

rule 127 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, I am directed to inform the Lok Sabha that the Rajya Sabha, at its sitting held on the 17th September, 1991, agreed without any amendment to the Cancellation of General Elections in Punjab Bill, 1991, which was passed by the Lok Sabha at its sitting held on the 16th September, 1991."

Sir, I also lay on the Table a copy, duly authenticated by the Secretary-General of Rajya Sabha, of the Cancellation of General Elections in Punjab Bill, 1991, passed by the Houses of Parliament during the current session and assented to by the President.

*(Interruptions)**

MR. SPEAKER: This is not going on record.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: If we have mentioned it on the floor of the House, yes, we have mentioned it.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: There are some expected and unexpected items on the agenda. I would like to inform you that there are two statements to be made by the Ministers and then there is something which will be explained to you later on. The House will sit and cooperate and allow the business to be completed.

(Interruptions)

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV (Azamgarh): Sir, this is unfair. You should not be a party to such a thing. You are the custodian of this House. This is not way the function the House. *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: There was a meeting with the leaders of all the parties in my

chamber and some issues were discussed over there. The Minister is going to put before you as to what those issues are and there was an agreement on those points.

That will be informed to you and you will come to know. We are not working in the darkness; discussion has taken place and we are going to take it up with your consent only. We are not going to take it up without your consent. We are trying to follow rules a little more scrupulously rather than flouting them. Please understand this.

Now, first of all, I will allow two statements to be made, first by Kumari Girija Vyas.

18.00 hrs.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

- (I) Certain References made to the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in that National Parliamentary Quiz Telecast.

[English]

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (KUMARI GIRIJA VYAS) : As Hon'ble Members are aware, the issue of a derogatory reference to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, in a programme telecast by Doordarshan, was brought up by Hon'ble Member Shri Mohd. Yunus Salim in this August House on the 6th September, 1991. Sharing his anxiety about the matter, the Leader of the House, Shri Arjun Singh Ji, had stressed the need for making an enquiry into the events and to report to this august House whether the error had crept in by mistake or was made deliberately.

In pursuance of this assurance given by the Leader of the House, the matter has been carefully looked into. In 1989, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in association with the Ministries of Information &

[Kumari Girija Vyas]
Broadcasting and Human Resources Development launched a scheme of organising "Nehru Parliamentary Quiz." This Quiz programme was for school students in the 10+2 group.

The representative teams from the various States and Union Territories were grouped into 4 zones and a written test was conducted by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs on 17-7-89. Eight teams were selected on the basis of the test to compete at the national level. The eight selected teams and two stand by teams assembled in Bombay from 28th August to 31st August, 1989. The programme was produced by M/s United Television of Bombay as sponsored programme comprising 7 episodes.

Prizes and certificates were distributed to the winners by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. The 7 episodes were telecast on the national hook-up during the period 9th November to 21st December, 1989. This programme was well received by members of public.

On 6th February, 1990, it was decided by the then Government to organise two quiz contests, one for senior secondary school level students and the other for University Students. The nomenclature of the programme was changed by the then Government from "Nehru Parliamentary Quiz" to "National Parliamentary Quiz". State Governments were requested to select representative teams of two students each to represent the State for the contest. The methodology of selection was left to the State Governments. Thereafter a written test was conducted by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs on 27th July, 1990 in different centres throughout the country to select the 8 best teams among the school students and 8 best teams from among the University students. Two stand-by teams were also selected for each level. The teams assembled in Bombay for shooting which took place from 3rd October to 10th October, 1990. During that period 7 episodes of the school level competition and 7 episodes of the University level competition were shot.

The questions and the material to be made use of during the course of shooting of the episodes were furnished to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs by M/s United Television. These questions and material were scrutinised by a team of officers of the Ministry and then put up to the then Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, who, on 21.9.90, directed the then MOS to see and approve. Accordingly, it was put up to the then Minister of State of Parliamentary Affairs who approved it on 24.9.90. The Quiz competition referred to above was based on this material.

VHS copies of the first episode were received in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs on 24th October, 1990. The comments of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs relating to Parliamentary procedural aspects were conveyed to M/s United Television on 29th October, 1990. The VHS copies of episodes 2, 3 and 4 were received by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs on 16th November, 1990 and comments of that Ministry were conveyed to M/s United Television on 19th November, 1990. No comments were made in respect of the said reference to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

Meanwhile, discussion and correspondence were made by M/S United Television with Doordarshan for additional free commercial time and the time slot. In the month of August, Doordarshan decided to offer them the 9.00 p.m. slot on Sundays from 1st September, 1991, without additional commercial time. Pursuant thereto, M/s United Television sent the U-matic of episode No.1 to Doordarshan on 27-8-91. Two Doordarshan Producers previewed the programme on 28-8-1991.

The reference of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has given rise to a feeling that a derogatory remark against a universally respected national leader was included in the programme. Officers of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, who saw the programme, looked at it from the point of view of Parliamentary procedure. As far as the two Producers of Doordarshan are concerned, their written explanations have been obtained.

They have stated that since the episode had been earlier previewed by officials of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, they had paid close attention to the technical quality of the programme while also paying attention to the content of the content of the programme. The Minister of State of Information & Broadcasting has personally looked into the matter. On close examination he did not find any malafide motive of these officers. In any event all concerned officers have deeply regretted such reference. The Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting has already offered his apology to the nation in the Rajya Sabha.

After having seen the programme and having detailed discussions with officials of the Ministries of Information & Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs as also of Doordarshan, the Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting is of the view that the inclusion of these words is derogatory. However, taking into account the explanations given by the officials who dealt with the programme and those who previewed it, they have been warned to be more careful hereafter in relation to sensitive matters. It has been decided that the remaining episodes of this programme would be hereafter previewed by the Secretary, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs and the Director General, Doordarshan. This being an educate programme which seeks to inform young minds about the greatest institution of democracy, namely Parliament, we believe, no purpose will be served by discontinuing the programme. The officers have been advised that this useful programme may go on but after taking extreme care to see that the factual position is correctly presented and no offensive remarks remain. Orders have also been issued that all such programmes already made must be previewed by the senior officials before these are telecast. I may also mention that as a tribute to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Doordarshan had telecast at prime-time on Sunday, 8th September, Films Division documentary bringing out the significant contribution made by him in our freedom struggle and towards the promotion of the highest values of human life.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Roseria) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this issue was taken up simultaneously in both the Houses on 6th. The hon. Minister made a statement in the Rajya Sabha on 7th and it is being made in this House, today, after 12 days. I feel that the prestige, decorum and importance of the lower House is being lowered deliberately. When the statement could be made in the other House, on the very next day, what difference it would have made, if he had done the same here also. I want your ruling in this regard. Such things should not recur and the lower House should not be treated as a lower house literally.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri Mallikarjun to make a statement on behalf of Shri Kamaluddin Ahmed.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now statement by Shri Mallikarjun on the measures proposed to ensure effective reach of the Public Distribution System.

(Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE: Sir, there is no supplementary list. (Interruptions) There is no mention of it.

What is this statement?

MR. SPEAKER: It is a policy statement.

(Interruptions)

(ii) **Measures proposed to ensure effective reach of the Public Distribution System**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI MALLIKARJUN) : The House will kindly recall that Prime Minister had made a statement earlier in the House on the Public Distribution System and promised that a