

MR. SPEAKER: Now, I put the motion as amended to the vote of the House.

The question is:

"That the motion, as amended, be adopted."

The motion was adopted.

MR. SPEAKER: The BAC meeting was to be held at 4 O' clock. But it could not be held because we are all here. It will be held tomorrow at 4 O' clock.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI H.K.L. BHAGAT): We are very grateful to the hon. Members, whether they be on this side or on that, for having participated in this debate. I would like to make an appeal to the members who left the House just now. We had an apprehension that they would ask for a Committee and then they would blame us and walk out of it. But I still appeal to them to join this committee and cooperate with the Government and not adopt the attitude which they are adopting now.

MR. SPEAKER: The BAC meeting will be held tomorrow at 4 O' clock.

16.45 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: PROGRESS ACHIEVED SO FAR IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIA - SHRI LANKA AGREEMENT TO ESTABLISH PEACE AND NORMALCY IN SRI LANKA

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): Mr. Speaker Sir, On July 29, the Prime Minister signed a historic Agreement in Colombo with President Jayewardene of Sri Lanka to establish peace and normalcy in the

country. Immediately after his return from Colombo, Prime Minister made statement in both the Houses of Parliament regarding this agreement and the text of the Agreement was laid on the Table of both Houses.

Both internationally and domestically the Agreement has been welcomed. World Leaders have conveyed their admiration and praise for the courage, wisdom and statesmanship shown by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President Jayewardene. But there have been other voices, some openly sceptical while others almost hopeful that the Agreement will not work, that it will break down at the stage of implementation. This is not surprising as there are many who do not wish to see peace and stability in our region. That is why Government would like to take the House into confidence about the progress achieved so far in the implementation of the Agreement.

As Members are aware, the Agreement provides that the Sri Lanka Government may call upon the Indian Government to render military assistance to ensure the implementation of the Agreement. As Prime Minister informed the House on July 30, the Sri Lanka Government made a formal request for such assistance soon after the Agreement was signed. In keeping with our commitments under the Agreement, Indian troops landed in Jaffna on July 30 for assuming peace keeping functions and for helping in the implementation of the Agreement.

A ceasefire between the Sri Lankan security forces and the militants came into effect as the Indian troops landed. The ceasefire has held till now almost without any incident. For the first time in over four years, peace and tranquility reign in the Northern and Eastern Provinces of Sri Lanka. Large numbers of people who had been rendered homeless and displaced from their areas of habitation have already started returning to their homes.

[Shri K. Natwar Singh]

The next and perhaps the most crucial step was to persuade the militant groups, especially the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which is the largest and the most active group, to agree to abide by the peace accord and to lay down arms. This was the essential first step before the process of reconciliation and of healing the wounds of several years of ethnic conflict could begin. The militants and especially the LTTE had certain apprehensions and reservations, especially about their security. With the cooperation of President Jayewardene, we have been able to give them credible assurances which have removed these doubts.

I am glad to inform the House that the LTTE informed within the 72 hour deadline expiring on the afternoon of August 3 that they will lay down arms and that they will make a formal announcement to this effect at a public meeting on August 4. Under the terms of the accord, arms have to be surrendered to an authority designated by the President of Sri Lanka. On August 5, President Jayewardene designated General Attigalle, Defence Secretary of Sri Lanka and General Harkirat Singh, Commander of the Indian Forces in Jaffna as his designated authorities to receive the arms to be handed over by the militants. The same afternoon, the formal handing over ceremony took place and arms are now being deposited with the designated authorities at different collection centres. We expect this process to be completed within a few days.

As a further step in the reconciliation process, President Jayewardene has announced a general amnesty for all militants who lay down arms. This amnesty will also apply to those who are imprisoned and those who have been accused of militant activity under relevant Sri Lankan laws. Today President Jayewardene has announced his decision to set up a single interim administrative council for the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The Sri Lanka Government has also requested our

troops to assist in peace keeping functions and in ensuring handing over of arms in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. We will continue to monitor progress and to take timely action to implement the Agreement as per its provisions.

I am sure the House will agree with me that progress in the implementation of the agreement has been remarkable by any standards and better than most people would have expected. This has been the result of patient and sustained diplomatic efforts and a minute to minute monitoring of progress. I would like to pay a tribute to the wisdom, patience and farsighted statesmanship of President Jayewardene who has been steadfast in his resolve to implement the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement in letter and in spirit. I would also like to pay a tribute to the various Tamil groups and in particular to the LTTE and its leader, Shri Prabhakaran who, despite some major concerns and reservations, have placed their trust in India and their faith in the future and have decided to abide by the terms of the Agreement. They have done this in the interests of peace, security and prosperity for the people on whose behalf they had taken up arms in the first place. I would also like to pay a tribute to the highly professional competence of our Armed Forces who have gone about their assigned task with professionalism, discipline and with a combination of tact and firmness. They are there as guests of the Sri Lankan Government and people, both Tamils and Sinhalese and they have established excellent rapport with both the militants and the Sri Lankan security forces.

Last but not the least, I would like to mention that the vast majority of the people of Sri Lanka, both Sinhalese and Tamils, desire nothing but peace and harmony in their country. There has been an overwhelming sense of relief and joy among a vast majority of all sections of the Sri Lankan population at the prospect of peace and security. I have no doubt that an equally vast majority of the Sinhala and

Muslim Communities would also welcome an accord which brings peace, stability and progress to their country. I would like to conclude by reiterating the government of India's determination to implement the accord in letter and in spirit and to cooperate fully with the Sri Lankan Government in this respect.

SHRI P. KOLANDAIVELU (Gobichettipalayam): Hats off to Rajiv Gandhi and M.G.R. for having brought about an amicable and historic accord!

16.51 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PAYMENT OF GRATUITY (AMENDMENT) BILL—*Contd.*

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We now resume further consideration of the following motion moved by Shri P.A. Sangma, on the 30th July 1987, namely:

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

Now Dr. Chandra Shekhar Tripathi.

[*Translation*]

DR. CHANDRA SHEKHAR TRIPATHI (Khalilabad): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise to support the Gratuity (Amendment) Bill which has been presented by the hon. Minister of Labour in the House. It is a fact that in a vast country like ours all the facilities are not available to all persons. But gratuity and provident fund occupy an important place in the lives of the workers and their families. Payment of Gratuity Act was first enacted in 1972, providing for payment of gratuity to those workers in factories, mines, plantations and railway companies whose wages were not more than Rs. 1600. As such, the workers falling

within the purview of this Act could get the benefit of gratuity. After sometime the hon. Minister of Labour presented an amendment Bill in this House under which this limit was raised from Rs. 1600 to Rs. 2500. In this connection I would like to make a submission to the hon. Minister of Labour that it was a commendable step to raise this limit from Rs. 1600 to Rs. 2500. Keeping in view the fact that we have in our country private limited companies like Richardson and Hindustan, where workers get wages to the extent of Rs. 2900, this limit of Rs. 2500 should further be raised to at least Rs. 3500.

My second submission is that though you have covered all the factories and mines, yet you have used words like "certain other establishments" I would like the hon. Minister to clarify as to what he means by this expression. Our endeavour should be to provide the facility of gratuity even to such workers as are working in departments other than those included in this Bill, and are drawing wages upto Rs. 2500/-.

16.54 hrs.

[SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI *in the Chair*]

I would further like to submit here, that the condition of 240 days service in a year in the compulsory provision made by us in regard to the payment of gratuity has been posing great difficulties. It is very often seen that employers give a break in service to the worker after he has worked for 10 to 15 or 20 days, or retrench him from service. With such a provision, the workers will find it very difficult to get gratuity. A number of instances can be given to show that the workers, even after working for 4 to 5 years in a factory, do not get the benefit of gratuity because of the breaks in service given to them from time to time. Therefore, this condition of service of 240 days in a year should be relaxed, or a provision be made to prevent the employer from playing with the career of a worker by appointing or