

MR. SPEAKER: I am satisfied and I will talk to you. No problem.

[Translation]

We will see in the forth coming session.

[English]

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO (Parvathi Puram): What about my privilege notice against the Indian Express?

MR. SPEAKER: Deputy Speaker will look after that.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO: Sir today is the last day and they are publishing all.

MR. SPEAKER: I told you that because it concerns me so, I did not do it. I am only answerable to you.

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji): I have given a notice of breach of privilege against Mr. Kishore Chandra Deo for casting aspersions on the Privilege Committee. To quote his own words, he said that the "Privileges Committee ran away" ... So, you kindly take action.

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: It has come just now what can be done Now, Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

11.27 hrs

[English]

# CONSTITUTION (SIXTY-FOURTH AMENDMENT) BILL\*

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI):** Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for leave to introduce a Bill to further amend the Constitution of India.

Sir, democracy was the greatest gift of

our freedom struggle to the people of India. Independence made the nation free. Democracy made our people free. A free people are a people who choose their own representatives. A free people are a people who are governed by their will and ruled with their consent. A free people are a people who participate in decisions affecting their lives and their destinies.

Gandhiji believed that democratic freedoms have to be founded in institutions of self-government in every village of India. He drew his inspiration and his vision from the 'Panchayats', the traditional village republics of India. Panditji established the institutions of Panchayati Raj as the primary instrument for bringing development to the doorstep of rural India. Indiraji stressed the need for the people's participation in the processes of economic and social transformation.

Yet, there is no denying that in most parts of the country we have failed to fulfil the high hopes we had vested 30 years ago in the institution of Panchayati Raj. Elections have been irregular. They are of ten unnecessarily delayed and frequently postponed.

This is not a matter of political will. The best record of regular elections to Panchayati Raj institutions is of two State Governments which since the inception of Panchayati Raj have almost continuously been ruled by the Congress Party. Gujarat and Maharashtra (Interruptions)

In recent times. (Interruptions)

SHRI AMAL DATTA: (Diamond Harbour): What is the record of U.P.?

(Interruptions)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: You hear the next sentence.....(Interruptions)

Sir, in recent times, some State Governments run by the Opposition Parties, such as, the CPI (M) in West Bengal and the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra and the Janata

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Party in Karnataka have held regular elections. In other States.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Say Tripura also.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: In other States, the record of non-Congress parties and coalitions has not been much better than that of Congress run State Governments. This is not a matter of political parties.

The essence of democracy is elections. Elections to panchayati Raj institutions have been woefully irregular and uncertain. A mandatory provision in the Constitution is sacrosanct. A statutory provision in the State law does not have quite the same sanctity. We propose through this Bill to enshrine in the Constitution regular, periodic elections to Panchayati Raj institutions.

We also propose through this Bill to end the other sickness which has overtaken Panchayati Raj in many parts of the country, that is, the sickness of unending suspensions and dissolutions. In the absence of any compelling provision to re-constitute Panchayats within a reasonable period of time by democratic elections, suspended Panchayats have remained suspended for years on end and dissolved Panchayats have remained dissolved for up to a decade or more. In the existing municipal law on the subject State Legislatures have given the executive authority such wide powers to abort the institutions of Panchayati Raj and delay reconstituting them that these institutions have been leached of their ability to stand on their own as representative forums of the people's will. Their existence has depended less on the mandate of the people than on the whims of State Governments.

Our Bill leaves it to the States to determine the grounds and conditions on which the Panchayats may be suspended or dissolved. We expect State legislatures to specify the grounds on which the Governor may suspend or dissolve a Panchayat. That is a matter for the Governor acting, in accordance with the Constitution, on the aid and

advice of the State Government. Our concern is with ensuring that a dissolved Panchayat is reconstituted within a reasonable period of time. Our Bill would make it mandatory through the Constitution for all Panchayats dissolved before the expiry of their term of office to be reconstituted through democratic elections based on adult suffrage within six months of the dissolution to complete the remaining term.

No more will Panchayats remain the playthings of the arbitrary exercise of executive power. It is the people who will determine within a matter of months the profile of the reconstituted panchayat. It is the Constitution which ensures that the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are constituted by the vote of the people on the basis of universal adult suffrage. It is the Constitution which ensures that if an Assembly is dissolved, it is reconstituted by a procedure and within a time frame specified in the Constitution itself. These are essential safeguards to ensure the strength and vitality of democratic institutions. The institutions of Panchayati Raj have lacked strength and vitality precisely because they have lacked Constitutional safeguards. Our Bill will ensure that Panchayati Raj has a democratic character similar to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies and Constitutional protection for their functioning as representative institutions of the people.

The single greatest event in the evolution of democracy in India was the enactment of the Constitution which established democracy in Parliament and in the State Legislatures. This historic revolutionary Bill takes its place along side that great event as the enshrinement in the Constitution of democracy at the grassroots.

Till now, there have been weaknesses in the structure of our democracy because although the superstructure is strong, the foundation has been weak. Putting together both Houses of Parliament and all the State Legislatures, we have only about five thousand to six thousand persons representing a population of nearly 800 million. This has

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had two serious consequences.

First, the number of persons holding elective office in well-founded institutions of democracy has been far too small in relation to the size of our electorate. Once we accord to democracy in the Panchayats the same sanctity now enjoyed by Parliament and the State Legislatures, we will be opening the doors to the participation in democratic institutions of something like seven lakh elected representatives. The people's stake in democracy will be increased by a factor of approximately 115.

There is a second deleterious consequence of the vast chasm that separates the general body of the electorate from the small number of its elected representatives. This gap has been occupied by the power brokers, the middle-man, the vested interests. For the minutest municipal function, the people have had to run around, finding persons with the right connection, who would intercede for them with the distant sources of power. The system has been captured by the power-brokers, it is being operated in the interest of the power brokers, it is being protected by the power-brokers. The power brokers have established their vice-like grip only because democracy has not functioned at the grass-roots. The only way of breaking their stranglehold is for democracy to fill the vacuum, which the power brokers have occupied. Once the people have their own elected representatives from electorates as small as a hundred to five hundred persons, the source of power will lie only as far away as the Panchayat Ghar: not some distant State capital or the even more distant capital of the country. To end any role for power brokers in the system, the Bill provides for the direct election of members to Panchayats at all levels.

Every voter will have his own representative in the Gram Panchayat, in the mid-level Panchayat and in the Zila Panchayat. That representative will be responsible to a small and well recognised electorate. If he

fulfils the mandate of the people, he will be re-elected; if he fails, the people will throw him out of office. The power of the vote will become the power of enforcement. The will of the people will render the power broker superfluous.

Today, opportunity for democratic elected leadership is confined to the few thousands who succeed in entering the portals of the State Legislatures and parliament. Once this Bill becomes an integral part of the Constitution, a huge country-wide reservoir of leadership potential will be created. At each Panchayat election approximately half a crore men and women, most of them young, will present themselves to the electorate seeking the people's mandate. Some will succeed and some will fall by the wayside. Those who do not succeed will get another opportunity five years later.

There is a vast uncultivated field of talent lying fallow in rural India. It is that fallow field, we now propose to seed. That field will be watered by the votes of the Members of this House and of our colleagues in the Rajya Sabha. The crop of talent you raise will give us the bountiful harvest to take our nation forward to a prosperous, glorious future.

There is no country richer than ours in the most precious asset of humankind, the human resource. We in India, have not flourished, as we should because we have not nurtured our greatest resource. This Bill makes it possible for the bulk of the nation's talent to be given opportunity. Throughout the country there will be a ferment. In every one of our 600,000 villages, in every one of our 5,000 blocks, in every one of our 400 districts, democracy will groom the men and women whose experience will subsequently become available to legislatures at the State level and to the Parliament of the Union of India.

Our proposed Constitutional amendment lays the Constitutional injunction upon the State legislatures. It is for the State legislatures to enact the appropriate law... (*Interruptions*)

A quite unnecessary controversy has been raised about the role of the Governor in the proposed Panchayati Raj system. The Constitution is unambiguous on this point. Article 154 (1) states that "The executive power of the State shall be vested in the Governor" Article 163 (1) clarifies that "There shall be a Council of Minister with the Chief Minister at the head to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions " And, therefore, the word Governor in the Constitution refers to the Governor exercising his executive powers only and exclusively on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, with one exception. The exception is provided for in the remainder of clause (1) of Article 163 (*Interruptions*) which reads: "except in so far as the Governor is....." (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Order, order.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Sir, I quote

"except in so far as he is by or under this Constitution required to exercise his functions or any of them in his discretion."

The distinction between the expression 'the Governor' and the expression "the Governor in his discretion" is such a well known matter of Constitutional law that it is amazing that there should be any confusion on this point. After all, the expression, "the Governor" appears at scores of places throughout the Constitution, and has nowhere been misconstrued, or misinterpreted.

We are confident that in this parliament, acting in the exercise of its inherent constituent powers, there will be no confusion between the functions of a Governor acting in accordance with the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers, and of a Governor acting in his discretion wherever the Constitution requires him to do so,

In establishing the institutions of democracy in Parliament and in the State leg-

islatures, our founding fathers gave particular recognition to the disabilities suffered by the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Provision was made for the reservation of seats for them in accordance with the proportion of their population in the total electorate. This is principal which has not been incorporated in most of the Panchayati Raj legislation enacted by the State legislatures.

In my discussions with Panchayati Raj representatives, both during my extensive tours of rural India and in the numerous Panchayati Raj sammelans we have held, it was brought home to me most forcefully that the democratic rights of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes cannot be secured by good intentions alone. At this stage, it has to be secured, in the first instance, by reservations in Panchayati Raj institutions on the same basis as reservations are given in the Lok Sabha and in the State Assemblies.

I see that a certain section of the House is not at all happy about this.....(*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (S. BUTA SINGH): They are not even concerned. (*Interruptions*) They are not even concerned. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: There is a widespread and justified apprehension on the part of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes that if their due representation in these bodies is not ensured, Panchayati Raj could become an instrument of oppression in the hands of the rural elite. Experience in different parts of the country....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI M. RAGHUMA REDDY (Nalgonda): What were you doing all these years? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: We are waking you up; that is what we are doing.

Experience in different parts of the country has shown how, in the absence of reservations, vested interests and feudal



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interests have been able to capture these institutions. *(Interruptions)*

Their hold on these institutions has been reinforced by the failure to hold regular elections. The people's mandate has been perverted into an instrument of exploitation.

To forestall such a perversion of the process, our Bill proposes to make it mandatory for State legislatures to ensure reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes..... *(Interruptions)*

I was aware that reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would cause certain problems when we wanted to enforce them, but to be honest I did not expect the problems to come from this section of the House. *(Interruptions)*

Obviously, the power-brokers and feudal interest as stand totally exposed today. *(Interruptions)*

To forestall such a perversion of the process, our Bill proposes to make it mandatory for State Legislatures to ensure reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in the relevant panchayat area. Our Bill also proposes a significant departure from the Constitution as it exists today. We propose the reservation in Panchayats at all levels of 30 per cent of the seats for women. *(Interruptions)*

I appreciate the interruptions from the hon. members; and I appreciate that this too disturbs them tremendously. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI M. RAGHUMA REDDY: What about the backward classes?

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: There are three major reasons for which we believe this Constitutional innovation to be necessary. *(Interruptions)*

First, women constitute half the popula-

tion and are involved in rather more than half the economic life of rural India. However, to our shame, their share of assets and income is much less than their share of the population. But the toil and sweat imposed upon them is rather more than half. Second, the sound finance of the household has traditionally been the responsibility of woman. Financial discipline and fiscal responsibility are ingrained in the habits and outlook of the women of rural India. These are qualities badly needed in Panchayati Raj institutions. We believe the presence of women in large numbers in the Panchayats will not only make the Panchayats more representative but will also make them more efficient, more honest, more disciplined and more responsible. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI AMAL DATTA (Diamond Harbour): You give them 50 per cent.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Third, it is the women of India, in their role as grandmothers and mothers, who have been the repository of India's ancient culture and traditions. It is to them that is entrusted the responsibility of transmitting to the next generation the quintessential values, standards and ideals which have enabled our civilization to survive and flourish without a break despite vicissitudes of many kinds. It is that strength of moral character which women will bring to the Panchayats. Let us give them a warm welcome.

not even a warm welcome for the women from the Opposition. *(Interruptions)*

I now turn to the heart of the matter: devolution and sound finance. Respecting the right of the States to legislate provisions for devolution, we have deliberately refrained from tampering with their rights. We have no intention of attempting to rule the districts from the Centre. But we do expect the State Legislatures to enact such measures as are required to devolve powers and authority upon the Panchayats, keeping in mind the provisions of this Bill and the spirit in which this Amendment is being brought forward.

First is the power and authority of the Panchayats to draw up plans within the framework of guidelines and conditions to be stipulated by the State Governments. These plans will constitute the basic inputs for the planning process at higher levels. Thus we will ensure that the voice of the people, their felt needs, their aspirations, their priorities, become the building blocks of the edifice of planning. We must put an end to planning from above. We must put an end to priorities being conceived and decided at ethereal heights far removed from the realities on the ground. We must put an end to paternalistic planning. We must initiate a process of people's planning.

Our Bill goes beyond merely planning for economic development. It lays upon the Panchayats the even heavier responsibility of planning for social justice. It will not do to romanticise life in our villages. Life there is hard. Life there is exacting, life there is in many ways, exploitative and oppressive.

In driving the power brokers out of the power houses, in rendering the Panchayats to the people, we lay upon the people's representatives the solemn responsibility of turning their attention first and foremost to the needs of the poorest, the most deprived and the most in need. Each plan for economic development will be accompanied by a plan for social justice. No plan for economic development will merit attention until its social justice component is clear. This is a charter not merely for our villages to become prosperous, but also for our villages to become just.

The second major responsibility of the Panchayats will be the implementation of development schemes assigned to them by the State Governments on such conditions as may be specified by the State Governments. These schemes should cover the major economic concern of rural India commencing with agriculture and land improvement and going on to irrigation and watershed management. It must comprise the diversification of the rural economy into animal husbandry, dairying, poultry and fisher-

ies. It must incorporate industrial activity in rural India. It must extend to minor forest produce which is the chief source of income for our entire tribal populace. It must encompass the day to day concerns of rural India, housing, drinking water, fuel and fodder. The devolution must deal with the basic infrastructure of communication and power in rural India.

We have suggested the inclusion in the Panchayats area of competence of development schemes relating to non-conventional energy sources.

The proposed Eleventh Schedule seeks to vest in the Panchayats the major responsibility for the administration of poverty alleviation programmes. It would entrust panchayats with education and culture as well as health and family welfare, women and child development. We propose to request the State Legislatures to make social welfare programmes for all the weaker and handicapped sections a functional responsibility of the Panchayats. We also propose to give to the Panchayats the responsibility for the public distribution system, which is so crucial for the survival of the weakest and the poorest as also for the general health of the rural economy.

SHRI AMAL DATTA: The Public Distribution System is collapsing.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: That is precisely why we want to give it to somebody who will run it and not to the States who are making it collapse. (*Interruptions*)

The Bill proposes that the Panchayats be entrusted with the most neglected area of our community life, namely, the maintenance of community assets.

I would like to stress that the Eleventh Schedule is not an exhaustive list. We hope that the States will progressively devolve many more powers and authority upon the Panchayats so that whatever can be looked after at the local level is looked after at that level and not remitted upwards. (*Interruptions*)

SHRISATYAGOPAL MISRA (Tamiluk): What about the land reforms?... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: The single greatest danger we have to guard against is the devolution of powers to the Panchayats being followed by the transfer of these powers out of the Panchayati Raj system into other bodies constituted outside the system and placed under the direct control of the State Governments. Almost all the State Governments whether Congress or non-Congress, who have established a good system of Panchayati Raj have seriously weakened the impact by constituting bodies outside the Panchayati Raj system where real powers of decision-making are vested and where the elected representatives of the Panchayati Raj are overshadowed by Ministers appointed by the State Government or, as in the case of Karnataka, by the MLA becoming the ex-official Chairman of the Taluka Panchayat Samiti.

It is the purpose of our Bill to ensure that powers delegated to the Panchayats remain within the Panchayats and are not channelled outside the system. By the same token, our Bill is designed to ensure that all development agencies are brought within the framework of the Panchayati Raj institutions and made responsive to the elected authority. There are two basic reasons for administration at the district and sub-district levels having become so unresponsive to the people. One is the fragmentation of the district administration into a large number of agencies vertically owing responsibility to State Government without adequate coordination at a single focal point at the district level. The other has been the absence of an elected authority to function as that focal point... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY (Mohbubnagar): Is this an election manifesto?... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: This is a manifesto for the election of the Panchayats... (*Interruptions*) Let us be clear about that.

This is a manifesto for the people of India... (*Interruptions*) Sir, this is a manifesto to give power to the people of India and to rob some of the power brokers who are getting so agitated... (*Interruptions*)

Sir, the House would recall that our Government was returned to office with the largest mandate ever accorded to any party in the history of independent India. I, as Head of that Government, pledged to make a number of structural changes. I very quickly discovered that the system could not cope with the demands which we were making upon it. There was too much ossification.

Mere tinkering with the system would not do; a systemic transformation was essential. Indeed, the starting point of the exercise which has led to the presentation of this Bill was my search for a way of fulfilling the 20th point of our revised 1986 20 Point programme, which promised to the people a responsive administration. At my instance, the Department of Personnel organised a series of workshops on Responsive Administration to which were invited all the District Magistrates, Deputy Commissioners, and District Collectors of the country. I spent over 20 hours in discussion with them.

It emerged that we could not make our administration responsive merely by simplifying procedures or establishing grievance redressal machinery or opening complaint windows. Every such step only led to one more power centre for the power brokers to occupy. The *sine qua non* of responsive administration is representative administration, responsible to the electorate. Such responsive administration in rural India can only be secured through genuine Panchayati Raj. It is this that our Bill seeks to achieve.

Devolution of administrative powers must go hand in hand with sound finance. Too often in the past, Panchayati Raj has had functions without finances, responsibilities without funds, duties without the means of carrying them out. Our Bill empowers State Legislatures to ensure the sound finance of the Panchayats by endowing them

with the revenues of taxes that might be appropriate by, or assigned to them, as also with grants in aid from the Consolidated Fund of the State.

#### 12.00 hrs

To assist State Legislatures and the executive authority in determining which taxes to assign or leave for appropriation, as also the grants in aid to be given, the Bill proposes the establishment of a Finance Commission to make suitable recommendations.

I would stress the importance of determining the taxes which will be levied, collected and appropriated by the Panchayats. Nothing will inculcate in the Panchayats a greater sense of fiscal responsibility than the possibility of retaining with them the moneys that they raise for such use as they best deem fit. Untied grants make for local-level planning. Authorisation for appropriation makes for responsible local-level planning. So far, the tendency has been to confine appropriation to cesses. We hope State Legislatures will go further and identify taxes, duties, tolls and fees which might be appropriated by the Panchayats.

We are asking of the State Legislatures no more than we are ourselves ready to do as a Union Government. A beginning has been made with the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. 80 Per cent of the Funds are being devolved on the village panchayats. (*Interruptions*).

We propose to extend this principle to other Centrally-sponsored schemes. There can be no better way of involving the people in their own development. There can be no better way of reducing corruption and nepotism. The system we propose is a transparent system. The bulk of the electorate in a village is composed of the intended beneficiaries of development schemes. Each intended beneficiary will know what schemes are available, how much money there is in the scheme, whether and how the moneys

are being spent. Any Panch or Sarpanch who cheats the people will be removed by the people. There is no way he can escape the consequences of the malfeasance.

I would now like to turn to those parts of the country we are proposing to exempt from the system, or in respect of which special provision is made for modification. In the North-East, there is one sparsely populated tribal State which has no difficulty in adopting Panchayati Raj without modification. That is the State of Arunachal Pradesh. The Bill recognises that in three other States of the North-East Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, there are traditional systems of self-government, akin to Panchayati Raj, which must be preserved. Indeed, the rest of the country would be well-advised to study and learn from the Village Development Boards of Nagaland. In these three States, the traditional systems will be left undisturbed.

Similarly, in areas covered by the sixth Schedule, where autonomous District Councils have been established, we would not wish to disturb the system so carefully structured. On the same principle, we are not extending the Bill to the District Council areas of Manipur and the areas covered by the Gorkha Hill Council in the Darjeeling Hill district of West Bengal.

As regards the Union territories, the Bill empowers the President to withhold, extend or modify the application of the provisions of the Bill to a part or the whole of the Union territories. This is designed to ensure that traditional or nascent institutions in areas like the Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry are not adversely affected and the special characteristics of Union territories like Delhi are taken into account.

Similarly, in areas covered by the Fifth Schedule the Government (in his discretion and not on the aid and advice of his Council of Ministers) may determine the conditions of which Panchayati Raj would be extended to these areas.



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Sir, the Bill proposes that all State Legislatures bring their State legislation into conformity with the proposed Part IX of the Constitution within a year of the commencement of operation of the amendment. We recognise, however, that Panchayati Raj institutions have been elected in most States, some as recently as this year. The Bill authorises the continuance of these Panchayats till the expiry of their terms, unless State Legislatures decide otherwise. The interregnum between the passage of this Bill and the alignment of State legislation with its provisions will, we hope, be used by State Government to give deep thought to the working of the new system.

Panchayats will have to be given the staff they require. We do not propose that the Annual Confidential Reports of the bureaucracy be written by elected representatives at the Panchayat level, but the district bureaucracy will have to be trained and oriented towards discharging its new responsibilities in changed conditions. We have to build trust and mutual respect between the district bureaucracy and the elected Panchayats. At other levels of our democracy, in the States and at the Centre, the bureaucracy and the elected authority have learned to work together in mutual cooperation. Such a harmonious relationship must also subsist between the district bureaucracy and the Panchayats. We hope. State Government will resist the temptation to effect a cleavage between the regulatory and development functions of district administration. There will have to be coordination because it is only through development administration that a regulating officer can establish the contacts and linkages essential to forestalling a law- and order crisis or resolving it when it occurs.

We are deeply conscious that this Bill restricts itself to democracy and development at the grass-roots in rural India. We must extend the same concern to the growing urban and semiurban population of the country. To this end, Government propose to bring forward major legislation in the next

session of the Lok Sabha.

We shall turn our attention to recasting, revamping and rejuvenating the cooperative movement which Panditji had always regarded as the essential complement to Panchayati Raj.

We come to this House after long consideration and a national debate without precedent. We have consulted with more than ten thousand representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions from all over the country. We have discussed Panchayati Raj with the bureaucracy at different echelons, including district officers, Chief Secretaries and Secretaries to the Government of India. We have held meetings with Panchayati Raj Ministers and the Chief Ministers of the States. We have extended the debate to political levels, with in Party forums and in a Parliamentary Consultative Committee.

Our proposals are before you but our mind is not closed. In the months to come, we hope there will be intensive debate about these proposals all over the country. We are prepared to carry forward such discussions with Opposition Parties and Chief Ministers. We will of course listen with the utmost care to suggestions made on the floor of the House. We seek consensus but we are prepared to face the challenge of confrontation. We shall fight for the rights of the people, we shall fight for democracy for the people, we shall fight for development for the people. It is the people of India who are our first and foremost concern. The proposals we place before the House are not really our proposals, they are the proposals of the people of India. We have drawn upon the accumulated experience of Panchayati Raj from all over the country, the good experience as well as the bad, the experience of Congress-run governments as much as of State Governments run by other parties. This experience has been pooled and churned. Out of this *man than* has emerged the *amrit* which we now propose to share.

Our democracy has reached the stage where the full participation parties caption of

the people brooks no further delay. We are accused of rushing through this Bill. There has been no rush. For several years now, we have been holding well-published consultation at several different levels on Panchayati Raj. No one in the public life of this country could have been unaware of our intentions. Our respected Rashtrapati, in his Address to both Houses of Parliament, had specifically referred to the major legislation on the subject which Government proposed to bring forward. We now fulfil that promise. Those who decry this as an election gimmick are precisely those whose feudal interest will be overthrown by power reaching the people (*Interruptions*). Sir, whenever I talk of power brokers and feudal interest, it hurts some of our friends very deeply and for that I apologise to them. But this is a fight for strengthening our people and we will fight this fight in spite of every thing the Opposition has to say.

Sir, we trust the people. We have faith in the people. It is the people who must determine their own destinies and the destiny of the nation. To the people of India, let us ensure maximum democracy and maximum devolution. Let there be an end to the power-brokers. Let us give power to the people. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI C. MADHAV REDDY: (Adilabad): Sir, you have permitted the hon. Prime Minister to make a long statement at the time of the introduction of this Bill. Sir, we have given notice that we are going to oppose the introduction of the Bill. Sir, our notices are pending before you and I would like that you should permit us to speak on the views given by the Prime Minister. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Sir, for allowing a debate, we can extend the session for tomorrow and we can have it tomorrow.

We have deliberately decided not to have a debate in this session because we thought that in the intervention period we will have enough time for debate for the Opposition because we in the Congress have been debating it for two years. It is the Opposition

which has ignored the people. So, we have thought that we have the debate in the next session.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received notices from several Members who want to oppose the introduction of the Bill and I shall allow one Member from each Group.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: No, no. Please don't introduce a new convention... (*Interruption*)

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: (Rajapur): Sir, whenever a Bill is moved, it is not that one is totally opposed to the Bill. There are certain provisions on which one would like to make concrete suggestions and observations so that the constitutionality of the Bill may not come into jeopardy. Therefore, don't restrict the speakers to only one person from each group. Whatever names have been given, you allow them to make their submissions and you will keep in mind that all the 20 Members make brief submissions. There is one such democracies ideal on which there is a total unanimity in the country in regard to the decentralisation and devolution of the power. But the only question of *moulds operandi* is to be decided.

SHRI SHANTARAM NAIK (Panaji): Sir, in the notice, I would like to know whether they have challenged the legislative competence of the House.,

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes; Yes.

(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, they have done it.

(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. If you could maintain everything can be done in an orderly manner.

(*Interruptions*)