

17.02 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: SITUATION ARISING OUT OF THE STRIKE BY THE STUDENTS OF THE BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY.

The Minister of Education (Shri M. C. Chagla): Sir, on the 17th November, 1965, the students of the Banaras Hindu University abstained from their classes in protest against the change of name of the University as adopted by the Rajya Sabha while considering the Banaras Hindu University (Amendment) Bill. It appears that the students and some citizens of Varanasi had been feeling agitated about the dropping of the word 'Hindu' from the name of the University. The Bharatiya Jan Sangh had also called for a general strike in Varanasi on the 17th November, 1965.

The students of the University held a meeting on the campus on the morning of the 17th November. Later, a large group of students belonging to outside institutions tried to force entry into the University but were kept out by the University authorities. In the afternoon about 1,500 students from Kashi Vidyapith and 1,000 students from the Harish Chandra College along with about 3,000 students from the University marched in a procession to the city and held a public meeting there. At this meeting, fiery speeches were made giving a call to "fight to the end" the proposal to change the name of the University.

Between 3 P.M. and 8 P.M. on the same day, the Bhartiya Jan Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha organised a public meeting in the Town Hall. There was a gathering of about 10,000 at this meeting.

On receipt of the information about the happenings in Varanasi on the 17th November, I issued a statement to the press in which I clarified the

position of the Government in the matter and appealed to the students to maintain the high traditions of the University by calling off the strike. I also pointed out that the Bill had not yet become law and I was sure that the Lok Sabha would take into consideration the views and feelings of the students and authorities of the University in the matter.

On the night of the 17th, the Vice-Chancellor along with the Registrar and the Dean of the Students met the President and the Secretary of the Students' Association and informed them about the statement issued by me. The Vice-Chancellor appealed to them to act in a constitutional manner and give up the strike. He suggested to the students that if they so desired they could send their representatives to meet me and Members of the Lok Sabha to put forth their point of view on the question.

On the 18th November, 1965, about 1,000 students went in a procession to the Central Office of the University and met the Vice-Chancellor who addressed them for about 45 minutes. On conclusion of Vice-Chancellor's address to the students, the Secretary of the Association informed him that the students would not retrace their steps till their objective was achieved.

On the 19th November, a deputation of four students from the University met me and urged that the word 'Hindu' be retained in the name of the University. I advised the students to end their strike and not to injure the reputation of this great University. I also pointed out that in a democratic set up Parliament is supreme and that it cannot be coerced into a particular course of action. The students should leave it to Parliament to take notice of their point of view when enacting the Bill on the University.

The students of the University have been holding meetings and organising demonstrations everyday. From the 20th November, they have

[Shri M. C. Chagla]

been joined in these demonstrations by "representative" of Students' Unions from Patna, Allahabad, Gorakhpur and Lucknow. On the 21st November, 1965, during the visit of the President to Varanasi, they marched in a procession to the Municipal Corporation building and handed over a memorandum to him. A crowd of about 5,000 including students, demonstrated in front of the Sanskrit University also. The demonstrations, however, were peaceful. Later, during the day, the student- Presidents of the Unions of the individual hostels went to Nadesar Palace and presented memoranda to the President.

On the evening of the 21st November, Prof. Mukut Behari Lal, Member, Rajya Sabha, who was in Varanasi on that day, was mobbed by the students and taken to a meeting where the students did not behave properly towards him. With the help of the authorities of the University, Prof. Mukut Behari Lal left the meeting and came back to Delhi.

Yesterday, at about 1.00 O'clock, a procession of 1,000 students went to the University gate and took possession of the gate from the chowkidars. The Chief Proctor, whose office is situated near the gate, had to lock his office and go away because of the crowd that had collected there. Later, the students thrust open one of the doors of the office, but did not cause any damage to the contents of the office. They took control of the traffic at the gate. At about 8.00 O'clock in the evening, the University authorities got back the possession of the Chief Proctor's office.

The students are now staging black-flag demonstrations. They have put up a black-flag at the central gate and also smaller flag in the hostels.

Yesterday, the Vice-Chancellor issued a final appeal to the students to

behave in a constitutional manner and pointed out that in spite of the advice given by him and his colleagues, the students have not been acting in accordance with the rules. The situation is reported today to be comparatively quiet except that the students are still in control of the University gate. The Vice-Chancellor was scheduled to have addressed a meeting of the staff and the students this afternoon at 3.00 P.M.

I would like to take this opportunity to make the position of the Government clear that it has adopted no official attitude with regard to the question of the name of the University and would leave it to the free vote of Parliament to decide the issue. I have no doubt that the Parliament will take all aspects of the question into consideration before taking its final decision.

Some hon. Members rose—

Shri Hem Barua (Gauhati): my name is there.

Mr. Speaker: The names are there. But I will again put it to the House whether it is desirable, if any demonstration or any agitation takes place as a consequent of some decision taken by one House of the Parliament and the other House has yet to consider it, at that time to just discuss it and put questions which will indirectly have a harmful effect on the whole thing.

Dr. L. M. Singhvi (Jodhpur): Its consideration must be expedited; it should be given the priority.

Mr. Speaker: We are taking up the Bill tomorrow. The first thing that we are taking up tomorrow is that.

Several hon. Members: No questions.

Mr. Speaker: Though we have to take note of all the opinions that are current in the country and all the reactions that take place ultimately it is the Parliament that has to take decisions so far as these important questions are concerned.

Shri Hem Barua: I want to have a clarification....

Mr. Speaker: I would request the hon. Members not to put any questions in any manner now.

Shri S. M. Banerjee (Kanpur): I only want to know....

Mr. Speaker: I would request Mr. Banerjee also.

Several hon. Members: No questions.

Mr. Speaker: I will not allow any questions.

Shri S. M. Banerjee: I am not putting any question on this. I only wanted to know, through you, what concrete steps the Government propose to take to end this agitation....

Mr. Speaker: I will not allow that. That is not desirable. That will be encouraging the agitators now. I will not allow any questions on this. Let the Parliament remain supreme. It is not any other body that has to take decision. And now the House stands adjourned to meet again tomorrow at 11 A.M.

17.15 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Wednesday, November 24, 1965/Agrahayana 3, 1887 (Saka).