of the earlier information from the hospital. Now I am coming to the information which I received today. (Interruptions) Because of this, there was constant contact with me by some Members who said I must adjourn the House the moment this happened. It means everybody was expecting this to happen all the while.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No, no.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: No, use saying 'no, no'. (Interruptions) It was at 12.30. (Interruptions) that a message was received (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please; order, order.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: At about 12.30, a message was received. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please; order order.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: At about 12.30, a message was received. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please; order, order.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: At 12.30, a message was received from the Chief Secretary of Maharashtra Government that a plane should be kept ready to take him to Patna in case this happened because his condition is

critical, and that arrangements should be made for a gun-carriage to take the body via certain places, and those arrangements should be made. But he did not say that he had passed away. That is true, because I verified it. But soon after, I received information from the Director of Intelligence Branch, that he had received from his deputy in Bombay, information which was conveyed to him from the Commissioner of Police's office that Jayaprakash Narain had passed away. And when I received this information soon after the other information, I did not wait to enquire further. Somebody else came and told me the same thing. That was some official, who told me. I cannot place him just now. And then we informed. After the House had met and we spoke and the House adjourned and I went back and within 15 minutes I received the correct information that he is alive. He is on dialysis; though he is critical. Well, I was happy (Interruptions) to learn that the earlier information was wrong; but it was a mistake.

SHRI HARI VISHNU KAMATH (Hoshangabad): A blunder. (Interruptions)

AN HON. MEMBER: A Himalayan blunder.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: I agree it was a blunder, no doubt. I don't think it was Himalayan blunder. I am not prepared to accept that kind of an epithet, because these things have happened before. This is not the first time. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Why can't you hear?

(Interruptions)

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA (Tumkur): He is justifying. (Interruptions)

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: I only hope and pray that this wrong publication of the news of his death gives

[Shri Morarji Desai]

him ten years more of life; as I have always believed and that is what has happened.

(Interruptions)

This is the good which may come out of the blunder. That is what I hope. I have always believed it. This is not the first time that I am saying this.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: Punishment is not necessary?

(Interruptions)

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: That is all right. The punishment is that I am giving an unqualified apology to the House and also to the nation; it is not merely to the House. I have no hesitation in doing this, but that does not mean that I have done a crime. And if anybody says that, well, he is welcome to say that, because they are only trying to find out a fault with me and they would be very happy if I disappear.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: You have to discharge your duty.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: I cannot do that. I am also discharging my duty.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: What is all this? This is not an occasion for a banter.

SHRI MORARJI DESAI: The House was sitting at that time and if I had delayed in bringing the information here, then it would have been said I was remiss in honouring him and giving a tribute to him. That is what I would have been told as it happened once before elsewhere, not here. Therefore, this was done. I do not want to cite previous instances or anything, because there is no question of justifying a mistake which has taken place by another mistake that took place before or any instance that may have taken place before.

I have asked the Director of IB to find out from the Deputy Director

who gave him information, why he did so and then one can take action about it. I cannot do it immediately because he is in Bombay; he is already there in connection with it. This is how this mistake took place. We hope and pray that this mistake gives him ten years more of life and early recovery.

SHRI C. M. STEPHEN (Idukki):

Sir, I join the Prime Minister in the wish and desire with which he closed the statement. But there are one or two observations I would like to make. Let us remember that we are the Parliament of India. Any presentation that is made to this House is to be made after thorough investigation, full satisfaction, with all seriousness. The question is whether that has been done that way. There can be many a slip between the cup and the lip; there can be many a remissness which all of us can understand. But when the information is passed on to the Lok Sabha with respect to a person of such eminence and about whom anxiety is brimming up in the hearts of the Members of this House, one should make a hundred times sure, one should be doubly conscious before one makes that fatal announcement before the House. I was surprised when the Prime Minister said that he was told so by the IB. I would like to know from whom it is that the information about the death of person is to be confirmed by the IB and intelligence officers. I suppose you have got a Medical Ministry; I suppose you must be told by the doctor concerned that Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan had passed away. Did you ascertain from the intelligence officers where they got the information from? Somebody giving information to your local man and that man passing on the information and then making an announcement of all the places in the Parliament of India that Jayaprakash Narayan had passed away, is it a matter which should be taken lightly? I am sorry that the Prime Minister

made an observation that it was a blunder, but not such a blunder and all that. I thought that at least in this matter, he would have had the humility to tell us that he committed a Himalayan blunder. It was a Himalayan blunder because he told this House certain matter, which has brought us in complete disgrace, without ascertaining the facts in the manner he should have ascertained, in the manner official procedure compels him. He relied not on the health Ministry, he relied not on the doctors of the hospital. He did not take the precaution of ascertaining direct from the hospital, whether this thing has been done. He received information from a police officer and that was the end of the matter; as a biblical truth he comes and says that this has happened. It is an act of absolute irresponsibility, an act of absolute inefficiency. He stands a butt of ridicule in the eye of the world.

Remember, it concerns Parliament; remember it concerns Jayaprakash Narain. Remember what happens is conveyed throughout the world and the news network throughout the world passes it on. Remember, as a result of this action an impression has gone out, that the Lok Sabha is functioning in that manner, government is functioning in this manner that anything that is done or stated by the Prime Minister or stated in the Lok Sabha need not be taken on the face value. This is the implication of the thing that has happened.

I also want to say here; I have seen with respect to you; you came and made the announcement. I would appeal to you; let us be sticking to the procedure. I have examined cases in which such announcements were made; when Stalin's death took place, Jawaharlal Nehru's death took place. When these deaths are taking place, it is the Prime Minister who comes and makes the announcement. I do not know why you took it on yourself to make this announcement here, unless you were directly told, or you directly

were satisfied and unless you directly enquired about it, I do not know how it was. When Jawaharlal Nehru passed away it was Mr. Subramaniam who made the announcement. When Stalin passed away it was Jawaharlal Nehru who made the announcement. In such cases it is the Ministry, the Minister or the Prime Minister who comes to the House and makes the announcement. I am sorry that you took upon yourself to make this announcement, to make a statement before the House.

You know that Mr. Chavan and myself, we were of the view that it must be taken in a particular manner, the procedure must be conformed to, obituary references must be made the next day because the leaders of the parties should have an opportunity to say. This is the advice we gave you. If the Prime Minister in the meanwhile wanted to make a statement, I suppose you should have told the Prime Minister hold it back; we may possibly adjourn it after I make the announcement; obituary references must take place tomorrow because it is the right of the House. Suddenly in the midst of the proceedings, bypassing the advice we gave you, which you accepted, without consulting us you came in here and made this. Obituary references impromptu took place—absolutely wrong. Large number of members who wanted to participate in obituary reference could not participate. Many leaders of the parties had to be hustled up. They had to make their extempore obituary references. This is wrong. If our advice was necessary, if you took our advice, I suppose when you revised that opinion you should have consulted us, should have taken our advice also. There the Prime Minister came in with a statement, he wanted to make a statement; he made a statement. The House stood adjourned and the Parliament of India has become a laughing stock. I am sorry to say that.

I say that not with anger, not with malice. I say that not with the pur-

[Shri C. M. Stephen]

pose of making capital out of it but as a parliamentarian. Parties may come; people may come, governments may come but the institution is there. Parliament of India must not be put into a position in which it has got to bow its head in shame. Today I stand here with my head hung in shame because the House business had to be interrupted; the House had to be called back. The House is now told that in all the obituary references we made saying very repeatedly that a great man has passed away, that we have all blundered, that we were making obituary references on the living body of Jayaprakash Narain, nothing is more shameful than that, this position has come.

I am sorry that the Prime Minister chose to make his apology and then qualify it and then was saying that is that and this is that, characteristic of him. Characteristic of him, may be on the other occasions, but characteristic it cannot be with respect to the shameful incident that has taken place. I do not want to add more to that because you have agreed to admit an adjournment motion on that. More things will have to be said about it. If Government is to be run, if Parliament is to be run in this manner and if procedure need not be conformed to and ultimately this lands us in a ridiculous position, there is nothing more painful than that. This observation I have got to make.

I again appeal to the Prime Minister to be repentant about it, to be really, sorry about it and not be self-rituous about it and come out with the statement that will satisfy the frayed feelings of the members of this House. With this I record my protest on what has happened. I bow my head in shame and I am sorry that we have become a laughing stock. It is for the Prime Minister to do something to redeem the prestige of this House, the prestige of the Members, the prestige of the Government and to put us back

in the position in which we ought to be.

I join the Prime Minister in the wish that he made. We are happy that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan has not passed away. We bow to God that he is given longer life to carry on and that we have him among our midst. This is the observation that I have to make.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri A. C. George has given notice of the Motion—

‘That this House unanimously expresses its heartfelt relief to hear the progress of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan’s health and wish him long life, steady progress and full recovery.’

SHRI A. C. GEORGE (Mukandapuram): I beg to move

“That this House unanimously expresses its heartfelt relief to hear the progress of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan’s health and wish him long life, steady progress and full recovery.”

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Chavan, you wanted to say something.

SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN (Satara): It is a very embarrassing situation for the Parliament and I share the indignation that was expressed by Mr. Stephen, the leader of the Opposition, because such a situation puts not only the individual concerned in a difficult position but it is again the Parliament of the country and we have been led to a position where we were passing feelings of condolence for a living person and a person who is respected and honoured. So, I must share that indignation. I cannot help it. But at the same time I support the Motion moved by hon. member Shri A. C. George. We are very glad that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan is living amongst us and we pray that he lives decades more amongst us.

MR. SPEAKER: Before I proceed further...

(Interruptions)

SHRI B. P. MANDAL (Madhepura): With your permission I want to move an amendment for steady progress and complete recovery.

MR. SPEAKER: It is there.

I must join with you all in expressing deep regret because some accusation was made against me by the Leader of the Opposition. The normal procedure in this House has been to announce the obituary by the Speaker. In fact to-day I called the leaders of all the parties when I got a message at about 10-30 a.m. in the morning that the position of Loknayak Jayaprakash Narayan was critical, as to what steps we should take. At that time I did not expect Shri Jayaprakash Narayan to pass away or at least get the news of passing away so early as that. Then we decided, if the information comes late we will have the references to-morrow morning and the House may adjourn thereafter. When I got the information at about 1 O'Clock, when I was speaking with the Leader of the Opposition of Shri Lanka, then immediately I came to the House because I thought my duty was first to inform the House as soon as I was officially informed about the news. I could not keep back the news. Then the Prime Minister made a reference. After the Prime Minister made a reference it would have been improper for me to adjourn the House proceedings till to-morrow and ask the other references to be made the next day. It would not be proper at all.

The Leader of the Opposition is not entirely accurate in saying that on occasions it is the Leader of the House that has made the announcement to the House. On many occasions the Speaker has also made announcement to the House. That apart, I do not want to get into a controversy in the matter. I deeply regret that it has so

happened that I had to play a part in making the announcement which was found out not correct later on.

SHRI SAUGTA ROY (Barrackpore): May I ask whether it is a fact that your Secretary was informed over the telephone while this discussion on the Resolution was going on that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan had not actually died and he was asked that he could go and inform you so that the embarrassing situation could be saved. I request you because I have got information that while the discussion was going on in the House, your Secretary got a telephone call... (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: I will find it out.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: If that is so, then the matter becomes more serious. (Interruptions).

MR. SPEAKER: This is the first time I am getting the information. I will find out.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: In these matters, we hear only the leaders.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: It is not that the Speaker himself is involved. When the obituary references were being made, whether such a thing happened, kindly check it up from the secretariat.

MR. SPEAKER: I will find out.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): It has been a big blunder no doubt and it has lowered the prestige of the House. The main thing is, we have to learn a lesson from this so that in future this thing never happens.

AN HON. MEMBER: This should be the first and last time.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE: The Prime Minister has honestly acknowledged his part in this. So, my only

[Shri Samar Mukherjee]

appeal is, this should be a lesson for all of us so that whenever in future a similar thing happens, we must be doubly, trebly careful to verify it.

I fully join with the wish expressed here through the resolution of hon. member, Mr. A. C. George, that the entire House expresses unanimously its wish for his long life and this should be conveyed to him and to all his well-wishers.

SHRI HARI VISHNU KAMATH (Heshangabad): May I ask ...

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow there is adjournment motion.

SHRI HARI VISHNU KAMATH: There is just one clarification I want. May I, in all humility but with all earnestness, ask why the Jaslok Hospital was not contacted before the news was conveyed to the House?

MR. SPEAKER: I think these questions will come up tomorrow when the adjournment motion comes. We have got an adjournment motion. (*Interruptions*). All these points may arise when the adjournment comes up. Today I am only considering the motion moved by Shri A. C. George.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: There is a privilege motion against the Prime Minister

MR. SPEAKER: That is under my consideration.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: The prestige of the House has been lowered... (*Interruptions*).

MR. SPEAKER: That is under consideration, Mr. Pajnor.

SHRI B. P. MANDAL: I want to move that amendment. (*Interruptions*).

SHRI A BALA PAJANOR (Pondy-cherry): I second the motion moved by Shri A. C. George, in expressing our gratitude to the Almighty that

J. P. is alive and I wish him a hundred years. I have to speak because, as the Leader of the Opposition and Chavanji have expressed, some mistake has taken place and we too participated in the obituary references. Since I expressed my feelings then, I feel I have to express my feelings again and pray to the Almighty that J.P. lives many more years. But at the same time, I have to mention, to err is human; to forgive is divine. But we cannot err too much and make this House—I do not want to use the word 'laughing stock'—treat this House lightly. I do not agree with many that this is an international mistake... -

AN HON. MEMBER: Nobody said so!

SHRI A. BALA PAJANOR: I have to say it because when the Prime Minister was making the statement, some of us tried to make it a joke. Since it is a serious matter, as the Leader of the Opposition has correctly put it, this august House cannot be taken lightly. At the same time, you cannot treat this august House's proceedings lightly. So, I want to go on record that matter. Whatever may be the mistake, even that mistake must be treated in a very serious fashion. But with that same feeling, I wish J.P. to live for many years and guide us and this House also with his great inspiration. I am sorry that we have made a reference and expressed our feelings as if J.P. is no more. It is heartening to note that J.P. is still alive in Jaslok Hospital. Let those people there be taken to task. I hope there will be full discussion on the adjournment motion. But I want the Prime Minister to take those people to proper task why they gave such an information. From the statement I understand, even on confirmation they confirmed it. How can a government function like that? It is a serious matter and as the CPM leader expressed it, let there not be a

repetition, but I do not wish a repetition but we cannot also afford to wait. Because such a mistake has taken place let not the Government take it to their advantage and inform us at a very late stage of any matters. At the proper time, after confirming it correctly, they should inform us in time.

With this, I support the Resolution.

SHRI SAUGATA ROY Sir I want to make a clarification. I just mentioned the Secretary got the information. I did not mean the Secretary to the Lok Sabha, I mean your Secretary i.e. Secretary to the Speaker who got the news from the PTI.

I have also moved an amendment saying that the Government of India should spare no efforts to satisfy.
(Interruptions)

MR SPEAKER I will read out that.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Coimbatore) Sir I want to express the feeling of my Party and myself on an occasion like this, the Government should not only but Parliament in such a very awkward situation but at the same time the credibility of Government is in question because, after all the Prime Minister has been long enough in administration—as Chief Minister in a State as a Deputy Prime Minister and now as Prime Minister.

AN HON MEMBER Deputy Collector

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN I do not want any amendment to what I am saying

to know that when he is coming forward to the House and making a statement about Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, about whose health everybody was concerned.

(Interruptions)

It is all right, they can continue to talk. They just show how they treat the House.

(Interruptions)

MR SPEAKER There is a parliamentary way of behaving.

(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN Some people seem to sit on springs.

My point is that somebody who has been in administration and held high offices one after the other, long enough, should know definitely that it is only when the Doctor Incharge issues the bulletin that the news becomes acceptable to the public. Therefore, this is the question of the credibility of the Government on occasions when such serious matters are before the House and before the people. Therefore it is not a question of just a lesson being learnt. We are not school children. We are serious parliamentarians. It is a costly lesson because the whole country and the Parliament have been ridiculed. Therefore, it is not that I want him to learn a lesson but I want him to understand that he cannot take Parliament for a ride in this manner and he should always, when he comes to Parliament, be absolutely sure that he has his facts absolutely correct on the basis of reports that are the reports that are required at that particular time, at that particular place, on the particular subject. That is what I want to say.

I lend my voice of support to the Resolution moved by Shri A. C. George and I would also like to say that we are also happy to know that Shri Jayaprakash Narayan has revived and is rallying. I hope that he will have many years before him.

MR SPEAKER Now I put the Resolution before the House.

"That this House unanimously expresses its heartfelt
(Interruptions)

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA Sir, I have a point of order.

MR SPEAKER What is the point of order?

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA My point of order is

MR. SPEAKER: To make a speech.

SHRI K. LAKKAPPA: This is a very important and serious matter. Instead of any motion being moved by the Leader of the House our party has to bring such a motion

MR. SPEAKER. That does not matter.

SHRI LAKKAPPA: At the same time, am very happy...

MR. SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Now we will take up the motion

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA (Ponnani): Those Members who were misled to make condolence speeches should be allowed two or three words before you put this Resolution to the vote.

MR. SPEAKER: There is an adjournment motion pending

SHRI A. BALA PAJANOR: Those who participated in the obituary reference should be given a chance.

SHRI G. M. BANATWALLA: With your permission, I have only a few words to say. We have all been put to great shame and have been misled into offering condolences for a man who is very much alive. So, I support the Resolution and wish Shri Jayaprakash Narayan speedy recovery and long life. I may only add that to err is human. A great mistake has taken place. But, then, when the hon. Prime Minister has tendered an unqualified apology that he has erred when he has said so, then we should not press the matter too much. We have all been misled no doubt, but it will be unjust if we try to make a political capital out of this we are thankful and we are happy that JP is alive. We wish him recovery. But now it would be wrong to try to be wise after the event and try to give pieces of advice to the Prime Minister. Therefore, though we are all very shocked and we express our righteous indignation at having been misled, though we are also shocked that the Prime Minister did not try to verify the matter, yet, realising that to err is human, realising that he has submitted an un-

GM GIPND—L 485; LS

qualified apology not only to this House but to the entire nation, and realising that we should not try to be wise after the event, I feel that the matter should rest there, instead of our trying to make political capital out of it. I conclude by saying that I support the Resolution and wish Shri JP speed recovery and long life.

SOME HON MEMBERS rose

MR. SPEAKER. Do not make it a debate. We will now take up the Resolution of Shri A. C. George and the amendment by Shri Saugata Roy. The amendment says "and the Government of India will not spare any efforts to save his life".

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA): I object to it. We have never spared any efforts. (Interruptions) It should be a unanimous motion

SHRI K. P. UNNIKRISHNAN (Badagara): He is withdrawing it

MR. SPEAKER: All right, he is withdrawing it

SHRI SAUGATA ROY: Does it mean he has spared some effort?

MR. SPEAKER. He says he has never spared any effort (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: The question is—

"That this House unanimously expresses its heartfelt relief to hear the progress of Shri Jayaprakash Narayan's health and wish him long life steady progress and full recovery."

The motion was adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is passed unanimously. I do not think the House is in a mood to transact any further work.

The House stands adjourned till 11 O'Clock tomorrow.

17.40 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday, March 23, 1979/Chaitra 2, 1901 (Saka),