

[English]

KUMARI FRIDA TOPNO: Sir, I may also kindly be allowed to speak.

MR. SPEAKER: I have called for the information.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO (Dhenkanal): Sir, it is a serious matter. She was arrested and police have not intimidated. She may please be allowed to make a statement.

MR. SPEAKER: I have called for the information.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I cannot just take decision without information.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Members who are speaking on behalf of the Member probably do not know the facts. You have received the facts only when you were sitting with the lady Member on the bench. The letter which she has written to me is in my possession. I have read the letter and I shall have to take a decision as to whether it constitutes a breach of privilege or not only after getting the information. I will be the first person to protect the privilege of the Members. As I am having some doubt about it, I have called for the information. I will take a decision after I receive the facts.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG (Shillong): Sir, I want to draw the attention of the

Government to the total failure of the Postal Department. The postal employees in the whole of the North-Eastern region are on strike and we do not receive any letters or anything of that kind. Even the Government offices are affected.

Sir, in 1989, the Communications Department had given special duty allowance to the Telecommunication staff and not to the Postal staff and negotiations had been going on between the Postal staff and the Government. But till today, nothing has been done. The case was withdrawn from the Supreme Court again only to be filed in the CAT, Guwahati Bench. This is only delay tactics on the part of the Communications Department. Sir, I urge upon the Communications Department to look into the matter. The whole North-Eastern region is without letters affecting not only the people there, the citizens of India but also the Department of the Government itself. So, I urge upon the Government for immediate negotiations with the Postal staff of the North-Eastern region.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar): Mr. Speaker Sir, I rise to draw the attention of the House and of the Government to the continuing strike of service doctors. Ten thousand service doctors representing various bodies such as the CGHS, Delhi Administration, Indian Railway Medical Service, Indian Ordnance Factories Health Service, DTC, DESU, etc. have been on strike for the last several days. And the distressing part is that the issue is very straight forward. Tikkoo Committee was constituted in 1989 when, as far as I can recall, Mr. Ram Niwas Mirdha was the Health Minister. At that time, the Government and the doctors entered into a Memorandum of Settlement signed by both. It was not an ordinary Committee. It was a high-powered Committee comprising of experts from health management, experts from personnel management and it was almost accepted that the recommendations of this Committee would be accepted. But

surprisingly, after the submission of its report which I have read and which is by and large very sound, I find that it makes recommendations in respect of standard promotion pattern for the service doctors. A very important recommendation which it makes is about setting up of a Medical Board on the lines of the Excise Board and the Telecom Board. I am sure that if this Board would be set up, it would deal with very many grievances of service doctors on a continuing basis. Subsequent Health Ministers have strongly recommended for it like Mr. Shakeelur Rehman, Mr. Rafique Alam and all the Health Ministers. I have seen their papers and their personal letters written to the Prime Minister and yet, this matter continues to hang on fire despite their attempt to have a negotiated settlement. Nothing has turned out and it is only under great compulsion and forced by circumstances, they have gone on strike. I do not command a strike by doctors. No one feels happy about a strike by doctors and many of those doctors whom I have met are very senior ones who are on the point of retirement. They have six months to go for retirement and they virtually stake their whole career. They say that they also feel unhappy. But we find that inspite of repeated assurances over a period of years, nothing is happening.

So, I would request the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to take this up on a very urgent basis and see that no one stands on prestige. It is not a question of prestige. It affects the health services throughout the country. And basically, the recommendations of the Tikkoo Committee ought to be accepted. But the office memorandum of 14th November negates those recommendations and even districts them. It has added to their grievances.

MR. SPEAKER : Advaniji, the Minister has spoken to me. He is going to make a statement, maybe on Monday. Then it can be discussed and we will take it up.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : I may please to allowed to speak on this because they came to me also. I am told that 250 hospitals in the country are not working; 1,000 medical centres and dispensaries are also not working. We can imagine the suffering of the patients. I appreciate the great difficulty that is being caused. But Sir, the amazing thing is that the Government is not even concerned to have a dialogue with them. The Minister has not spoken to them in spite of reported requests. The Prime Minister is not giving any appointment to them. He cannot meet them, although they belong to an important section of the community. They are government servants but they cannot have a discussion with anybody. Subject to correction, I am told that the total financial involvement is Rs. 2.5 crore per year. Just two and a half crores only. But it seems that the Government has now taken it as a prestige issue. Today the situation is so critical. I strongly impress upon them that it is very unfortunate that the patients are suffering. I had appealed to the doctors that they should try to call off their strike as soon as possible. But I understand that instead of trying to meet them and talk to them, the Government is taking rather provocative action. The Secretary of the Department is issuing directions and giving information which goes totally contrary to the Committee's recommendations which have already been accepted by the Government. Mr. Rafeeq Alam, who was the Health Minister and who was in the Congress and Shri Shakil-ur-Rahman, your friendly Health Minister had strongly recommend these. They said that during their regime these recommendations were accepted and were going to be implemented. I find that it is the question of status with which they are concerned. I appeal to the doctors also to call off their strike and I demand that the Government should immediately start a dialogue and negotiations with them. I am sure if the Government and the Minister sit with them and talk to them, they will call off their strike and the negotiations will be

completed. Let the Minister make a start. He must consider the feelings of the people and the feelings of this House.

[*Translation*]

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH (Sheohar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we express our sympathy to doctors on behalf of the Janata Dal. We support the views expressed by the Leader of the Opposition party and Shri Somnath Chatterjee. As far as I know like the previous Health Ministers, the present Health Minister too is sympathetic to them. This has turned into a very complicated issue. Those who are administrators and belong to the non-doctor-cadre do not want to attach importance to doctors. The amount of Rs. two and a half crore does not matter here. This is the vital question here whether doctors would be able to render their services to the people with honour or not. I would like you to go through the memorandum and then only you will get its true picture. And the picture will show that the administrative authorities create such circumstances so that they may be able to let down the doctors. Such attempts are frequently made. The Government should have a clear stand on the TIKKU Committee or any other committee and the doctors must be treated at par with I.A.S. and bureaucrats. The Government should clarify its position in this regard.

What is the stand on these two? Doctors and Engineers both are equal. Unless some doctor takes over as Health Secretary in the Health Ministry, this problem cannot be solved. I would like the Health Minister to give a statement day after tomorrow and resolve the problem. The doctors have informed me that the Health Minister is totally sympathetic to them. I, therefore, do not understand as to why the Government is not able to accept their demands.

MR. SPEAKER : When Ministers make statements in the House, no question is

allowed to be asked on that statement but I would try that at least 2-3 questions could be asked after the statement of the Health Minister.

[*English*]

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA (Madhubani) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I add my voice simply in one sentence to the points raised by my friends here.

MR. SPEAKER : It is quite highlighted, don't worry. Allow others to speak.

SHRI BHOGENDRA JHA: I would like to submit that by Monday, when he will make the Statement, the Minister should settle the issue so that the doctors resume their duty. On Monday we do not want to hear that the strike is still going on.

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Gobichettipalayam) : Sir, due to the floods there has been a heavy damage to the life and property of the people, particularly the agriculturists in Tamil Nadu have suffered a great loss as their standing crop is completely destroyed. Roads, irrigation canals and bridges have been destroyed and they cannot be used until they are properly repaired. Thousands of houses and huts were completely collapsed and more than hundred people have lost their lives. Rough estimates reveal that Rs. 340 crores is immediately required to undertake relief measures in order to restore the affected areas to their original condition.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has taken relief measures on a war footing but the State Government is facing financial problems. It is implementing prohibition programme because of which it is incurring a heavy loss of revenues. So far no Central team has visited the affected areas. I request the Government of India to send a Central team of officials to the affected areas to