

Tourism and Culture on action taken by the Government on the recommendations/observations contained in its Three Hundred Twenty-sixth Report on 'Role of Indian Missions Globally for the growth of Tourism in India'; and

- (iii) Status of implementation of recommendations contained in the Three Hundred Sixty-fourth Report of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture on Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations/ observations contained in its Three Hundred Forty-third Report on 'Demand for Grants (2023-24)' of Ministry of Tourism.

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### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform hon. Members that a communication has been received from Dr. Bhim Singh, stating that he is unable to attend the sittings of the current 267<sup>th</sup> session of the Rajya Sabha from 12th March to 28th March due to medical reasons.

Does he have the permission of the House for remaining absent from 12th March to 28th March during the current session of the Rajya Sabha?

*(No Hon. Member dissented.)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Permission to remain absent is granted.

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### OBSERVATIONS BY THE CHAIR

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2025, I received a communication, 'Notice of Question of Privilege against Shri Amit Shah, Minister of Home Affairs' from Shri Jairam Ramesh, the Chief Whip of the Indian National Congress. While appending his signatures, Shri Jairam Ramesh has signed as '26<sup>th</sup> of May'. This is something which can be overlooked, as it does not change the context. This notice has been given by Shri Jairam Ramesh under Rule 188 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, the Rajya Sabha, against Shri Amit Shah, Minister of Home Affairs. And, his assertion is that aspersions have been cast on Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, Member of Rajya Sabha and Chairperson of the Congress

Parliamentary Party. Shri Jairam Ramesh has, in particular, indicated that on 25th March, 2025, Shri Amit Shah, Minister of Home Affairs, while replying to the debate on the Disaster Management Bill 2024, had *inter alia* stated as follows, I quote, "प्रधानमंत्री राष्ट्रीय राहत कोष कांग्रेस शासन में बना और पीएम केयर्स नरेन्द्र मोदी जी के शासन में बना, एनडीए के शासन में। कांग्रेस के शासन में एक परिवार का ही नियंत्रण होता था, मान्यवर। इसके अंदर कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष सदस्य होते थे, मान्यवर।" He further goes on to quote, and I read, "कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष, सरकारी फंड में कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष - क्या जवाब..." ...(व्यवधान)... Please sit down. Nothing will go on record. ...(Interruptions)... This is a serious matter and I have very frequently noticed that with respect to breach of privilege notices, which I will come to a little later, we need to evolve our protocol. I will come to that a little later. "कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष, सरकारी फंड में कांग्रेस के अध्यक्ष - क्या जवाब दोगे देश की जनता को? ऐसा मानते हैं, कोई पढ़ता नहीं है, देखता नहीं है!" Hon. Members, thereafter, some Members took exception and the hon. Home Minister announced that he will authenticate his statement. Shri Jairam Ramesh, after indicating this, has requested that in view of the foregoing, privileged proceedings may be initiated against Shri Amit Shah, Union Home Minister. Hon. Members, this has found wide attraction in media. If a communication is sent to the Chair, as has been indicated in the Bulletin, the long-standing practice is that it should not get publicity.

Ultimately, the Chairman or the House has to take a call. But the traction has been very widespread. I have taken note of the authentication wherein Shri Amit Shah, the hon. Home Minister, has indicated, I quote: "मैं राज्य सभा में दिनांक 25 मार्च, 2025 को 'आपदा प्रबंधन संशोधन विधेयक, 2024' के चर्चा के दौरान मेरे द्वारा 'प्रधान मंत्री राष्ट्रीय राहत कोष (पीएमएनआरएफ)' पर की गई टिप्पणी को सत्यापित करते हुए भारत सरकार द्वारा दिनांक 24 जनवरी, 1948 को जारी प्रेस विज्ञप्ति को आपके समक्ष रखता हूँ।"

Hon. Members, he has authenticated a document which is dated January 24, 1948. "Press Information Bureau, Government of India, Press Note, Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, Pandit Nehru's Appeal, Pandit Nehru has issued the following appeal." I am focussing, hon. Members, on the relevant part; it is available to you. 'I am, therefore, starting a fund called "The Prime Minister's National Relief Fund" and I invite donations to this Fund.' And, then the constitution of the Fund is given. "...This Fund will be managed by a committee consisting of: 1. The Prime Minister, 2. The President of the Indian National Congress, 3. The Deputy Prime Minister", and there are some other Members. Hon. Members, I have carefully gone through the debate and what the Union Home Minister asserted. The Home Minister focussed in categorical terms that this was the practice.

SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH (Karnataka): Sir, this is too clever by half. ...*(Interruptions)*... It is of 1948, we are in 2025. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: I am coming to that. ...*(Interruptions)*... I am coming to that. ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing will go on record. ...*(Interruptions)*... No, nothing will go on record. Hon. Members, let me reflect, I have carefully gone through it. I find there has been no transgression. There has been absolute adherence to truth, which is vindicated by a document that is available to the hon. Members, and that being the situation, I cannot persuade myself to accord any acceptance to this notice, of question of privilege against Shri Amit Shah, the Minister of Home Affairs. ...*(Interruptions)*...

Hon. Members, your Chairman has done home work. The practice continued for decades. I do not want to go beyond that. ..*(Interruptions)*... All I say is, breach of privilege is a serious matter. ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing else will go on record. I have declined, with a deep sense of anguish and pain that we rush to invoke breach of privilege, we rush to the media, give it traction, and try to tarnish image. And I have said on a number of occasions that this House will not be a platform to ruin reputations of people. We have to protect it.

Hon. Members, on this sensitive occasion, I seek to invite your attention that Ethics Committee in the entire country, in the largest democracy, was formed, for the first time, in Rajya Sabha. This was headed by a very distinguished parliamentarian, a veteran leader, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and a senior Cabinet Minister, Shri S.B. Chavan. A first of its kind, the report was rendered on 1st December, 1998, to which I have adverted earlier also. After wider consultations across Parliamentarians, Legislatures and public associations, a report was rendered. In that Report, amongst numerous other situations, Shri S.B. Chavan Report says, "Firstly, Members must conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the dignity of Parliament and preserves their personal credibility. Secondly, Members bear the responsibility of maintaining exemplary standards of morality, dignity, decorum and values in their public conduct." ...*(Interruptions)*... Hon. Members, now, the Ethics Committee is headed by the distinguished parliamentarian, Shri Ghanshyam Tiwari. I am tasking the Ethics Committee to look into S.B. Chavan Committee Report on Ethics and take note of the intervening situations mostly brought about by technological developments and social media and evolve a mechanism, fresh guidelines for Members for adherence.

Hon. Members, there are seven notices that have been received under Rule 267. I must advert to one notice in particular. Notice has been received -- this is

time-barred -- from Shrimati Sagarika Ghose. The notice was received on 26th March, 2025, at 1.36 p.m. ...*(Interruptions)*... One minute. Surprisingly and painfully, the notice wants 'Suspension of Business under Rule 267 on 20th March, 2025'; and this is at two places in the notice. I will urge you to be a little serious about parliamentary work. How can, on any ground, your Chairman accord acceptance by suspending proceedings that have already taken place? And we have a senior Member of the Party who is very stickler about rules, and I hold him in high esteem for it. ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, it has to be a little careful. Hon. Members, I overlooked Shri Jairam Ramesh's, which said 'May' instead of 'March' because I can overlook that. But this one is beyond implementation. I cannot, even if I want, suspend on this day the proceedings of 20th of March. Even Artificial Intelligence has not gone to that level to help me in the line. ...*(Interruptions)*... Hon. Members, the notices of Shri Javed Ali Khan and Shri Ramji Lal Suman have demanded discussion over the alleged threat and attempt to attack on the residence of a former Union Minister and a sitting Member of Rajya Sabha at Agra by some anti-social elements. ...*(Interruptions)*...

The notices of Ms. Dola Sen, Shri Ritabrata Banerjee and Shri Mohammed Nadimul Haque have demanded discussion over the alleged lapse of Election Commission in issuance of multiple duplicate Electors Photo Identity Cards across the States. Shri Sanjay Singh demands discussion over the alleged weakening of provisions of the RTI Act, 2005 due to amendment in the Digital Data Protection Act. The notice of Shri Sandosh Kumar P calls for discussion over the infamous Kodakara money laundering case and action by the Enforcement Directorate. Hon. Members, I am unable to persuade myself to accord acceptance to these. I would accommodate the hon. Members in Zero Hour to raise their points.

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### MATTERS RAISED WITH PERMISSION

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, 'Matters Raised with the Permission of the Chair'. Jayaji — 'Request for issuance of Commemorative Stamps on 50 years of Iconic Films *Deewar* and *Sholay*'.

**श्रीमती जया अमिताभ बच्चन:** सर, मेरी आपसे रिक्वेस्ट है कि आप इतना pain मत लिया कीजिए।

MR. CHAIRMAN: Jayaji, your advice is well taken.