

amendments in the relevant rules. These are:-

- i) Members of Parliament are at present entitled to constituency allowance at the rate of Rs. 1250/- per month. It is being enhanced to Rs. 3000/- per month.
- ii) Members at present are entitled to a concession of free water and electricity upto Rs. 3000/- per month. There has been a demand to calculate it annually. This would now be computed @ Rs. 3600/- per annum.
- iii) In view of the increase in taxi charges etc. the Government has accepted the demand to increase road mileage allowance from Rs. 2/- per k.m. to Rs. 3/- per k.m.
- iv) In case the member chooses to travel by circuitous route, the existing rule provides that he would be entitled to a sum of Rs. 120/- in addition to the normal air fare. It is proposed to increase this sum to Rs. 250/- for each such journey.

Since the Bill is very simple and non-controversial, I feel and hope that it would receive unanimous support from all sides of the House and may be passed without much discussion. With these words I commend the Bill for consideration by the House.

I have one or two verbal amendments to this which I will move later on.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That the Bill further to amend the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament, Act, 1954 be taken into consideration."

SHRI ANANDA PATHAK (Darjeeling): Sir, the Government have brought this Bill in an inopportune moment when the country as a whole is facing serious economic crisis.

What was the hurry in pushing through this Bill at this moment?

When about ten lakhs of State Government employees in Bihar are struggling and when they are on strike for the last two months for increasing their emoluments, why have the Government come forward to increase the cash emoluments like salary, allowances, DA, etc. of the MPs, instead of settling the reasonable demands of the striking employees?

If the Government are really interested in ensuring efficient and effective functioning of the MPs, they should consider providing other essential amenities like secretarial and clerical assistance, facility of free postal services, stationery, etc. If the Government are really interested in recognising the services rendered by the ex-MPs to the nation, they should consider providing free first class railway passes and reasonable pension to them irrespective of the number of terms served by the ex-Members of Parliament. They should also be provided free medical facilities where they are staying so that they may continue to serve the country with dignity.

But these amenities are not provided in the Bill.

Therefore, I request the Government to consider these proposals with sympathy.

12.32 hrs.

STATEMENT RE. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MALDIVES

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI): I rise to apprise the House about

[Sh. Rajiv Gandhi]

recent developments in the Maldives. In the morning yesterday, we received reports that the capital of our friendly neighbour, the Maldives was under attack from a group of mercenaries apparently recruited by disgruntled expatriate Maldivian citizens. These mercenaries arrived by ship. After landing in the capital, Male, at about four in the morning yesterday, they quickly captured some key government buildings, including the radio station, the TV station and the communications centre. They also surrounded the Presidential Palace. They were reported to have taken hostage one senior Government Minister and a large number of civilians. The objective of the operation, clearly, was to overthrow the democratically elected government of Maldives.

President Gayoom managed to elude the attackers and took refuge in an area outside the Presidential Palace. Shortly thereafter we received a formal appeal for urgent military assistance to put down this plot. This request was repeated by Maldivian emissaries in Colombo and New York. According to reports that we were receiving at regular intervals, the situation was critical.

Maldives is a peaceful country, with no Armed Forces except a small force to maintain law and order. President Gayoom is the democratically elected and popular President of this friendly neighbour of ours. He was re-elected for a third term in office as recently as September 23, 1988 securing over 95 per cent of the votes polled. Maldives is also one of our closest and friendliest neighbours. It appealed to us in desperation in its grave hour of need. After carefully considering this appeal, we felt that we must respond positively and go to the aid of a friendly neighbour facing a threat to its sovereignty and its democratic order.

Accordingly, two IAF aircraft with about 300 paratroopers of the Indian Army were despatched yesterday evening on a reconnaissance mission with carefully preplanned options. Later last night, I briefed leaders of the opposition of the action taken. I am glad

to inform the House that our troops successfully landed near Male. I take this opportunity to inform the House about the background of our action in support of the democratically elected government of a friendly neighbouring country.

I am proud to report that our troops have carried out their assigned task in an exemplary fashion in the highest traditions of the Indian Armed Forces. They successfully completed their major mission by around 2.30 this morning. The safety of the President and senior members of his government were ensured. The operations have been carried out in an extremely tight time frame without a single Indian casualty till now. More troops have landed in the Maldives during the early hours of this morning to ensure the availability of an adequate force to meet any contingency. Some armed rebels have been captured. Mopping up operations are continuing. We would like to withdraw our troops at the earliest. We are in touch with President Gayoom and hope that the withdrawal can begin today. President Gayoom telephoned me early this morning and expressed his deep appreciation of our prompt and timely assistance. We are happy to have been of assistance to the friendly people of the Maldives, with whom we have always enjoyed close and warm ties. The attempt to spread terror and undermine peace and stability in our region has been frustrated. I am sure the House would wish to join me in conveying the country's good wishes and support to President Gayoom and the people of the Maldives. We extend to our Armed Forces our appreciation and our warmest congratulations. This was an operation involving coordination between all three wings of the services. The country is proud of the speed and efficiency with which the operation was planned and executed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, our response to developments is a clear manifestation of our commitment to the promotion of peace and stability in our region. It is in keeping with our belief that countries in the region can resolve their problems in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, free of outside influences.

We have kept in touch with a number of friendly countries on these developments. I am happy that the response to our constructive approach, both in our neighbourhood and elsewhere, has been positive and indeed heartening.

Thank you, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are resuming discussion on the Bill further to amend the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament...

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Baserhat): What an anti-climax, Sir, Salary, Allowances and Pension. Hear something at least about those people who have gone there. What is the reaction of those countries which were approached for help?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr. Indrajit Gupta, I cannot allow a discussion on the Statement. I cannot allow. You give it separately in writing.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Why should we be treated like school boys?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, no. I am not treating you like school boys. I am following the convention and rules and regulations.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: In the Rajya Sabha, they are having a full discussion. *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You change the rules. I have no objection. If you want to discuss it in such a manner, you will have to change the rules.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Mahbubnagar): While we extend general support to the line of action, we want to

know....

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: More information and more facts are needed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you give it in writing, I will allow a discussion on this subject.

*(Interruptions)*

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): Either you have to change the rules or we have to change the House, Sir!

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If you want to change it you can do it. Whatever you prefer, you do it. I have no objection.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Within the Rules, Sir, clarificatory questions used to be allowed earlier. I have been here for 25 years. I know what I am talking about.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is not allowed.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: It was allowed. It is not disallowed at all under the Rules. It all depends on the discretion of the Chair. *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Rule is very clear here. Rule 372:

"A Statement may be made by a Minister on a matter of public importance with the consent of the Speaker but no question shall be asked at the time the statement is made."

It is very clear. What can I do?

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: Sir, we wanted only to express our support and at the same time we also want to know what is the security implication in the Indian Ocean for us? Is there anything behind the move of these mercenaries?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. It is not allowed.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA: What is our report? Who are the forces supporting these mercenaries? We are not told of anything. I am sure the Government has more information than what it is here.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. I cannot allow a discussion right now.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ (Baramulla): We must congratulate the Government. ... *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Prof. Soz, you speak on the Bill further to amend the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament.

*(Interruptions)*

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Is Prof. Soz allowed to speak on the statement of the Prime Minister? *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not allowed now. I have asked him to speak on the Bill on Member's Salary and allowances.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ: What I feel is that India has fulfilled the responsibility of a neighbour.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. No. Nothing on the statement.

12.40 hrs.

SALARY, ALLOWANCES AND PENSION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL—CONTD.

*[English]*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We now resume discussion on the Salary, Allowances and Pension to Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill. Prof. Soz.

PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ (Baramulla): I find that this Bill on Salaries, Allowances and

Pension to Members of Parliament is deficient in certain respects. So far as pension is concerned, it is said that when a Member dies, his family will receive Rs. 500 per month for a period of five years. What about a living Member who becomes an ex-MP? As of now, it is Rs. 500. I would suggest that you give us the average pension of MLAs, i.e. which they receive within the country. As of now, members of Indian Parliament are the lowest paid in the world, because I have collected some statistics. There is no time to discuss those things here. But as far as pension is concerned, we have been trying; we had approached the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. We had suggested that the minimum pension should be Rs. 1500, for one term. Thereafter, the increment could be nominal, say Rs. 50 or Rs. 100. But initially it should be at a substantial level, with the index of prices being so high, and its continuing to increase year after year. Therefore, there should be a pension to an ex-MP which can help keep his body and soul together. It may not be easy, but I want a commitment from the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. There should be a reasonable amount of pension available to MPs who cease to be Members and become ex-MPs.

Today, I am appealing to him that he should announce a pension which is reasonable. It should not be less than Rs. 1500. I will give you an example: Chaudhary Mohammed Khan from Jammu and Kashmir died recently. He had no money or bank balance—it was insulting—to support him when he was lying in the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. There were so many philanthropic agencies coming forward; but that MP had not a penny in the bank anywhere. So, Government must seriously consider whether Rs. 500 as pension is sufficient. Otherwise, you withdraw it, and leave them to God's mercy.

Secondly, ex-MPs have no unions. They cannot voice their grievances and demands. They should have a Railway Pass. They have lived in Delhi. Many farsighted people have built houses, and there are many MPs who have a lot of private