

[Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh]

the highest, in the case of Estate Duty. So the cost of collection was also higher. So, in view of all these considerations we have come with this proposal to abolish this. As for as the point that we are helping the rich is concerned, I want to say there is no question about it. You know the strong action we are taking with regard to tax evasion.

Sir, I want to repeat one point which I have also made in my first statement that in 1984 there was a Bill for abolition of estate duty from agriculture land. Several States have passed the legislation and only a few States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Manipur, Nagaland, Punjab and Tripura have not yet passed it. When two of these States pass it we will be coming with a Bill. No where else on agriculture land there is estate duty.

As regards the point raised by Shri Mushran to having retrospective effect of six months, I think, I cannot agree to that because still there may be cases where one day earlier somebody might have died. (Interruptions) I have applied my mind but I cannot agree.

Again, Sir, a point had been made that people will put their money now in the bank and, therefore, they will become safe from the operation of law tax. I do not know how one who puts it in the bank becomes safer. It is unaccounted money whether it is in the bank or in the house. Once it is unaccounted, by putting it in the bank nobody becomes safer.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur) : If you put in the Swiss bank,

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH : Perhaps we will take advice from you how to deposit it. As regards State's share it is very meagre. Abolition of estate duty does not affect the Finance Commission's recommendations. Some States have got surplus budget due to Finance Commission recommendations.

Sir, I am thankful to the Members for their support. With these words I recommend the House for passing of this Bill.

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

"That the Bill further to amend the Estate Duty Act, 1953, be taken into consideration."

The motion was adopted

MR. SPEAKER : The House will now take up clause by clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is :

"This Clause 2 stand part of the Bill."

The motion was adopted.

Clause 2 was added to the Bill.

Clause 1, Enacting Formula and Title were added to the Bill.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH : Sir, I move :

"That the Bill be passed."

MR. SPEAKER : The question is :

"That the Bill be passed."

The motion was adopted.

14.40 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: ELECTIONS IN PUNJAB

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : Sir, Hon'ble members are aware that the schedule for elections in Punjab has been announced by the Election Commission.

The primacy of the electoral process in our country is obvious ; it needs no special emphasis.

It is well understood by our people that the right to vote is their instrument for achieving progress and prosperity.

However, in the context of recent events in Punjab, the electoral process has also acquired a new national significance.

The fundamental issue now before all political parties committed to the democratic system is :

Shall we allow the exercise of the free will of the people to be obstructed, frustrated and subverted by the forces of extremism and terrorism ?

On a correct response to this question hinges the fate of the democratic system in India.

Either all political parties unitedly face the sinister challenge of terrorism by strengthening democratic process or they succumb to the threat from terrorism and extremism.

In Punjab all else is secondary.

How individual parties fare is of little consequence. It does not matter who wins, and who loses.

What matters is that the lamp of democracy is not extinguished : what does matter is that India wins.

The people of India have shown that they value democratic rights and freedom above everything else : the political parties that represent them value democracy no less.

A democratic election is the people's answer to the brute force employed by a small section to impose their will on the masses.

We shall not allow divisive forces to prevail.

We shall serve as the instrument to enable the democratic process to triumph whatever the risk to ourselves.

As the custodian of the people's will and mandate, I am fully committed to this course.

Our democratic society has the inner strength to close its ranks to face the dangers that confront it.

We shall demonstrate that we are capable of rising above expediency.

Let us, who value the ideals that have built this Nation, together accept this challenge.

14 43 hrs.

RAILWAY PROTECTION FORCE (AMENDMENT) BILL

[English]

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS
(SHRI BANSI LAL) : I beg to move :

“That the Bill to amend the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957, be taken into consideration.”

Sir, the Railway Protection Force, before the Act of 1957 was a watch and ward department of the Railways. After 1957, it became an organised force. At present, the Railway Protection Force has little powers to discharge its functions properly. After the passing of this amendment, the Railway Protection Force will be able to discharge its duties properly and more effectively. The Railway Protection Force will be an Armed Force and prosecution against them in certain cases will be done away with.

With these words, I commend the Bill for the consideration of the House.

MR. SPEAKER : Motion moved :

“That the Bill to amend the Railway Protection Force Act, 1957, be taken into consideration.”