

17.27 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. ASSAULT ON THE
PRIME MINISTER IN COLOMBO—

Contd.

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Mr. Speaker Sir, I rise to make a statement on the incident which happened in Colombo at about 10.20 this morning.

As part of the official programme, the Prime Minister was scheduled to review the Guard of Honour at the farewell ceremony. Special precautions, as agreed to between the two Governments, had been implemented. The review guard was in two rows. In accordance with the schedule, the P.M. reviewed only the front row. Towards the end of the review, after P.M. had passed one of the Naval guards, the said guard lifted his rifle and in one swing motion hit the P.M. with the butt of the rifle. The rifle butt hit the P.M. on the left shoulder and grazed his head. Instantaneously, the Personal Security Officer, who was only two paces behind, pounced on the naval guard and threw him to the ground and pinned him down. The naval guard's rifle also fell to the ground. The Commander of the guard of honour, who was immediately behind the P.M., also threw himself on the naval guard.

Sensing the unusual movement, P.M. had moved forward very quickly and turned around. SPG's close protection team, which was just to the right side of the Personal Security Officer, immediately surrounded the P.M. and gave him full body cover. All other security personnel of the SPG carried out their respective duties. P.M. was escorted quickly to the special enclosure where President Jayawardene, Mrs. Jayawardene and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi were standing. He bid goodbye to President

Jayawardene and Mrs. Jayawardene and walked a few steps to his car. The ceremonial drive to the heliped was completed.

The Sri Lankan security personnel immediately took charge of the naval guard and removed him to custody. No other member of the Guard of Honour made any unusual movement, nor were the arrangements for the ceremony disturbed in any other way.

Since the sole assailant had been immobilized instantaneously, there was no need to resort to any other action.

I am sure that the whole House will join me in expressing our relief and happiness that the Prime Minister is safe and is back amidst us.

17.30 hrs.

PAYMENT OF GRATUITY (AMENDMENT) BILL

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill further to amend the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, as passed by Rajya Sabha, be taken into consideration."

As the Hon. Members will be aware, the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 provides for a scheme for payment of gratuity to the employees employed in factories, mines, plantations, oil fields, ports, railway companies, shops and certain other establishments and for matters connected therewith. The payment of gratuity under the Act is, however, at present restricted to the employees drawing wages not exceeding Rs. 1600/- per month.