

[Shri Morarji Desai]

raised with me in many conversations. I had the opportunity of reaffirming our position, which had been made clear on many occasions, both in this country and outside, that we are interested in developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes only.

Sir, we have wider options to develop beneficial relations with the community of nations than ever in the past. In the last three months since we assumed office, within the framework of the positive thrust of non-alignment, we have assured old friends of our abiding commitments and repaired estranged relationships, both near and far. We can claim that our neighbours have greater trust in our friendship and the subcontinent as a whole is less disturbed by tensions and more inclined to cooperation. The Commonwealth Conference and this trip abroad provided me with an opportunity to affirm to the leaders from all parts of the world that this Government of India, sustained in the exhilaration of the trust of its people and inspired once again by the vision and idealism of Gandhiji, will be second to none in its commitment to a world at peace striving towards international social justice.

Altogether, this opportunity of meeting the Heads of more than thirty Commonwealth countries, the Shahanshah of Iran and the President and Prime Minister of France, proved that India commands great goodwill and respect in the international community.

12.58 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE RELINQUISHING OF OFFICE BY SHRI S. L. SHAKDHER, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF LOK SABHA AND APPOINTMENT OF SHRI AVTAR SINGH RIKHY AS SECRETARY, LOK SABHA.

MR. SPEAKER: I have to inform

the House that Shri S. L. Shakdher, Secretary-General of Lok Sabha is relinquishing his office tomorrow morning on his appointment as Chief Election Commissioner. He has been the Secretary-General of Lok Sabha for the last 13 years. He was in the Lok Sabha Secretariat as an officer of the House since 1950. His contribution in adaptation and changes in Parliamentary procedure with a view to help the efficient functioning of this House is commendable. I and my predecessors have always relied on his sound advice. His rich knowledge and wide experience in parliamentary field is symbolised by his treatise on "Practice and Procedure of Parliament", not to speak of his numerous other publications. His advice on matters of procedure was always available to Members irrespective of their party affiliations.

Shri Shakdher is a familiar and much liked figure in the parliamentary circle the world over. He has been a member of several parliamentary delegations and has availed of every occasion to acquaint himself first-hand with the developments in parliamentary processes and procedures in different Parliaments of the world. He has been associated with international parliamentary bodies like Inter-Parliamentary Union, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments. His unanimous election in 1973 as President of the Association of Secretaries-General of Parliaments to which references were made in Lok Sabha on November, 12, 1973 is evidence of his popularity and standing among Secretaries-General of Parliaments of the world.

Shri Shakdher's appointment as Chief Election Commissioner comes as a fitting tribute to his distinguished service to the House as also the position he commands as an expert on constitutional matters and parlia-

mentary procedures. We shall miss him. We wish him well in his new assignment.

In appreciation of his long and devoted service to this House and following past precedent, I have appointed him as Honorary Officer of the House.

13 hrs.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): May I, Sir, join you in your well deserved appreciation of the services of Mr. Shakhder on the occasion of his demission of this office for an equally important office of the Chief Election Commissioner from tomorrow. I have been an active but silent witness for 20 years of his service to this House out of 27 years. It is a fairly long experience and I can say without any fear of contradiction that I found his work to have been in the true democratic spirit and he did his work to the satisfaction generally of the whole House.

It is not possible for anybody to please everybody. Therefore, we have to take it in that light, but even in that condition, I would say that he had been able to satisfy generally the whole House which is no small achievement. I have no doubt that he will do his work in the new office with equal credit and even more with all the rich experience that he has had here. And in many memoirs that he has written he will add one more, I am sure, on the Election Law. I have no doubt that he will do his work with the greatest credit. I wish him well and success in his new task.

SHRI YASHVANTRAO CHAVAN (Satara): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with you and the Prime Minister for offering my felicitations to Mr. Shakhder whom I have seen sitting here as Secretary-General of Lok Sabha for many years. From my long association with this House I can

say Mr. Shakhder is not only a scholarly person but an expert adviser on the matter of working of legislatures. He had been very silent in applying those rules and scholarly information and knowledge about the functioning of Parliament in practice. As we all know, the Parliament naturally reflects the mood of the country; sometimes it is calm and quiet; sometimes, it becomes tempestuous and this is a very natural thing, and during these moments he had always been a source of strength and consolation. To see this calm and quiet figure sitting here, it looked as if he had to help silently and at the same time, resourcefully the Speaker to control the House. That is a very important function that the Secretary General has to do.

Apart from that, he had been very objective. I don't think any Member had any hesitation in approaching him irrespective of his party affiliation. He had always been helpful to us all. I can say this from my experience when I used to sit on the side of the Treasury Benches and now I can say this when I am sitting on the opposite side. He has been helpful not only here but also on the other important side of the functioning of Parliament, that is, the working of Committees which is not popularly known because it is not reflected in the press; the press does not not know about it. The Committee work is a very essential part of Parliamentary activities and there we receive help from all officers, but particularly with Mr. Shakhder I have got personal experience on many Committees where we found his presence and advice very useful, and that is why I used the adjective that he is a very resourceful person. Well, I am sorry he is leaving because certainly it is a loss to Parliament and particularly to us. But it is a gain to the nation since he is going as the Chief Election Commissioner. I must say that it is a very appropriate selection for the office of the Chief

Election Commissioner because, I think, for the first time, at least as far as I remember, a person associated with legislative work is going to work as the Chief Election Commissioner, which is a very right thing.

Well, Mr. Shakdher, you have all our best wishes. Though we will miss you here, we will meet you on some other ground because, though you are changing the place and the position, you are certainly going to an assignment with which all Members of all legislatures are connected. So far, you were only connected with Members of Lok Sabha, but now you will be connected and concerned with the problems of all the people contesting the elections and desirous of becoming Members....

MR. SPEAKER: Not of voters?

SHRI YESHWANTRAO CHAVAN: I was coming to that point. Ultimately the test of success of a Chief Election Commissioner is the fact that the voter is satisfied. Therefore, it is a very important national institution, and the fact that an experienced person is going there is a matter of joy for us. Certainly it is a matter of satisfaction to him also that he is being promoted. I should say, or changed to a position which is very important. He has all my best wishes for all the success. Naturally, as I have said, we will be missing him, but it will be our national gain.

I support all the good words used by the Prime Minister and the Speaker.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE (Howrah): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I fully associate myself with the words of appreciation expressed by you and the Prime Minister as well as the Leader of the Opposition, for Mr. Shakdher. My experience with him has not been very long, but I have seen that, whenever the House was in a turbulent

mood, he always came to the rescue of the Speaker. That is a very big qualification which he has demonstrated, and this shows that the special capacity which he has got to help the Speaker in tackling situations is a very good qualification. I have also seen Members quoting him as an authority during debates, quoting from the book written by him jointly with Mr. M. N. Kaul. This shows that he is an authority on Parliamentary functioning and Constitutional aspects: he has acquired and developed this knowledge through so many years of experience and by his personal qualities. I hope that, in his new assignment, he will maintain perfect impartiality which is expected of the Chief Election Commissioner—because the Chief Election Commissioner is faced with the claims and counter-claims of many rival political parties—and that he will play his role in his new assignment more effectively. With this hope and confidence, I again express my appreciation to him. It is a loss for us that we shall not be able to maintain our daily association with him here, but I hope our association will be maintained in another form after he takes over his new assignment.

I express my appreciation of his services once again.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN (Coimbatore): On behalf of my group, I associate myself with all the sentiments expressed so far, and I would like to mention particularly how Mr. Shakdher has always been of the greatest help to new and young Members of Parliament. He helped them come into the main stream of Parliamentary procedures and also helped them to find out how they could derive the best from Parliament and fulfil their duties as Members of Parliament for their constituencies.

Another point I would like to draw attention to is that I have seen, again and again, how Mr. Shakdher has been most helpful to the panel of Chairmen because sometimes, particularly in recent years, there have been very turbulent moments when the Chairman had been left to the mercy of the Members of Parliament while the Speaker was not present in the House and Mr. Shakdher has helped these Chairmen enormously to create order in the House again—as his book, which has been referred to, is becoming more or less a Bible for tackling those who raised points of order, and I am sure, it will continue to be so. In saying good-bye to him I would like to say that we are, in fact, not saying 'good-bye' but are only saying 'au revoir' as we would be meeting him again.

SHRI EBRAHIM SULAIMAN SAIT (Manjeri): On behalf of my Party I would very much like to place on record our appreciation of the great service rendered by Mr. Shakdher in developing and strengthening the Parliamentary democracy of our country in the most difficult times. One has to accept and concede that Mr. Shakdher has effectively contributed to the efficient functioning of democracy in our country in the last fourteen years because of his rich knowledge of the Parliamentary system of democracy. No doubt, we all feel sorry that he is leaving us but we shall be seeing him again as the Chief Election Commissioner of our country. I am sure he will perform his task to the entire satisfaction of the people and supervise the future elections in our country as an impartial officer and thus protect the democracy of our country.

I wish him well and also thank him for all the services he has rendered to democracy. We shall also be missing him, as he is also a great friend of the Members of this Parliament.

SHRI P. K. DEO (Kalahandi): I have the privilege of knowing Mr. Shakdher as an officer of this House for the last twenty years and as the Secretary-General for the last fourteen years, in which post he acquitted himself with great credit.

A reference was made to his book on the practice and procedure in Parliament. It may be compared to May's 'Parliamentary Practices' and it will be a useful guide for any student of history in regard to the evolution of Parliament in this country, and also for posterity in upholding the valuable Parliamentary practices that have been evolved in this House. Though the Emergency vitiated the entire atmosphere of the country, it hardly touched the fringe of the precincts of Parliament, and the credit for the same goes to Mr. Shakdher.

I had the privilege of accompanying Mr. Shakdher to various international conferences and I am grateful to him for the attention he paid to all the Members of Parliament. In Hong Kong, when I fell ill, with all interest and attention, he took special care about my health, and I am extremely grateful to him for the same. Wherever I have been, whether Hong Kong, Ottawa, Laos or Kaula Lampur, there were enquires about him and that is the greatest proof of the appreciation his work received, not only from this country but from other countries also. He is now going to shoulder new responsibilities and I am sure he will acquit himself equally well as the Chief Election Commissioner.

MR. SPEAKER: Consequent on the appointment of Shri Shakdher as Chief Election Commissioner, the post of Secretary-General of Lok Sabha has fallen vacant. I have gone through the records of service of Shri Rikhy and Shri Patnaik. Taking all factors into consideration, I have selected Shri A. S. Rikhy to officiate as Secretary of the Lok Sabha from 18-6-1977, i.e. tomorrow. The post of Secretary-General shall be redesignated as Secre-

[Mr. Speaker]
 tary until further orders. The post of Secretary-General was created recently; now we shall have only Secretary. We shall consider it again later on, but Shri Rikhy will be Secretary from tomorrow onwards.

13.15 hrs.

DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (RAILWAYS), 1977-78—Contd

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Sukhdev Prasad Verma.

श्री सुखदेव प्रसाद वर्मा (चतरा) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं बजट का समर्थन करने हुए सर्वप्रथम माननीय रेल मंत्री महोदय को बधाई देना चाहता हूँ कि उन्होंने देश की जनता की आकांक्षाओं और आशाओं के अनुरूप बजट पेश किया है जो कि बदलती हुई परिस्थितियों में पूर्ण रूप से वास्तविक है। बजट को देखने से तसल्ली होती है कि वास्तव में अब रेल विभाग द्वारा योजनाबद्ध और सही ढंग से, शीघ्रता से काम होने वाला है। यह आशा न सिर्फ संसद के सदस्यों को है बल्कि मैं अभी क्षेत्र के भ्रमण में आया हूँ वहाँ की जनता को भी है। मैं रेल मंत्री को इस बात के लिए भी बधाई देना चाहता हूँ कि उन्होंने बजट के द्वारा ऐसा दृष्टिकोण प्रस्तुत किया है कि रेल विभाग एक व्यवसायिक संस्था नहीं है बल्कि यह देश के विकास में एक बहुत बड़ा योगदान करने वाला संस्थान है। जहाँ रेल विभाग इस दृष्टिकोण पर आगे बढ़ कर काम करे वहाँ उसे इस बात को भी ध्यान में रखना चाहिए कि हमें जो पूंजी लगी है उसका ह्रास न हो बल्कि शून्यः शून्यः उसकी वृद्धि हो और विकास के कार्य भी साथ साथ चलते रहें। मंत्री महोदय को इस बात का कयाल रखना चाहिए।

13.16 hrs.

[MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER in the Chair]

हिन्दुस्तान जैसे बहुत बड़े देश में रेलों का बहुत महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। भारत संसार के बहुत से देशों से पिछड़ा है। इसका कारण यह भी है कि इस देश के बहुत से हिस्से ऐसे पिछड़े हुए इलाके के हैं जहाँ पर कि लोग आज तक रेल नहीं देख पाये हैं। उन इलाकों में विकास की गति बड़ी धीमी है। इसलिये माननीय मंत्री जी को चाहिए कि रेलों का इस तरह से विस्तार हो जिससे कि वेग के पिछड़े इलाकों की तरफकी हो सके। वे रेलों के विस्तार की ऐसी योजना बनायें जिससे किसी संसद सदस्य को या राज्य सरकार को उनसे अपने इलाके में रेल के विस्तार की मांग न करनी पड़े। मैं समझता हूँ कि नयी परिस्थितियों में हमें पुरानी परम्पराओं को बदलना चाहिए। हमें सारे देश की बृहत् रूप से ऐसी योजना बनानी चाहिए जिसमें सारे देश में वास्तविकता के आधार पर रेलों का विस्तार हो, ज़रूरत के अनुसार रेलें बिछायी जाएं।

अगर इस तरह की योजना रेल मंत्रालय या रेलवे बोर्ड के पास रहेगी तो उसी के आधार पर इसका काम चलता रहेगा और हर एक को यह पता रहेगा कि इतने दिन के अन्दर उमरें यहाँ काम होने वाला है और बार बार जो इस तरह की मांग की जाती है विभिन्न सदस्यों की ओर से कि उनके यहाँ ये ये लाइनें होनी चाहियें उस में बड़ी कमी आएगी। सारे देश के जो पिछड़े हुए इलाके हैं, आर्थिक सामाजिक, तथा अन्य दृष्टिकोणों से उन्हें विकसित करने के लिए एक योजना सारे देश के लिए बननी चाहिये रेलवे विभाग की ओर से और उस में यह अंकित रहना चाहिये कि इस प्राथमिकता के मुताबिक काम चलता रहेगा चाहे कुछ भी हो और काम रुकेगा नहीं तो लोगों को शिकायत करने का मौका नहीं रहेगा।

रेलें देश के विकास में बड़ी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका भूषा कर सकती हैं। कई इलाके ऐसे हैं जो बहुत पिछड़े हुए हैं। इस सम्बन्ध