

[20 December, 2004]

RAJYASABHA

some action. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is here. ...(*Interruptions*)

डा. छत्रपाल सिंह लोधा (उड़ीसा) : मैं इसका समर्थन करता हूँ। यह हो रहा है, भ्रष्टाचार हो रहा है ...(*व्यवधान*)...

श्री उपसभापति : सभी जगह हुआ है ...(*व्यवधान*)...

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): Sir, this is a matter of great concern for all of us that this has happened to Members of Parliament, in a cluster of houses in the South Avenue and also in the North Avenue. I, myself, as an Urban Development Minister, not as a Parliamentary Affairs Minister, will sit with the Home Minister and And some permanent solutions to this problem. As far as the quality of work is concerned, I think, I am more dissatisfied than them. We are trying to improve upon it, and we will soon find solutions for them.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Concern over the ban imposed on religious freedom of Sikhs in France

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA(Jharkhand): Sir, the UN General Assembly on 25th November, 1981 made a declaration for elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and discriminations. There are several international laws and conventions recognising the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; Article 9 of the European Convention; etc. uphold the right of a person to manifest his religion of belief in teaching, practices, worship and observance. Vide an amendment to the Code of Education in the law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools, France has imposed ban on wearing of turban by Sikh students in public schools. This is denial of religious freedom to the Sikhs who constitute a miniscule minority of French population. Unshorn-hair, turban etc. are integral parts and inalienable elements of Sikhism. This law is seen as sign of religious intolerance and racial discrimination, which is distinctly opposed to Indian

ethos of *Sarva Dharma Sama-bhava* implying let all religions flourish under benevolent and non-discriminatory regime. This is unexpected from French people who enjoy reputation as progressive among Europeans. Other European countries comprise of sizeable citizen belonging to Sikh religion and this ban may encourage these countries also to imitate. I apprehend this ban on the Sikhs may be a design to force them to either give up their religion or face hardships. In view of the tradition of cordial relationship between India and France, the House may direct the Government to urge upon French Government to reconsider the new law in order that the religious freedom is restored to their citizens belonging to Sikh religion.

DR. M.S. GILL (Punjab): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE (Nominated): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sir, the whole House would like to associate on the Special Mention made by Shri S.S. Ahluwalia.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): Sir, this is an issue which I have taken up with the Foreign Minister. Long back, I wrote to him and the Foreign Minister is here and he has taken it up with the French Government.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, Shri P.K. Maheshwari.

Concern over the Implementation of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme

श्री पी . के. माहेश्वरी (मध्य प्रदेश) : महोदय , मैं आपके माध्यम से सदन का ध्यान मध्याह्न भोजन योजना की ओर आकर्षित करना चाहूंगा । इस देश में शिक्षा और साक्षरता के प्रसार के लिए स्कूलों में मध्याह्न भोजन योजना बनाई गई है । सोचा यह गया था कि गरीबी में जी रही देश की 60 फीसदी आबादी के बच्चे भोजन की लालच में स्कूल जाएंगे । पालक भी बेहतर भोजन व्यवस्था को