

"That the time appointed for the presentation of the Report of the Joint Committee of the Houses on the Bill to define and limit the powers of certain courts in punishing contempts of courts and to regulate their procedure in relation thereto be further extended up to the first day of the Seventieth (November-December, 1969) Session of the Rajya Sabha."

12.49 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. STRIKE SITUATION  
IN JUTE INDUSTRY

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Shri Bhagat.

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE AND SUPPLY (SHRI B. R. BHAGAT) : Sir, the House has already held a discussion...

SHRI S. K. TAPURIAH (Pali) : It may be laid on the Table of the House

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Is it a long one ?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT : About four pages.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Then it may be laid on the Table.

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT : I beg to lay on the Table a statement regarding the strike situation in the jute industry.

*Statement*

Mr. Speaker Sir. The House has already held a discussion on the issues involved in the strike of the workers in the jute industry and I, therefore, do not wish to burden Hon'ble Members with a detailed account of the course of events. I will accordingly confine myself to a statement regarding developments in the last three days.

2. As I had already stated in the House, I have been in constant touch with the West Bengal Government as well as representative of the jute industry and my colleague the Labour Minister was in touch with the workers. I had suggested to the Chief Minister that one way out of the impasse might be to appoint a Committee

which would go into the demands of workers and whose recommendation would be binding on all concerned. The Committee would consist of an equal number of representatives from industry and labour and be headed by an independent Chairman.

3. A message was sent by the Chief Minister on Saturday that in his judgment unless the workers were given some cash relief immediately, he did not feel that the strike could be averted. I, therefore, went to Calcutta on Sunday to make one last attempt to meet all the concerned parties in order to find a solution.

4. I had a number of separate discussions with representatives of both the Trade Unions as well as the industry. The West Bengal Chief Minister, Shri Ajoy Mukherji, was good enough to be present throughout the greater part of the discussions. I came to the conclusion that the workers were prepared to call off the threatened strike only if interim cash increase in wages was granted to them immediately. I also gathered that the industry conceded that the workers' demands for some increase in the wage level were justified. The industry, however, declared their inability to grant cash relief unless they were given fiscal concessions by the Government and in particular some drastic change was made in the present levels of export duties payable on jute goods.

5. I cannot help confessing to a sense of disappointment at the approach adopted by the industry. There is no justification for linking up the question of readjustment of export duties with the question of payment of interim relief to the workers. As the House is aware, export duty is payable by overseas importers and the benefit of reduction accrues to them.

6. Export duties on jute manufactures have been reviewed by Government from time to time. The level of these duties is based on a judgment in regard to the competitive position of jute manufactures in the world markets. In arriving at this judgment, the costs of production in India, including the level of raw material prices, wage costs, and manufacturing charges, are compared with like costs in other countries.

To enable Government to take a fair view of costs of production, the Tariff Commission has been instructed to make a recommendation on fair conversion costs. The Tariff Commission is expected to submit its report within a matter of weeks.

7. It will help the Tariff Commission to take into account the new wage level if an amicable settlement of the dispute between industry and labour is reached.

8. I have tried to impress on all concerned the urgent need to reach a fair settlement. It is my impression that workers were not unwilling to call off the strike if some immediate relief is assured to them. The representatives of the industry, however, remained adamant. I trust that good sense will prevail and a provisional agreement on immediate cash relief will be reached so that the Committee proposed by me may go into the matter and make its recommendations at an early date. So far as the Government of India is concerned, it will take into account any immediate cash relief that might be agreed upon between industry and labour and also the new level of wages that might be recommended by the Committee suggested by us in computing the cost of production and reviewing the position in respect of export duties.

9. To my mind, there will be no gainers from this strike except our competitors abroad. Already some importers are tending to meet their immediate requirements from other sources of supply. For every day of interruption in production, the country loses production worth about one crore of rupees, two-thirds of which is normally expected to be converted into foreign exchange. If the strike is prolonged, the country and the industry will be faced with longer term losses in world markets and the growers will lose in case in consequence the price support operations to be undertaken by S.T.C. are hampered. Labour cannot be happy when two lakhs of workers are out of work and when prolonged stoppage could adversely affect both production and exports. I am sure the House will wish to impress on all concerned the urgent need to place national interest above narrow points of view and express the hope that production which has been interrupted is resumed without any further loss of time.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE (Kanpur) : The hon. Minister has laid on the Table a statement regarding the strike situation in the jute industry, which affects 2½ lakhs workers in Calcutta in 25 mills.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : I can guess his point. Now that the statement has been made, if he wants to raise a discussion, what I would suggest is.....

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : Sir, I am rising on a point of order under rule 376 (2) regarding the business before the House. The hon. Minister was to make a statement. Fortunately or unfortunately, he has laid it on the Table. So, the House is in possession of the statement. I want to move a motion under rule 340.

Because it is a very urgent matter we wanted to discuss it immediately. The salary Bill may be discussed tomorrow or the day after. I want the House to be adjourned. It is said that any time after the motion is made, the Member may move. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Read the next proviso. You have raised the matter. Time permitting, we will permit you, not now.

श्री छतल बिहारी बाजपेयी (बलरामपुर) :  
उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, हम जूट हड़ताल के बारे में चर्चा चाहेंगे। उसके लिए आप कोई समय निश्चिन कीजिये।

SHRI NAMBIAR (Tiruchirappalli) :  
This is a serious matter.

12:51 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. APPOINTMENT OF  
COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY IN CON-  
NECTION WITH THE MURDER OF SHRI  
DIN DAYAL UPADHYAYA

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS  
(SHRI Y. B. CHAVAN) : I had in my state-  
ment on July 29, 1969, assured the House  
that Government were most anxious that no  
responsible section of public opinion should  
have reason to feel that all that was possible  
was not done to find out the facts. During