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Title: Regarding celebrating the birth anniversary of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya as a Good governance Day on 25th December,

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Madam, I would like to invite the attention of this august House to a very important issue which has been reported today. It is about the reported move of the Central Government to celebrate the birth anniversary of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya as a Good Governance Day on 25th December. ...(*Interruptions*) It is Christmas Day.

माननीय अध्यक्ष: इसमें क्या करना है?

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL : The day in which they are celebrating this event is the birth day of Jesus Christ celebrated all over the world. We are not against Shri Vajpayee ji or celebrating the birth day of Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. It is a good thing, not a bad thing.

The point is that the Navodaya Vidyalaya has issued a circular to the schools operating in the rural areas on the lines of the Kendriya Vidyalayas. The schools are affiliated to CBSE. The Navodaya Vidyalaya circular says that the CSBE will be organizing an Essay Competition on December 24th and 25th, the topics for which will be declared on December 23rd. The Essay Competition will be held for standards I to V; VI and VII and IX and X.

The Commissioner of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti Shri V.S. Motiyal has asked the schools to conduct Quiz Competition, screen documentaries on the best practices in good governance and carry out related activities on Christmas Day. Is it good governance? ...(*Interruptions*) On Christmas Day, every Christian will go to church for prayers. Not only Christians, but all the people will go to churches. From 24th night onwards and also on 25th morning, every Christian family and those who are associated with them will be in church for the devotional rituals and prayers. Asking the children to be present in schools on that auspicious day for participating in programmes like Essay Competition and Quiz Competition would really hurt the sentiments of the minorities. Being a sovereign, secular and democratic country, how can the Government of India insist on this type of activities on Christmas Day? Is it good governance? ...(*Interruptions*)

माननीय अध्यक्ष : आप केवल अपनी बात रखिए।

â€¦(*व्यथान*)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL : Madam, celebrating Vajpayeeji's birthday is a good thing. But I think Vajpayeeji would not want any honour like this at the expense of suppressing the faith of the minorities. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: Shri Mullapally Ramachandran, Shri N.K. Premachandran, Shri P.K. Biju, Shri M.B. Rajesh, Dr. A. Sampath and Shrimati P.K. Shreemathi Teacher are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri K.C. Venugopal.

Shri Badaruddoza Khan.

...(*Interruptions*)

माननीय अध्यक्ष : आपने अपना मैटर बता दिया है।

â€¦(*व्यथान*)

माननीय अध्यक्ष : जीसे आवर में बाकी कुछ नहीं होता।

â€¦(*व्यथान*)

HON. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record except what Shri Md. Badaruddoza Khan says.

(*Interruptions*) â€¦ *

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Sir, I want a reply from the Government on the issue raised by me during the 'Zero Hour'...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Sir, the Government should reply....(*Interruptions*)

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The 'Zero Hour' is over.

...(*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. VENKAIHA NAIDU): Hon. Deputy Speaker, Sir, though it is not the practice, keeping in view the issue raised by hon. Venugopal ji and other Members, I would like to just clarify one thing though I am more keen that the Bill should be taken up and there is another important programme also.

Some of the newspapers today carried out an item...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : A very big item; not a small item.

SHRI M. VENKAIHA NAIDU: Okay. They carried a very big item without any basis. We would like to clarify from the Government. I have talked to the

Minister; I have talked to the Secretary also. The instructions from CBSE to conduct online essay competition on 24th and 25th December...*(Interruptions)*

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let him complete.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: From CBSE, Navodaya, Kendriya Vidyalayas, there is no Circular to say that they must run the schools on the day of holy Christmas on 25th December. There is no such instruction. This is my first point...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : On 24th also...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Just hear me. Secondly, Sir, this is a vacation season for schools depending on the climatic conditions. On the basis of the climate, the Navodaya Schools declare holidays. There are holidays, as per our information. In residential schools, normally children stay there. This good governance essay writing competition is only online and voluntary even for them also. Whoever wants to participate in it, they can participate in it on 24th December, 2014 and if they do not want to participate, they need not participate. Nothing has been made mandatory. It has been made online. I think, Venugopalji understands as to what is online. So, there is no question of using any force. I am thankful that, at least, he accepts that Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji's birthday is also very important. Definitely, it is important because he is the man who brought the connectivity revolution in the country. So, the Government has decided to observe 25th as a 'Good Governance Day'. Keeping that in mind, these instructions were given but not to open any schools or conduct any essay writing competition. I would like to assure that no such thing is going to happen at all. I only hope that the media, important newspapers – I do not want to name any newspapers – should also verify it. ...*(Interruptions)* Then people will say that you are giving extra publicity only to *The Times of India*. What about other newspapers, *The Hindustan Times*, *Navbharat Times*, etc?...*(Interruptions)* My point here is that there is no such thing. Secondly, everything is optional. Thirdly, school holidays will continue as they were earlier. Fourthly, this essay writing competition is online. Fifthly, it is voluntary. Whoever is interested, can participate and whoever is not interested, need not to participate. On the 25th December, people are going to the church. They can happily go to the Church. They can offer their prayers and enjoy the Christmas also. Like others, I would also like to convey my best wishes to our Christian friends of this House and outside also. But from the Government side, there is no such move. This is a clarification that I would like to give. ...*(Interruptions)*

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The matter is over.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL : Sir, the hon. Minister has given directions to the concerned schools. ...*(Interruptions)*

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: He has already replied that there is no such move.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: There is no such thing...*(Interruptions)* Venugopalji, there is no such thing. I have instructions with me.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: Sir, hon. Minister of HRD has sent a letter to the concerned schools. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: She has not sent any letter. ...*(Interruptions)* I had a talk with the Minister of HRD. She was there in my room just now. Her son is having some health problem. He is admitted to hospital and she wanted to go there. Otherwise, as a Parliamentary Affairs Minister, I have been taking proactive role to see that the concerned Minister also comes to the House and clarifies the position. Though it is not required as per the rules yet we do not want to go only by rules but we want to see that whatever information asked for is given to hon. Members also to the extent possible. Hon. Minister has clarified that nothing has been forced on anybody. There is no such Circular also because conducting essay writing competition is a different thing. But opening the school and making it mandatory is not there at all.