

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry. It is with advance notice.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am deeply grateful to the hon. Members who have taken part in the debate in the last two days.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (MAVELIKARA): Sir, what about my personal explanation?

MR. SPEAKER: I am sorry. Prof. Kurien wanted to give some explanation. The Minister may speak after it.

Prof. Kurien, you tell your point in just one minute.

12.16 hrs.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION UNDER RULE 357

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (MAVELIKARA): Thank you, Sir. Day before yesterday, while the hon. Finance Minister was replying to some of the points which I raised, Finance Minister made some remarks which, I know, are off the cuff remarks. However, since they are not in conformity with facts, I thought that for record's sake I must correct it. I am quoting from what he said.

"SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: I have invited him to meet with the Member (Customs) and Member (Budget)."

'He' means me. He said: "The file is being shown to him contrary to normal rules of the Government". I did not see any file neither I asked for. He said: "Yet if Prof. Kurien does not understand the basic facts there is nothing I can do to help him. He will call me at midnight". I never called him at midnight. Yes, I called him at 10.45 p.m. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I do not know whose watch went wrong.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: I am only requesting that we should give him a good watch. That is my submission.

He said: "He will call me at 5.00 in the morning". I never get up at 5 a.m. I get up at 6 a.m. only. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I think it is okay now.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Sir, I called him only at 7.45 a.m. And then he said he could charge me that I am lobbying for industries.

Sir, I am taking pride for lobbying for the small scale growers and small scale industries. My point was only that the small scale growers of rubber in Kerala cannot sell their latex because the buyers, who are small scale industries producing rubber foam, are crippled because of competition from synthetic material. My only request and my earnest request to the hon. Finance Minister is only one thing. I have no quarrel with him. My earnest request on behalf of these small rubber growers and these small scale industries is: please give some relief, at least five per cent excise duty relief to these small scale industries. If you are not convinced, please announce that you will consider and then come and see whether these rubber growers are facing problem or not. Please come and see the situation.

MR. SPEAKER: I think that is enough.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: This is my earnest appeal. I request him, through you, to please protect us. Please use your good offices. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Finance Minister is a person that if he wants to do he will do it in one appeal.

PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this time.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): Sir, he should get up before 5 a.m. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): Sir, I appeal to the hon. Finance Minister to give some excise duty relief with regard to use of latex rubber for small scale industry. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I think it is enough. Let the hon. Minister reply.

12.19 hrs.

FINANCE BILL, 1997-CONTD.

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am deeply grateful to the hon. Members who have participated in this debate over the last two days. Even while criticising some aspects of the Finance Bill, even while pointing out what they believe are errors and departures from good policy, I note with some satisfaction that they broadly support the direction and thrust of this Budget and which is reflected in the Finance Bill.

I am grateful to the Leaders of the parties who led the discussion and who spoke at great length like Dr. Murlu Manohar Joshi, Shri Nirmal Kanti Chatterjee, Dr. Debi Prosad Pal and all other Members who made very valuable suggestions.

The Finance Bill only reflects the legislative changes that are required to implement the Budget. The Budget itself was discussed extensively and I have already replied to the Budget discussion. Naturally, there will be some overlap between that discussion and this discussion. There is, of course, a time interval which results in such an overlap in the two discussions. There is also the political crisis which overtook us for 30 days which means that we tried to go back to what we fairly were prior to March, 30 and tried to revive the continuity of the Government of India.

Specific suggestions have been made about specific issues, both of indirect taxes and direct taxes. Normally, the Finance Minister receives hundreds of representations. This year also we received a large number of them, but I am told by my office that the number is much smaller than in the previous years which are being scrutinised.