

(ix) Need for Compensation to the Cloud-burst affected people in Kargil.

SHRI P. NAMGYAL (Ladakh) : The unprecedented cloud burst that occurred recently in the Kargil and Leh districts of Ladakh resulted in the death of fourteen persons, including two children and has rendered many people homeless and hundreds of acres of cultivable and fodder lands, including standing crops buried under debris. Property worth lakhs of rupees is reported to have been lost in the cloud burst.

I urge upon the Government of India to assist the affected people by providing relief and compensation enabling them to make alternate arrangements before the onset of winter.

12.31 hrs.

TAXATION LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S. M. KRISHNA) : on behalf of SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE : I move

“That the Bill further to amend the Income-Tax Act, 1961 the Wealth-Tax Act, 1957; the Gift-Tax Act, 1958 the Companies (Profits) Surtax Act, 1964, the Compulsory Deposit Scheme (Income-tax Payers) Act, 1974 and the Interest-tax Act, 1974 be taken into consideration.”

Sir, the proposals in this Bill are intended mainly to streamline procedures in the interest of better work management, avoid inconvenience to tax-payers reduce litigation, remove certain amounts in, and rationalise some of the provisions of, these enactments, and counteract tax avoidance and tax evasion.

The Bill contains about seventy proposals. A more comprehensive Bill would have taken more time to prepare, and in case it was referred for detailed

consideration to a Select Committee of this hon. House, it would have involved further delay.

I have, therefore, struck a compromise and adopted a practical approach. I have sponsored certain important, and yet simple and non-controversial measures, so that the Bill may be considered and passed during the current session. Hence, proposals which needed more detailed discussion and consideration by Parliament have been left over for consideration at the appropriate time.

Sir, the Bill does not contain any proposal for the amendment of the Estate Duty Act, although there is urgent need to simplify and rationalise its provisions. However, a Bill to amend the Estate Duty Act can be introduced in this House only after necessary resolutions under Article 25 (1) of the Constitution have been passed by State Legislatures adopting the proposals relating to these amendments. As this procedure takes considerable time, it would not have been feasible to include any proposals relating to the amendment of the Estate Duty Act in this Bill.

The Parliament, has, however, recently passed the Estate Duty (Amendment) Bill, 1984 for excluding agricultural land from the levy of estate duty under the Central enactment. After the various States have adopted the amendments in that Bill, it would be possible to sponsor amendments to the Estate Duty Act without following the procedure laid down in Article 252 (1) of the Constitution. Comprehensive reform of the law relating to estate duty has, therefore, to be necessarily deferred.

I shall, with the indulgence of the House, now briefly refer to some of the more important proposals in the Bill.

Payment of small sums by way of advance tax, not only causes inconvenience to tax-payers, but also adds to the workload in the Income-tax offices. I, therefore, propose to provide that, from the financial year 1985-86, payment of advance tax will be optional in the case of individuals, Hindu undivided families,