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Title: Made a statement regarding the Extra Departmental Agents of the Department of Posts.

THE MINISTR OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI JAGMOHAN): Sir, the Postal service in the rural areas is provided through the Extra Departmental System which comprises 1,27,162 Extra Departmental Post Offices. The Extra Departmental Agents which number 3,09,825 are employed for a period of two to five hours and are remunerated broadly on pro rata basis with reference to the work load and the pay scales of corresponding categories of whole-time departmental employees. Their terms and conditions of service is governed by separate rules, namely, P&T EDA (Conduct & Service) Rules, 1964 framed in this behalf by the Director-General, Posts.

Keeping in view the growth of postal services and the agency functions as also increasing cost of living and other factors, the Government have in the past set up three committees for Extra Departmental Agents for reviewing the benefits for the ED Agents including the rate of allowances and as a consequence a variety of benefits have flowed over the years to the ED Agents. These committees were set up in the context of the Central Pay Commissions which were appointed by the Central Government for reviewing scales of pay and other conditions of service for regular Government employees.

A one-man Committee headed by Justice Charanjeet Talwar was set up by the Government on 31st March, 1995 to examine the wage structure and conditions of service of the ED Agents. Justice Talwar Committee submitted its report on 30th April, 1997 making wide-ranging recommendations which, in effect, place the ED Agents on equal footing with regular employees of the Central Government. The recommendations of this Committee were duly processed and the Postal Staff Federations were also consulted. In November 1997, the Government decided that pending detailed consideration of the Committee's recommendations, the basic monthly allowance of different categories of ED Agents may be raised by a factor of 3.25 with effect from 1.1.96. This was, however, not acceptable to the Postal Staff Federations which insisted on implementation of the Justice Talwar Committee recommendations, particularly, in regard to grant of first two scales of pay, pension, leave and gratuity for ED Agents in the first instance.

Early implementation of positive recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee for ED Agents also figured in the Charter of Demands, on which two of the Postal Federations went on strike during July, 1998. The hon. Members of both the Houses have also expressed their concern for early implementation of the recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee.

The Government has fully and carefully considered the recommendations of Justice Talwar Committee for Postal ED Agents and the various demands raised in this regard by Postal Federations and has now decided to extend the following benefits to the ED Agents:

14.00 hrs.

(i) The ED Agents will be paid arrears of allowance for the period 1st January 1996 to 28th February 1998 by increasing their fixed basic monthly allowance by a factor of 3.25.

(ii) Different categories of ED Agents will be placed with effect from 1st March, 1998 in two Time Related Continuity Allowance depending on the hours of their employment corresponding to the first two scales of pay recommended by Justice Talwar Committee. Only in respect of ED Sub-Postmaster there will be only one Time Related Continuity Allowance.

(iii) ED Agents will now be allowed paid leave at the rate of 10 days for every half-year without any provision of carry forward or encashment and with effect from the half year beginning from 1st July, 1998.

(iv) The ex-gratia gratuity available to ED Agents at present will be raised from the present Rs.6,000/- to Rs.18,000/-.

(v) The amount of Office Maintenance Allowance as also allowed to ED Agents will be raised from the existing Rs.25/- to Rs.50/- per month.

6. As a measure of post-employment benefits to ED Agents, Government have decided to provide lump sum severance amount of Rs.30,000/- on retirement of an ED Agent at the age of 65 years or in the event of death after completing a minimum of 20 years of continuous service. In case of an ED Agent who has completed only 15 to 20 years of continuous service, the severance amount shall be Rs.20,000/- on retirement or death. Payment of severance amount of Rs.20,000 will also be available for such ED Agents who are absorbed against regular departmental posts after 15 years of continuous service as ED Agents.

7. Necessary orders in this regard are being issued immediately.

8. The payment of arrears to ED Agents for the revised basic monthly allowance from 1-1-96 to 28-2-98 is estimated to cost an additional Rs.157.74 crore to the Government, while the additional annual expenditure on the other substantial benefits now being extended to ED Agents is estimated to be of the order of Rs.301.35 crore.

9. Despite severe constraint of resources, the Government have gone a long way to improve the conditions of service of Extra Departmental Agents. In this connection, it may be noted that the existing annual wage bill of the Extra Departmental Agents at present is about Rs.230 crore. To this Wage Bill, another Rs.301.2 crore would now be added annually, thereby raising the total Wage Bill to Rs.531.2 crore.

10. Government is keen to ensure high morale among its Agents and bring about new dedication and dynamism in the working of the Department. Government hopes that Extra Departmental Agents would put their best foot forward in attaining a very high level of efficiency and productivity.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): It is a clear violation of the agreement.
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS : The postal employees have threatened to go on strike. (Interruptions)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : This is a clear violation. (Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS : There was a strike for a very long period. At the end of that strike, they entered into an agreement. (Interruptions) There is no response from the Government (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Radhakrishnan, please sit down. I am on my legs.

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN (CANNANORE): Sir, we want some clarifications. (Interruptions)

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (QUILON): What about the recommendations of the Talwar Committee?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Mullapally Ramachandran, I am on my legs, please sit down.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: After a Minister makes a statement, no clarification is sought. This House has no such tradition.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I just cannot permit that. I am sorry.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS (PALAKKAD): There should be a discussion on this.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : This matter should be discussed.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Radhakrishnan, there are other avenues that are open.

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : We want a discussion regarding this issue.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Hon. Members, please sit down.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: All right, if you want a discussion who is going to stop you? Is anybody going to prevent you from raising the matter according to the procedure? You can raise it under rule 193 or in any other form of discussion.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let Shri Balram Jakhar speak please.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, what about the Zero Hour?
(Interruptions)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : Sir, we want a discussion.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Radhakrishnan, you have other avenues. If you want to have a discussion, you can give a notice under rule 193.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : This is a misleading statement.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You cannot raise it in this manner. Some rule should be followed. How can you raise it this way?

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: He has made a statement. Maybe, it is misleading or otherwise. I do not know about that. Whatever it may be, if you want to raise the matter, you have to follow some rules and give some notice.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Radhakrishnan, you were a Speaker of an Assembly. I am on my legs. Please sit down.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : I hope, the Government will agree for a discussion.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Whether the Government will agree or not, you can give your notice. It is left to the discretion of the Speaker.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Jakhar, you may please start.

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Sir, you have already called me.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I am sorry. Shri Fatmi is on his legs.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : Now that the hon. Minister is here, let him clarify whether he is going to implement the Talwar Committee Report or not.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I cannot compel him to give a clarification.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : Sir, we want a clarification.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Under the rules, on any statement made by a Minister, you cannot ask for a clarification.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : Let him merely clarify the position. (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Do not waste the time of the House. You may raise the matter in some other form. You have other avenues open. Please do not disturb now.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Keeping in view the seriousness of the situation, you may decide on a discussion.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: You have to give some notice under some rule. Unless you do that, how can I allow it?

श्री मोहम्मद अली अशरफ फातमी : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने मुझे समय दिया था। ... (व्यवधान) मुझे बोलने दीजिए। मुझे मौका मिला है।

... (व्यवधान)

मेरा समय क्यों खराब कर रहे हैं ?

... (व्यवधान)

जब मेरा समय समाप्त हो जाए तब आप बोलिएगा। ... (व्यवधान)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Radhakrishnan, you have been the Speaker of the Kerala Assembly. If any matter is to be discussed, there must be a notice for that.

... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please follow the rules. After all, this House will have to run according to the rules. If you are agitated, you give a notice under some rule. Then, you will get an opportunity to discuss it.

1421 hours

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till twenty minutes past Fifteen of the Clock.

1525 hours

The Lok Sabha re-assembled after Lunch at twenty-five minutes past Fifteen of the Clock.

(Shri Khagapati Pradhani in the Chair)

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ (BARAMULLA): Sir, we want a discussion on the situation in Iraq caused by bombing. You kindly announce whether it will be done under Rule 193 or under any other rule. We want a discussion. It is an open aggression on Iraq. The Prime Minister has made a statement. But we want a thorough discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can raise it after the Minister makes a statement.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister will give a detailed statement in the evening.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ : But we should know about the timing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The meeting of the BAC is going on. In that meeting, they will decide about the timing.

Now we shall take up Matters under Rule 377.
