

- (i) RMK may lend its funds to the organisations/NGOs at 8 percent;
- (ii) The organisations/NGOs may further lend to the SHGs/directly to beneficiaries at 12 percent; and
- (iii) SHGs may be left free to decide the rate of interest to be charged from the ultimate members/ borrowers. Such rate should not, however, exceed the lending rate of State Bank of India on its unsecured loans during the last financial year ending 31st March.

The Government have decided to accept these recommendations.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Clarifications on this statement would be taken up later.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal): Sir, would it be taken up on Monday? If it is possible, I suggest that this may be taken up on Monday.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): We will decide.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: I would like to know the time so that we can allocate duties.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): We can have it on Monday, if it is agreed.

PROF. RAM KAPSE (Maharashtra): Sir, it can be taken up at the end of the day. We can take up the clarifications at the end of the day. Generally, statements are made at 5 O' clock and clarifications are also taken up after the statement is made. That is the decision of the House.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Is it the desire of the House that it should be taken up on Monday?

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Sir. I would like to make a request. Today being a Friday, we have some problem. Not many people are here. It is an important statement. Therefore, we can take it up on Monday, if it is possible.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANTAN BISI): Is it convenient for the Minister?

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI: Sir, I would like this to be taken up on Tuesday, because, on Monday, I would be held up in the Lok Sabha. We can have it on Tuesday.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI SANATAN BISI): Oke then; it will be on Tuesday.

We will now take up the Zero Hour submission. Shri Govindram Miri.

#### **RE.: RETURN OF KOHINOOR DIAMOND TO INDIA**

SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI (Madhya Pradesh): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, a report in the 'Sunday Telegraph' published in London early this week says that a box belonging to one of the three princes of late Maharaja Dalip Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, is in the locker of the Zurich Bank. 'This box contains the Kohinoor, the remnant of the original diamond of which Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son was dispossessed after the accession of Punjab to the British Dominion in 1848 AD; the original one is in the custody of the Bank of England.'

Sir, the Maharaja had no intention to give it to the British. This could be ascertained from the papers reportedly lying in the locker.

Sir, the sentiment attached to the Kohinoor in India is formidable. This is realised by Britain. The Labour Government in the United Kingdom must exhibit a sense of morality and fairness once again, as it did fifty years ago in 1947 by withdrawing from the subcontinent, and hand over the historical jewel to India in the Golden Jubilee Year of India's Independence.

Another suggestion made by the President of the Indian National Congress Overseas, Shri Balwant Kapoor, is that it should be graciously donated by the Queen at the Holy Harmandir Sahib in

Amritsar when she visits India in October, 1997.

Sir, while demanding return of the Kohinoor to India, I urge upon the Government to rejuvenate and renovate its efforts at getting the Kohinoor back to India in the Golden Jubilee Year. The celebrations relating to the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Independence will shine brighter with the glow of the Kohinoor.

Thank you.

**RE: TORTURE OF WOMEN FOR  
ALLEGED WITCHCRAFT**

PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY  
(West Bengal): Sir, I want to draw the attention of the House to a matter of great social injustice.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES reported on the 1st of august this year several cases of women who were tortured or driven away from their homes on suspicion of witchcraft. To give but one or two examples, one Basanti Devi was declared to be a witch by her brother-in-law and was subjected to inhuman torture. The ojha of the locality colluded. One, Radha Devi, was mercilessly beaten as a witch because one of her relations was suffering from prolonged illness.

We know that in Europe witch-hunting was a form of religious persecution. In India, this (persecution is due to interplay of vested interests on popular superstition. Women are tormented, as witches, when their existence becomes disadvantageous to some people with some power in the family or in the area. The purpose of witch-hunting is to further property interests, or ensure social positions or to enact men's rivalries on women's bodies.

Sir, the mute co-operation or the mute support of the non-risisting people watching the humiliation of the women, in my humble view, is not due to ignorance or to illiteracy but due to sunerstitifin the old life that .

women is the source and embodiment of all evil. This is the fundamental point to be taken note of beyond and above all other concerns, for witch carft, that a women, only a woman, more so, if she is ugly or old or unfortunate in her personal life, is considered to be a harbinger of misfortune, a harbinger of evil to others. Thii is the problem. It is very difficult to remove this deep-rooted superstition. It will take a long time.

I urge upon the Government to take sorfie steps immediatley. First, it is necessary to launch an awareness programme. Our Information and Broadcasting Minister is here. He takes a lot of interest in such matters. I request him to use the electronic media to generate awareness about this and to use popular art forms like *qawalis*, puppetry, *jatra*, so on and so forth.

Secondly, I urge upon the Government to find NGOs with one-issue agenda of anti-witch-hunting programmes.

Thirdly, I urge upon the Government to inform the Panchayats about this. I am very sorry to say that some Panchayats are either indifferent or actively support the victimisers. The Government should inform them of the Government's intentions and policies.

Finally, Sir, as women are subjected to such humiliation in public and not in private, the Government should give instructions to Government officials to take immediate and severe action against the culprits who are involved either directly or indirectly in it. Also, if Government officials do not do their job properly, they should be charged with dereliction of duty.

I urge upon the Government to take these steps immediately.

Thank you. Sir.

**RE: DEMOLITION OF VIDYA  
MANDIR BUILDING BY KUMAON  
REGIMENT, RANIKHET.**

श्री मनोहर कान्त ध्यानी (उत्तर प्रदेश) : महोदय, मैं एक पीड़ादायक और दुर्भाग्यवपूर्ण घटना की ओर इस