

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Personally I discussed it with some people here... (*Interruptions*). In fact, I think it can be that tomorrow before the Private Members' Business and after the Private Members' Business, for however long it takes, we sit and finally dispose of the Finance Bill tomorrow itself. The Private Members' Business will be finished at six o'clock. A certain amount of disposal would take place of speakers before the Private Members' Business starts at 3.30 or 3.45, whatever it is, and after it finishes at six o'clock. It will be much neater and tidier to dispose of the Finance Bill in that fashion. That would be my submission.

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: There is also another problem, Sir. If tomorrow we are only going to take the Finance Bill, then there are other Government business also which are slated for tomorrow. Keeping that in mind, we had agreed in the BAC that we have the BCCI discussion on Saturday morning.

AN HON MEMBER: Not in the morning, at three o'clock.

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: No, the discussion is supported to start in the morning and finish by three o'clock. Now we can reverse that. Let us start the BCCI discussion also after four on Saturday and let us finish... (*Interruptions*). May I suggest that we discuss in the chamber because there are complications overall. Let the Half-an-Hour discussion go on. We will discuss it and sort it out.

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: No, we cannot, because we have to see the collective interest of the House.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA: When can we sit in the chamber?

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: Now... (*Interruptions*).

Sir, if we are going to start a debate on the whole *modus operandi* of when reply should be given, etc. in the House, we are

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wasting the time of the House. A lot of this could be done in the Chamber. Let the Half-an-Hour discussion go on. We have the time to discuss it and let us discuss it and sort it out amongst ourselves. And come to a conclusion. Meanwhile, let the time be utilised for the Half-an-Hour discussion effectively.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : May I request Shrimati Suseela Gopalan to commence her Half-an-Hour discussion?

17.54 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

National Commission for Women

[*English*]

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN (*Chirayinkil*): Sir, I raise to rise Half-an-Hour discussion on the points arising out of the answer given by the Minister of Human Resource Development on August 5, 1991 to Starred Question No. 291 regarding National Commission for Women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir,, at the outset, I want to thank the Speaker, who has given some time in this tight schedule, besides the agreed discussion on the atrocities on women. On August 5, to a question by Shrimati Malini Bhattacharya about setting up of the National Women's Commission, a reply was given by the Government that decision has not been taken. This House has unanimously passed this Bill... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House should not suffer for want of quorum and the ladies speaking should not feel that they are not cared for. So, care should be taken. You can continue Suseelaji.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN: Sir, this House has unanimously passed the Bill for constituting a National Women's Commission. It was the long-standing demand of

[Shrimati Suseela Gopalan]

the women's movement in the country that a National Women's Commission should be constituted for going into the various problems of women. In the year 1975 - which was the International Year of Women - the participants in the United Nations Conference suggested that all member-Governments should establish in their countries such national commissions, committees and bureaus to develop the status of women in the world. By the year 1985 many countries did set up such commissions. Recently SAARC also had called on all member-countries to establish such commissions in this field.

We constituted the Status of Women's Committee in 1975. But, within a year, that Committee submitted its report and there ended the function of that Committee. A Women's Committee for self employment was also constituted which too submitted its report. That Committee was also for one year. No permanent body was set up. The National Women's Committee was there. Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee will be able to tell you in detail about the functions of that Committee. Actually there was no function at all in that Committee. Actually no effective step in any direction was taken to take suitable steps to develop the position of the women in the society.

Sir, why are we asking for a Women's Commission? We all know the deplorable condition of our women in India. 60.58 per cent of them are illiterates. 90 per cent are working in the unorganised sector. 65 per cent of pregnant women are eating mal-nutrition food. One out of eighteen women die during the pregnancy. Infant mortality is also high at 91. The sex ratio has come down to 929 women for 1,000 men. In 1981 the Government was telling that we have achieved an improvement in the sex ratio; because sex ratio at that time was 933 women for 1,000 men. In the next ten years it has come down to 929 for 1,000. What does it mean? Atrocities on women are increasing. Sex determination tests are going on unabated. New technological changes

have also started throwing out women from the organised sector. They will be thrown into the unorganised sector. That is the result of this indiscriminate mechanisation and attitude adopted. Throwing women from whatever little employment they have got, is becoming a regular feature.

Many legislation are passed. But many of them are not implemented. Some of the achievements are being taken away by retrograde steps like the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights and Divorce) Act, 1986 and some unwarranted sections in the Sati Prevention Act, 1981 which have deep implications not only for women's side and to justice, equality and freedom but to the political and social health of the nation. The result of this is compromise with fundamentalism.

18.00 hrs

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Just a minute. Is it the desire of the House that we should sit for half-an-hour more?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, Suseelaji, you continue. I just wanted to take the permission of the House for extension of time for this.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN: We are witnessing the result of these compromises in our country today. We had compromised with fundamentalism from all sides. With minority fundamentalism and majority fundamentalism we compromised. We are all witnessing the result today. Approximately 2,500 recommendations regarding women's issues were made since Independence. There are extremely important recommendations such as Ila Bhatt commission's recommendation on self-employment of women. Several recommendations of the Law Commission are still remaining unnoticed. The Status of women's Committee Report, 1975, has not been implemented. The main recommendation was for setting up a National Women's Commission. That also was not done by the congress Government. No re-

view of the programme was made. It was waste of money and time because it is not mandatory on the Government to accept the decision and implement it. The crucial question is that it is the Government that is violating the Constitutional guarantees given to women. Innumerable struggles were conducted by women's organisations and put prolonged pressure for the amendment of Dowry Prohibition Act and for constituting family courts. Because of pressure the Government was forced to pass some legislation. But what happened afterwards? A family court was meant to be established in every district with counselling centres. I would like to know from the Government how many courts have been established. In 1984 the legislation was passed, but how many courts are being established? We have approached many State Government, but they are saying there is no money because in every district they have to set up courts and there is no money. They are not setting apart any amount for this purpose. Amount should be allocated by the Planning Commission. So, when pressure is put, you will pass legislations. But in very few place family courts are set up. One family court in the Capital will not serve any purpose and the amount sanctioned for this is also very much inadequate. That is the state of affairs. Why should we pass a legislation then?

About the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, so much agitation was there. We actually picketted the Parliament twice or thrice and so much agitation was there for the constitution of a Women's Commission. That was finally passed here, But where is the Dowry Prohibition Officer? Every district should have one Dowry prohibition Officer. But did you make any effort? The State Governments are telling they have no money. What is the solution to this? And you are complaining that there is dowry death, harassment and everything against women. But what is the purpose of the law passed? Law was passed, but the Central Government did not take any initiative to implement this legislation. In 1984, I said in this Parliament that all these legislations can be kept in the archives for the future research students to

study and say that none of these legislations were implemented. This is the fate of many social legislations. What steps were taken to see that these legislations are implemented? So, women's organisations unanimously passed a resolution to constitute a National Commission for Women with statutory powers. All the women's organisations and the Social Welfare Board Chairmen were called for a meeting to discuss the Perspective Plan for Women. We discussed the Perspective Plan, we have our own reservations on it. Afterwards, in August, 1989, 43 women's organisations convened a convention in Delhi and passed a resolution requesting the Government to constitute the Women's Commission, but no positive response was there. Finally, the National Front Government brought a Bill with many lacunae and flaws and the women's organisations protested. As a laudable departure from the Congress Government's policy, the National Front Government re-discussed it with the Women's organisations and changed it substantially although some weaknesses are still there. But they were prepared to discuss with the women's organisations. Not only that they discussed with trade unions, youths and so on, they were prepared to discuss with everybody as to know how the beneficiaries in this country are thinking and how they are feeling about these legislations. Actually, the Congress Government was never willing to discuss with concerned organisations. So, after the discussions, the bill on Women's commission it was substantially changed. I can tell you, this is the best Bill ever passed in the world. It means that this is the best Bill passed in the Third World countries and the capitalist countries. I exclude socialist countries, because they have a separate system. This Bill was passed unanimously in this House. Why are they reluctant to implement it now? Not only that; you have a suggestion to have a Women's Rights Commissioner. In a country with so many languages, cultures and multifarious other problems, will a Commissioner be able to tackle the problems of women in a proper way? When we talked to the Minister, he was telling that they are trying to amalgamate both the Women's Commission as well as

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the Women's Rights commissioner. How is it possible? It means that you want to put on all powerful bureaucrat on the National Women's Commission. There are forces within the bureaucracy which are fighting against the National Commission for Women. When this Commission is constituted. Their work also will be maintained it is going to monitor as to how the Acts are implemented and how the Government is responding with regard to the problems of women. They can demand records from the departments. They can opine on them and give them to the Government with their opinion for correction. Now, there is nobody to monitor it. Whatever violation is taking place, nobody can actually do anything. Everything is happening every day. Women are suffering so much and there is so much discrimination against women in every walk of life. Sexual harassments are being meted out to women in various sectors where they are working. Who is there to monitor and check all these things? That is why, we suggested that there should be an autonomous body. But the Congress Party has objected to it. They want a Governmental body so that as usual, they can tackle these things. But I tell you about the experience of the Third World countries and the capitalist countries where commissions were set up without proper power and money this resulted in failure. In very few countries, they have achieved some progress. For example, U.K., U.S.A., France and Scandinavia. Even Pakistan has set up a Commissioner for Women. But they did not give enough powers, it was not an autonomous body. No money was given. Actually, in the initial stage, with the passing of some legislation, like equal pay equal work, some little progress was made. But again the women were very much demoralised by the functioning of the Commission. They were not happy.

So, the only solution to tackle these problems pertaining to the women is to constitute autonomous commission. That is what we are demanding. Once again, I appeal to the Government not to force the women's organisations in the country to come to the

street for the implementation of the law which is passed by this Parliament. That is my request. It is very easy to implement this thing. The people from various walks of life should be represented in the Commission and they should go into the various problems of women as to how those problems should be tackled and how the various welfare laws are to be implemented. All these things should be done.

I am very happy, Kumari Mamata Banerjee is there in the Government, on the other side. As a Minister, she has to fight within also. It is not only outside but within the Government also you have to fight. We will fight for the women's cause from outside. Otherwise this Commission will not come into existence. Government does not want autonomous body. So, I request the Government to immediately constitute a National Commission for women with proper and adequate money. That should be done. The future of the country is linked with the change in women. Then only, there will be progress in the country. Whatever developmental works you organise, without change among the women, there would not be any progress. You are seeing that in every field.

With this, I request the Government to positively react to the question of constituting of National Commission for Women.

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI(Contai): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I join with Shrimati Suseela Gopalan and the women folk of our country to express our deep concern for the negligence of the welfare of women by the Government.

Due to the existence of feudal system for centuries in our country, the womenfolk have been denied the opportunities and advantages which are due to them.

In this backdrop, various laws have been passed by the Government at the Centre as well as in the States. Various policy measures have been adopted by the Centre and the State Governments. But there is nobody to look after the machinery which is to imple-

ment all the laws and policy resolutions. So, there is a need and the need is great to establish a National Commission for Women and not National Commissioner.

In this backdrop, I want to point out that the Minister when he replied to the question under discussion said that they have not decided to implement the provisions of the Bill for National Commission on Women passed in this House. On this, a delegation of women MPs met Mr. Arjun Singh and he said that they are not opposed to implementing the Bill on National Commission on Women. He pointed out that they are considering how much they could harmonise the concept of Commissioner's Office with the Commission on Women.

The Minister for Women and Child Development has said that they have not decided as yet. The Bill on National Commission on Women was passed in this House unanimously. Various women organisations and various organisations concerned with women's welfare had suggested various measures and those measures were included in the National Commission on Women. So the Government at that time supported the Bill. Therefore, I think the Government run by Congress stands committee to implement the provisions of the Bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have to close at 6. 30 PM.

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI: To make my question effective, I should made my background effective.

The Government has confused the concept of Commissioner's Office with the Commission on Women. This concept was discarded in 1988 when it was presented in the National Perspective Plan. The 25th report of the UN on Status of Women and the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India recommended unanimously that there shall be set up an autonomous and statutory women's commission in our country. But in the Congress manifesto, the concept of Commissioner's Office was revived.

This has created doubts in our mind why such a Commission has been delayed and why they are dilly-dallying the implementation of the Bill on National Commission on Women.

So my very brief question is this: In this background, when the welfare of women is very much desired in our society, whether the Parliament both male and female joint together to have a National Commission on Women to be set up.

My pointed question is: What are the reasons for dilly-dallying the implementation of the Bill which was already passed by this House? My next question to the Hon. Minister is: Will she give a definite assurance that within a short span of time, the Bill will be implemented? These are my questions.

PROF. SAVITHRI LAKSHMANAN (Mukundapuram): Sir, we, the women, are contributors and partakers along with men and are in the mainstream of national development. I am sorry to say that it remains, so only on papers and files. We see the case of Muthamma, Ameena Aneetha Dhawan etc. every other day in this country. There were Chief Ministers in this land who were justifying or describing raping as a common phenomenon just like drinking a cup of tea. When this comment was made by an ex-Chief Minister in Kerala when he was in power, teenage boys used to comment on the girls by asking the question: Are you coming with me, to have a cup of tea?

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN (Chirayinkil): This was corrected by the Chief Minister himself.

PROF. SAVITHRI LAKSHMANAN: This is the condition of the poor women in our sovereign State. The Ameena's case was well-discussed in this House. Some of the Hon. Members having children of the same age of Ameena have expressed their deep sorrow for not allowing Ameena to be looked after by any women's organisation or individual. I do appreciate this feeling. But it is reported that a sixty-year old man Kheema

[Prof. Savithari Lakshmanan]

from a village in West Bengal bought a 12 year-old girl for Rs. 5000/- and married her. Some of my friends may be interested in collecting the data and the political interests of that particular person. But to me no matter who the man is. Let the man be from any party, caste or creed, he is a human being humiliating the girl child. It is reported that this man is now under the police custody. But the girl child has been admitted into a juvenile centre, for what crime? In this particular case, the accused is not a foreigner, but he is an Indian. I never expected such a brutal act from a so-called revolutionary State like West Bengal. I narrated this story only to express the sad condition of the women of India.

Coming to my point I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the Government have any plan to decentralise the powers of the National Commission for Women at the district level and at the grass-root level. That is all I wanted to ask.

Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, I would request the Hon. Minister to reply.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARAYA (Jadavpur): May I seek a clarification?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Yes.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: My question to the Government is: In what sense in your election manifesto you have talked about setting up of the Office of the Commissioner for Women's Rights? Even after the Bill On the National Commission for Women was passed in this House, it was not implemented.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Just a minute. After the Minister's reply is over, you can just put any question. You may do it at that time. It will be a new precedent. That is why I am telling you.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARAYA: That is all right.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT) (KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE): Sir, instead of allowing half-an-hour discussion, you should have allowed a full discussion on this subject.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: This suggestion is coming at the fag end of the hour.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Everybody's intention is this. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, first I would like to congratulate Hon. Speaker, who has provided the opportunity to discuss on this issue in the House. I would like to congratulate Shrimati Suseela Gopalan, Sudhir Giriji and Savithri Lakshmanan for their good suggestions. I too ponder several times over literacy, infant mortality, atrocities which you have mentioned. I cannot claim that today atrocities in Hindustan are not being committed and ladies are not suffering from the atrocities. I cannot claim so. But it is also not proper to say that Government is sitting like a puppet and doing nothing in this regard. This is also not correct. Hitherto our Government has not taken any decision relating to National Commission for Women. Why not? It does not matter whether it is National Commission for Women or Office of Commissioner for Women. What matters is that our Government should say something about it. We are also thinking about it. It will be good if a law is formulated, a commission is appointed in which the problems of women may be solved. It does not make any difference whether it is the issue of National Commission for Women, Commission for Women Rights. But the matter is that the laws we have and which the Parliament has passed, several such laws like- Dowry Pro-

hibition Act, 1961, Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956, Individual Representative of Women Prohibition Act, 1986, Commission on Sati Prevention Act, 1987, National Commission of Women Act which was notified but yet to be implemented, the V.P. Singh Government too fell, but the act could not be come into force even after the notification of the Act. But this has not been furnished till now. Besides these there are many other laws. There are Hindu marriage Act, 1955, Special Marriage Act, 1954, Hindu Succession Act, 1956, Hindu adoption of Maintenance Act, 1956. There are so many Acts with us... (*Interruptions*)... Please let me speak. There is need to be implemented these only. Law and order is a state-subject. Its being a state-subject, the total responsibility to implement the Acts rest on State Governments and Union territories.

I would like to request every member of the House to insist the State Government as to why they are not taking stringent measures to implement those acts. For this I want to state:

[*English*]

This is not alone a matter of U.P., Rajasthan, Bengal, Tripura or any other State. It is related to every State. The Government should come forward to take stringent action. At atrocities are on the increase. Are the political parties not responsible for this? Of course, they are also responsible for this.

[*Translation*]

Political atrocities are inflicted on women. Today, you may find it in three-four State. I do not want to make the debate controversial to hurt anybody. But it is a fact, our party is not ruling in my States, but the party which is ruling there will torture. The party ruling in Tripura, will torture my party. In the other State, my party will torture the other one. First of all, political atrocities should be reduced. Leaders of all political parties and their workers should think over the matter. They should espouse the women's cause. When political leaders and workers come to

deliver a speech they must have a compulsory subject. My submission to the political leaders is that they should speak against the atrocities on women. I call upon the leaders of the political parties to provide special protection to women. We are moving towards twenty first century, but it is very distressing that our women are still being treated as show pieces. Our women are in distress. They are not physically fit. As such they are being subjected to atrocities, molestations and rape. There should be no such thing. If India has to make progress, women should be brought forward: If they are left behind, India cannot make progress. Swami Vivekananda once said. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: You should speak about the commission. (*Interruptions*) Swami Vivekananda had said that India cannot march ahead unless our women are awakened. Women will have to be brought forward if India wants to make progress...(*Interruptions*)...I know what I have to say. Even if you insist on me you would not succeed. We will do a thing what we are supposed to do. (*Interruptions*) Sometimes parties think that this matter does not concern them. Our Government is thinking for women and paying attention to them. In 1975 Mrs. Indira Gandhi constituted a national commission on women. During the years 1977 and 1989 the matter was widely debated. But office of the commission could not be set up. It takes time, but nothing concrete could be done Congressmen remain consistent to their words. They never back out of the same. Shri Rajiv Gandhi during his tenure as Prime Minister left no stone unturned to achieve the target, but after that elections were declared soon. (*Interruptions*)

First listen to me. He could not do it due to elections. Then Shri V.P. Singh's Government also came to power. (*Interruptions*)

They also could not do as the elections were round the corner. The National Commission of Women Act was not applied in Shah Bano case. Just think about it please.

[Shrimati Malini Bhattacharya]

[English]

The Government had introduced the Bill on National Commission for Women in the Lok Sabha on 22.5.1990. The Bill was discussed in the monsoon session of the Lok Sabha, in 1990. The Bill was debated on 8th August, 1990 and it was passed in Lok Sabha on 9.8. 1990.

It was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 20.8.1990. It was debated in the Rajya Sabha on 22nd and 23rd of August, 1990. It was passed on 23rd August, 1990, by Rajya Sabha, It was a fact and the National Commission for Women Act, 1990- No.20, was notified in the Gazette on 31.8.1990. However, it has not been brought into force.

[Translation]

Our Government was formed only three months back. Our manifesto stipulates that.

[English]

The Commission on the status of women was set up by our Government. We have always believed that a special mechanism for pursuing and monitoring the rights of women should be created. It is, with a view to see that our party manifesto stipulates that the Office of the Commissioner for women's rights will be established to defend the women's rights and for taking timely action, in case of atrocities on women, in the first 365 days.

In the president's Address also, it had been mentioned that we will take measures to enforce all the legislations for women which is already there in the Statute Book. As a first step we will appoint a Commissioner for Women rights for taking the required action for effective enforcement of women rights. I would like to assure the Hon. Members that our Government will leave no stone unturned to ensure respect and dignity of women citizens of our country and will

stringently implement the laws for their protection.

[Translation]

First of all we would set up commission for women rights I have also been trying for setting up of National Commission for women. It is not a political issue for women.

[English]

There should not be a partisan attitude in this matter. We are also interested in protecting the rights of women.

[Translation]

Now it is the discussion stage. When a legislation on National Commission for Women will be brought forward its responsibilities will be specified. It has not yet been decided s to what would be the structure, the function and organisation of the commission for women rights. It would take some time. I would therefore, tell the Hon. Members.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura):
An act for this is already there.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Act is already there, but unless the law is enforced, people won't get justice.

ONE HON. MEMBER: What is the way out for this?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: There is a way to do it.

[English]

As you have asked the question I want to reply to it.

National Commission for Women will be only at the Central level, according to the Act. Whereas Commissioner for women rights will have the State branches also and district level officers will help the women in

the redressal of their grievances. (*Interruptions*)

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN: Commissions are already formed. It has already been enforced in Kerala and in West Bengal, it is going to be passed. It is on the anvil. (*Interruptions*)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Please listen to me... (*Interruptions*). .

The matter is now being politicalised. Please state why this was not done in the seven month's period after the fall of Shri V.P. Singh's Government? There was enough time for this. It was not implemented even after the Bill had been passed by the House. We came to power only three months back. A few days ago 2-3 questions were put in this regard.

[*English*]

I want to reply to the question raised by Suseelaji regarding family courts. The subject of family courts is under the State Government and under the Law and Justice Ministry. So far as my knowledge is concerned... (*Interruptions*)... You asked about the Dowry Prohibition Act also.

[*Translation*]

The august House passed the Dowry Prohibition Act. It is now for the State Governments to implement it. I make a fervent request to all the Hon. Members to ensure that State Governments pay more attention to it. Women face employment problems. They do not get food. All of us should join hands if we want to give priority to rise the standard of women.

[*English*]

We need the cooperation of each and everybody so that standard of women can be raised. Otherwise, it will not be possible to raise their standard of living. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

Nothing concrete is achieved through these

speeches alone. If proper implementation is not done, what is use of setting up of commissions? A number of such commissions are already there. A large number of officials work in these commissions. But it is of no use when implementation is not done properly. There should be a machinery to take care of all these things. Then I would like to assure the Hon. Members. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: My request to you is to let the Minister say what she wants to say.

(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: I would like to say that our department would extend every possible help to women. We want to provide them legal protection, employment opportunities and also extend the awareness generation programmes to them. We are trying to help them through every possible way. But as yet nothing has been finalised about setting up of Commission of Humans Rights or National Commission of Women. Because, other Ministers, viz. the Ministry of Law, the Health Ministry, the Department of Education and the Ministry of Agriculture are also involved in the process. So we can not take any decision now. I would like to assure you that after having mutual consultations, we will definitely do something or the other for the development of women.

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM): I would like to clarify regarding the family courts. Now, under the Family Courts Act, fortunately or unfortunately, it is provided that the State Governments are the ones which would take decision to set up family courts and to provide

[Sh. Rangarajan Kumaraman-galam]

infrastructure. When they intimate us, we notify it. We have been requesting the States to intimate to us. Since this is a forum where all parties and all States are represented, I request you to take it up with your respective State Governments to impress upon them to kindly intimate the Central Government to notify. The moment they send us the intimation, we are ready to do it. We have written to them not once but many times. We have sent many reminders to the State Governments asking them to do it on a regular basis.

SHRIMATI SUSEELA GOPALAN: Actually, we have approached the Kerala Government on this question. They agreed to set up three family courts in three districts. But the High Court said that in all the 14 districts, the family courts must be set up. They have said that it will not be possible to allow the family courts only in three districts. The real question is to find the money. This is the issue that I raised to which the Minister has not replied. You know that the State Governments will not be able to find so much money. So, my request is to set apart some money in the Plan itself so that these social legislations can be implemented after they are passed.

SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMAN-GALAM: I welcome the suggestion. In fact, I myself have taken it up with the Planning Commission and asked them to provide some amount in the Plan itself for administrative justice especially where social causes are involved. At the same time let me clarify that it may not be necessary to set apart a new building or to establish new infrastructure. In the existing district courts, it is possible to carve out one court for the purposes of a family court. It has been done in other States without incurring additional expenditure.

I understand the situation in Kerala because the High Court has intimated that it would like to start it on a total state-level basis. In other areas, where the High Courts have not insisted on this, they have set up the family courts in certain areas. We will

definitely try to impress upon the High Court of Kerala to allow the Government to set up the family courts in two or three or four districts and let the movement begin because this is in the interest of the people.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I permit Shrimati Malini Bhattacharya, Shrimati Saroj Dubey and Shrimati Vasundhara Raje to ask some clarifications, as a special case. This should not be treated as a precedent.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: It seems the Minister has made a distinction between the Commissioner's Office and the National Commission on Women only in name as if there is no real difference. She has stated that whatever be the name, the work may continue. If this is her point of view, then I would ask her to read the Act again. If I am right, later on she said that first of all they would set up Commissioner's Office and later they would set up the Commission. If this is so, then of course, she has distinguished between the two. So, in that case when an Act is there and when a simple notification is necessary to implement it, why is it necessary to set up a Commissioner's Office now and the National Commission some time later?

Then I would also like to ask that in the National perspective Plan which was submitted in 1988, there was a debate on that and during that debate almost all the women organisations rejected the idea of a commissioner's office for women and instead they recommended a National Commission for Women, a statutory autonomous body. So, I would like to know why even after that the Government have again gone back to that rejected idea of a commissioner's office instead of having a National Commission which was unanimously passed.

Finally, since she has put a lot of responsibility on the State, I would like to suggest to her only that women's problems are not just law and order problems which the State can solve by instituting police action. It is a much more important problem at a national level. We are, of course, recom-

mending decentralisation of State Commissions with district level branches. And, such a State Commission can only function when it is coordinated with a national level body.

So, I would like to have a response to that, Sir.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, let me say at the outset that I have gone through all the reports of National Commission for Women and I have also seen the recommendation to have the Commissioner's Office for women's right.

In 1989, when Shri Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister, he initiated steps to set up the Office of Commissioner for Women's Right. If you give me at least one hour's time, I can read out all the proposals.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA: Sir, the agreed recommendation of the debate on the national perspective plan says that a National Commission should be set up.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shall I make a suggestion to the Hon. Minister? Since, it is the fog end of the day, I request the Hon. Minister to call all the lady Members and discuss the matter with them.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: Sir, I have already discussed this matter with the lady Members of the House like Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee and others.

I agree that it is an important problem and the Central Government should do something in this regard. But, there are some rules and regulations. Law and order is a State subject. So, Central Government cannot interfere in any State matter. I request Shrimati Malini Bhattacharya to recollect that when one lady named Anita Dewan was brutally murdered in West Bengal, so many reputed ladies went there to attend some function and they were also murdered. We asked for a CBI Inquiry but it was not held because law and order is a State subject and Central Government cannot interfere in it.

Why I am worried? If something happens in Tripura - if it is not a Congress ruled State - the Opposition Members will shout. When it is a question of West Bengal, they will not say anything. It is not a matter of West Bengal or Tripura. We should not take these matters as matters that come under the State subject. When I am not in power, then I will criticise. When they are not in power, they will criticise. That is why, we are going to establish the Office of the Commissioner of Women Right for giving protection to women.

Regarding National Commission for Women, the President has already stated in his Address that we are going to set up such Commission. (*Interruptions*) No decision has yet been taken. I am not telling you that the matter is closed. The matter is not closed. (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Shrimati Saroj Dubey.

[*Translation*]

SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY (Allahabad): Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, the Minister has been trying to give a reply since long and has related the miserable condition of women. I would like to know only this much as to why does not the Government give a straight reply about the present position of State Women Commission in which had been constituted by the National Front Government in order to bring the women to the national mainstream by raising their social, economic and political status? I would further like that the Hon. Minister should give a clear cut reply about the Constitution of National Women Commission. Will a Woman Commissioner be appointed? Please let me know whether the woman commissioner, who will be a Government officer, will have the same powers as that of the Chairman of Women Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to say that there are already a large number of officers and bureaucrats who have been appointed to ensure women's

[Shrimati Saroj Dubey]

development in this country. Still, what are the reasons that innocent girls like Ameena are being sold every day? girl like Sugma are being tripped of their dresses on the roads, Injustice is being done to women agricultural labourers. The condition of women is very deplorable. If I go on relating the tortures our women are being subjected to, our eyes will be filled with tears. That is why I want to know about the safety of those suffering women. Why does not the Hon. Minister give a straight reply? Why does she want to pass on this work of bringing awareness among women to officials? Why does not she announce the constitution of National Women Commission?

[English]

SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE (Jhalawar): MR. Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you very much for giving me an opportunity to speak.

Obviously, we are all very exercised about this issue. We have been exercised about it for the whole of this particular Session. I do not want to make a lengthy speech on this.

I would like to slice through the Whole thing. Since the issue is of such a burning importance, since we are all worried about it, is it not necessary that we should come to the conclusion quickly? You meet with the people and discuss with them. Are you willing to sit down and give yourself a time bar within which you will put up a framework which is going to take care of this situation? We are not going to face this day-to-day occurrence—whether it is in the House, whether it is outside to read it in the papers—because it is extremely shameful. So, whether it is my Hon. friend Shrimati Malini Bhattacharya over here or Saroji or the Minister or myself or any Member of the B.J.P. I feel that we are all worried about it. I think, even the male Members, when we started the discussion on atrocities on women or any such problem, I find that there is a general hilarity in the

House and they tried more often than not to disturb the ladies—whether it is the Minister or for that matter anybody else—who are worried about this.

So, there is no point in arguing further. I think, all of us have to sit down and decide about it. Why hair-splitting? Why do we say anything about the State Government or the Central Government or the National Commission? Let us come down to something which is basic; let us do it soon. Are you prepared to do it and how soon will you do it?

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: I have already told in what way we can do it from our Department, we are ready to do that. I have already said, the name is not a matter. We have to see how we can help the women folk. We are ready to do it as early as possible.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA (Berhampore): What are your difficulties about setting up a commission for women?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM): I propose that we should sit upto eight O' clock and conclude the discussion on the Finance Bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are a number of Hon. Members who want to take part in the discussion on the Finance Bill. If you all agree, we can sit upto eight o'clock and do justice to the subject. There are Hon. Members who could not get a chance to speak in this Session. Therefore, my humble request is that we should try to accommodate those Hon. Members also. Let every Hon. Member stick to five minutes only. It is no use going on ringing the bell now and then.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES (Muzaffarpur): You make it upto 7.30 P.M.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri R. Jeevarathinam.

18.57 hrs.

FINANCE (NO.2) BILL-Contd.

[Translation]

*SHRI R. JEEVARATHINAM (Arakkonam) : Mr. Deputy Speaker Sir, while welcoming and supporting the second Finance Bill moved by the Hon'ble Finance Minister, I would like to share some of my views for his kind consideration.

He has announced certain tax relief and tax exemption on certain goods and commodities. I welcome them. He has announced income tax exemption on deposits in Rural Land Mortgage Banks, Land Development Banks and Cooperative banks. I welcome the tax relief measures with particular reference to this tax exemption to those who deposit in Rural Banks.

Likewise I heartily welcome excise duty exemption given to beverages made of fruit pulp and fruit juices. Finance Minister has announced excise duty reduction of Rs. 25 from Rs. 300 levied on picture tubes of black and white T.V. sets. The reduction to the tune of Rs. 25 may kindly be further reduced to Rs. 100 so that it could be really beneficial a relief from the budgetary proposal he made earlier.

In order to bring out the black money, Finance Minister has announced that there may not be levying of fine on voluntary disclosure or investment in Rural Housing Schemes. I would welcome this and would like to cite an earlier instance. When Mr. R. Venkatraman was our Finance Minister, he took efforts to bring out black money through the issuance of 'Bearer Bonds'. I request the present Finance Minister to reconsider the feasibility of that earlier scheme.

Now black money deposited in banks attract income tax and it is combined with the income tax already paid by such black money holders. Instead of encouraging black money holders to deposit them in banks, this method of taxation discourage them. Hence I request the Hon'ble Finance Minister to treat such accounts separately and to collect taxes levied exclusively on them.

19.00 hrs.

The ceiling on taxable income remains to be twenty tow thousand rupees. The present day prices and salaries if when taken in top consideration would suggest that even ordinary people could earn easily Rs.1750/- or Rs.2000 a month. Middle class people are the ones who are worst hit by the low income tax ceiling limit now. Hence I request the Hone'ble Finance Minister to raise liberally the income tax ceiling limit to thirty thousand rupees from existing twenty tow thousand ceiling limit. This kind gesture of the Finance Minister would benefit the salaried class at large.

I would also request the Finance Minister to reconsider the slab rates method in the levying of income tax. Those who are in the income bracket of two to three lakhs of rupees find it fleeing to pay a tax to the tune of forty to sixty per cent of their income. This taxation method appears to give rise to black money. Our able Finance Minister should look into this problem in a right perspective. I would like to say that appropriate restructuring would yield better results. In the present circumstances revenues from wealth tax is not good enough. I would like to suggest that wealth tax may be increased to augment the revenue from this area.

There is yet another way to bring out black money. Even our Finance Minister has announced in his Budget speech that investment deposits made in Rural Housing Loan banks will be exempted from income tax. Let me request the Finance Minister to extend this concession to urban housing too. In