

arises, it is stated that they haven't been working for them. At least in Delhi you can set the things right then other states may be asked to follow the example stating that when this facility can be given in Delhi, it should be made available in other states as well.

There are several teaching shops in the capital. People have opened tuition and coaching centres where the lady teachers are employed. But how many of these teaching shops give maternity benefits to their women workers? What I mean to say is that this law should be got implemented strictly and effectively. As one hon. Member has submitted that even the nurses working in the All India Institute of Medical Services are not getting maternity benefits which is most unfortunate. You should conduct a comprehensive survey to find out the places where these benefits are not being given and ensure that they are given to them. It is a welcome step that you have reduced the period of eligibility for the maternity benefits from 160 to 80 working days. In rural areas the women workers on the agricultural farms can easily achieve this mark of 80 days. Government should ensure that a proper register is maintained so that the woman worker who has worked for 80 days may be given maternity benefits.

I agree with the point that the maximum of maternity benefits should be given only upto two children but it should not be discontinued after this limit is crossed, rather it may be lessened. I want to submit that not only the women and the voluntary agencies should have the power to complain but also any individual. For example, if a newspaper reporter comes to know of the exploitation of women in the construction industry, he should have the power to file a complaint in this regard and there should be hearing on this case and it should be implemented properly.

Finally, this is a very good and progressive Bill. Government should make their all out efforts to implement it effectively.

STATEMENT REGARDING THE VISIT OF  
MR. GORBACHEV, GENERAL SECRETARY  
OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE  
CPSU AND PRESIDENT OF THE  
PRESIDIUM OF SUPREME  
SOVIET TO INDIA

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI): Sir, as the House is aware, Mr. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Chairman of the President of Supreme Soviet, came as our honoured guest to receive the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, President Gorbachev's contribution towards making our world free of nuclear weapons and strengthening the force of peace, cooperation, goodwill and understanding has brought about a unique and qualitative change in the international environment. In our honouring him with the Indira Gandhi Prize, we are paying tribute to a person who symbolises the passionate yearning for peace, progress and prosperity to which Indira Gandhi dedicated her life. President Gorbachev's visit was a reaffirmation of the high regard which the Soviet Government and the people have for the values which motivated our freedom struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and for the vision of a strong and self-reliant India, which Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi espoused.

Sir, the Delhi Declaration which President Gorbachev and I signed during his last visit to India in November 1986, embodied the commitment of our two countries to rid the world of the threat of a nuclear holocaust and to build a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world order. The Action Plan which I presented to the Third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament in June this year, spelt out to the world community, the concrete steps which could be taken to achieve the goals enshrined in the Delhi Declaration. Honourable Members will be pleased to note that President Gorbachev has supported our Action Plan. India and the Soviet Union have agreed on the need for immediate measures to end the nuclear arms race, to establish international control over emerging new technologies with a military

[Shri Rajiv Gandhi]

potential and to work for the conclusion of an International Convention banning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.

President Gorbachev's visit provided yet another opportunity for us to exchange views on regional and International issues. We both agreed that since my last meeting with him in July 1987, there has been a marked reduction in the tensions and suspicions which had bedevilled the world in the recent past. The signing of the INF Treaty, the Geneva Accords on Afghanistan, the cessation of hostilities in the Iran-Iraq war and the progress towards finding negotiated settlements to issues in South-East Asia and Southern Africa, are all manifestations of a new era emerging in international relations. President Gorbachev's bold and imaginative initiatives are replacing confrontation by co-operation, suspicion by trust and doubt by hope. The Soviet Union highly appreciates India's active and constructive role in the Non-aligned Movement and our efforts to promote peace, disarmament and development.

As Hon'ble Members are aware, developments in Afghanistan had led to increasing tensions in our region and even threatened our security environment. It has been the hope of the international community that the Geneva Accords would usher in an era of peace and stability in the region and enable the Afghan people to determine their own destiny, free from all foreign interference and intervention. President Gorbachev informed me that while the Soviet Union supported the establishment of a broad based government in Afghanistan, it was concerned at the continuing violations of the Geneva Accords. It is our hope that these Accords would be implemented fully in letter and spirit, so that the people of Afghanistan, can devote their energies to the tasks of national reconstruction and economic development.

The House is aware that our bilateral relations with the Soviet Union have been growing from strength to strength. During President Gorbachev's visit we reviewed the

progress which has been achieved in implementing the various decisions and agreements which we had arrived at in our past meetings. Agreements were signed yesterday on the construction of a nuclear power station in India [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6745/88], on the exploration of outer space for peaceful purposes [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6744/88] on the setting up of the second stage of the Vindhya Thermal Power Station [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6742/88], on Avoidance of Double Taxation [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6743/88] as well as a Protocol on Economic and Technical Cooperation in Power Projects [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6746/88]. The texts of the Agreements and the Protocol are laid on the table of the House [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6742 to 6746/88]. These agreements will give an added impetus and new dimension to our already multifaceted economic, scientific and technical cooperation. We also signed an Indo-Soviet Summit Statement, whose text reflects our common commitment to strengthening peace, friendship and cooperation. The text of the statement is also laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library. See No. LT 6747/88].

May I add, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that our ties have been significantly strengthened by the unique exposure which people in India and the Soviet Union have had during the last year, to each other's ancient, rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, our friendship with the Soviet Union has stood the test of time. President Gorbachev's visit to India is second in the last two years, symbolises the desire of the Soviet leadership and people to further nurture, enrich, deepen and widen this friendship. This, we greatly cherish and fully reciprocate.

12.58 hrs.

MATERNITY BENEFIT (AMENDMENT) BILL  
*Contd.*

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: The House will now continue with the discussion on the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill.