

17.55 hrs.

VALEDICTORY REFERENCES

MR. SPEAKER : The Prime Minister wishes to make a statement.

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH) :

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is once again with mixed feelings that we come to the end of yet another Session of this august House. There is a sense of achievement, with respect to the enormous business that we have been able to transact. There is also a sense of loss, occasioned by the manner in which the proceedings of the House were disrupted and boycotted and, more worryingly, the manner in which aspersions have been cast on the high office of the hon. Speaker.

Sir, at the end of last Session, I had expressed my sadness at the manner in which the proceedings of the House could not take place in an orderly fashion. I deeply regret that once again, we have not had adequate occasion to undertake our work in the presence of the Opposition for a substantial part of this Session. The people of India have reposed their faith and trust in us and have sent us here to project and protect their interests, to canvass and convey their concerns, to influence and shape public policy. We are here, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to voice the views of the people, not to stay away from the House and give no expression to it.

I must, however, compliment you, Sir, for your patience, your forbearance, your fair play and leadership in the conduct of the proceedings of this House. We are truly fortunate to have a leader of your eminence and wisdom chairing the proceedings of this august House. It is because of your abilities and your qualities of mind and heart that we have been able to transact so much useful business in this Session, in the face of the disruption of the proceedings of the House.

Sir, as many as 26 Bills were introduced and 26 Bills, including the Finance Bill, were passed in this Session. My colleagues in the Union Council of Ministers and I had 11 occasions to make important statements of the floor of this House. On ten important issues of concern to our people, the House discussed Calling Attention Motions. We discussed, under rule 193, such matters of national concern as the Tsunami, electoral reforms, foreign policy, demographic trends and developments in Nepal.

Sir, taken together the legislative business in this Session has taken the national forward in our march towards high economic growth with greater social justice. The United Progressive Alliance was voted to office to provide the people

of India with a Government that cares. A Government that is sensitive to the needs of the ordinary citizen, the *aam aadmi*, that strengthens the inclusive character of our nationhood. We had succeeded in this one year in reversing the trend of the politics of exclusion, the politics of divisiveness, the politics of majoritarianism. In its place, the UPA has returned the nation to even keel, to the course set by the leaders of our national movement for freedom. The path of secularism and pluralism in which every citizen of this country, irrespective of caste or community, region or religion, language or lineage feels an equal and has an equal stake in our collective future.

Sir, in my intervention yesterday, I dwelt at length at our initiatives in foreign policy. I do not wish to repeat what I said except to draw the attention of this House once again to the fact that our Government has been able to create an international environment in which our developmental priorities can be better addressed.

18.00 hrs.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in his Budget Speech, the hon. Finance Minister has outlined our Government's priorities for this year. We are committed to building a more equitable and efficient economy. Our priority is to create new wealth and new employment, to attract new investment and generate new knowledge, to build a caring society and a competitive economy. That is our promise to our people.

Sir, I truly wish we had more time to discuss these issues that are the real concern of our people. I can only express the hope that the next Session would be a normal Session and a more productive Session. I trust the hon. Members of the Opposition will return to Parliament in the next Session so that we can resume normal work in accordance with the aspirations of the people we all represent. I look forward to participating in the next Session of Parliament, with the presence of all Members of this august House. I greatly regret the absence of the Opposition from Parliament. The Opposition has an honoured place in our system of governance and their absence from the House detracts from the efficiency of our processes of governance. As I have said repeatedly, Sir, all issues which are of concern to any Member of this august House can be discussed and debated on the floor of the House. It will be a sad day if our people were to lose faith in important institutions such as our Parliament. Therefore, both the Government and the Opposition are obliged to play their respective roles to ensure that the system of checks and balances envisaged by our founding fathers functions effectively and efficiently for the common benefit of our people.

Sir, I would like to conclude by placing on record my sincere appreciation for your guidance and leadership, and I also thank the hon. Deputy-Speaker, the Secretary-General and the staff of the Lok Sabha Secretariat for their commitment and hard work.

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, the Fourth Session of the Fourteenth Lok Sabha, which commenced on 25th February, 2005 with the Address by the hon. President to the Members of both the Houses assembled together in the Central Hall, is coming to a close now.

During the Session, as many as 38 sittings, spread over 211 hours, were held. The House took a break from 27th March, 2005 to 18th April, 2005 to enable the Departmentally-related Standing Committees to consider the Demands for Grants of Union Ministries and Departments and submit their Reports to the House. The Standing Committees of Lok Sabha submitted 81 Reports during the Session. Statements were also made by the Ministers under Direction 73A on the Action Taken on the recommendations of the Standing Committee.

During the Budget Session, the House transacted many important items of financial, legislative and other business. After a debate lasting for more than 11 hours and extending over three days, the House passed the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address on 10th March, 2005.

The House, besides having General Discussions on the Budget (Railways) and Budget (General) for 2005-2006, also passed the Demands for Grants on Account (Railways) and (General) for 2005-2006, Supplementary Demands for Grant (Railways) and (General) for 2004-2005 and the related Appropriation Bills. The House also had General Discussions on the Budgets for the States of Goa and Bihar for 2005-2006 and passed their respective Demands for Grants on Account for 2005-2006 and Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2004-2005 and the related Appropriation Bills.

The Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, Home Affairs, and Science and Technology were discussed for over 14 hours before being passed. All the outstanding Demands for Grants in respect of Budget (General) for 2005-2006 were voted by the House on 27th April, 2005. Later, on 2nd May, 2005, after in depth discussion which lasted for over 10 hours, and spread over three days, the House passed the Finance Bill, 2005.

The House passed as many as 26 Government Bills during the Session. One of the Bills, the Patents (Amendment)

Bill, 2005 has been passed in fulfilment of India's obligations under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights under the aegis of the World Trade Organization. Similarly, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, 2005, passed by the House provides an integrated legislative basis to the country's commitment to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The other important Bills which have been passed are the Central Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005, Prevention of Money Laundering (Amendment) Bill, 2005, and the Special Economic Zones Bill, 2005. Besides the above, two other important Bills passed include the Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 2005, which is another step towards reform of the criminal law system of the country. The Right to Information Bill, 2004 passed by the House is also a major initiative towards ushering in a new era in accessing information, which would, in turn, promote transparency in governance and eliminate corruption.

The House unanimously adopted the Resolutions seeking approval of the Proclamations dated the 4th March, 2005 and 7th March, 2005 issued under article 356 of the Constitution for the States of Goa and Bihar respectively.

Five Matters of Urgent Public Importance were raised under Rule 193. Further, 13 matters were raised by way of Calling Attention, in response to which the concerned Ministers made statements. Besides, as many as 58 statements were made by Ministers on various other important subjects.

Coming to the Private Members' Business, as many as 42 Private Members' Bills were introduced. Two Bills came up for consideration, out of which one was negatived after intense debate, and the debate on the second Bill still remains inconclusive.

Two Private Members' Resolutions were also considered by the House. One was negatived and discussion on the other has not concluded.

During the Session, 700 Starred Questions were listed, out of which 116 Questions were answered orally. Replies to the remaining 584 Starred Questions and 7,337 Unstarred Questions were laid on the Table.

356 matters were raised under Rule 377. Besides, as many as 348 matters of urgent public importance were raised during what is called the 'Zero Hour'.

As you are aware, during the second part of this Session the main Opposition Party and its Allies boycotted the House

from 27th April, 2005. I made repeated requests to hon. Members of the Opposition to participate in the proceedings of the House and I reiterated my assurance, if any was needed, that I was prepared to allow any discussion permissible under the Rules, but they have chosen to continue with the boycott, which is extremely disappointing for me. Nevertheless, I am happy that the Opposition did constructively participate in the discussion on the Finance Bill.

On 5th May, 2005, a section of the Opposition, namely the friends from the Telugu Desam Party, called off the boycott. While welcoming them, I renewed my request to all friends to participate in the proceedings of the House. While emphasizing that Lok Sabha does not belong to any particular section of the House, I stressed that it is the Speaker's duty to see that the House functions in accordance with the Rules of Procedure and well-settled conventions. I reiterate this position once again; and I humbly would try to maintain that position.

Of late, I have noticed a disturbing trend of absenteeism in the House due to which, on more than one occasion, the House could not meet at the appointed time or its proceedings had to be adjourned for want of quorum. I would appeal to the Leaders of Parties to give a thought to this problem and ensure that there is quorum in the House at all times.

I have since initiated a practice of informing the Members of the details of the business transacted in the House on weekly basis, mainly with a view to apprising all the Members of the actual business transacted in the House and the time lost due to forced adjournments and interruptions.

I have also been convening every morning, a meeting of the Leaders of Parties and Groups in the House 27th April, 2005 to discuss the urgent issues likely to be raised by them in the House.

Pursuant to a decision arrived at the Leaders' Meeting held on 20th of April, 2005, an attempt has been made to streamline the raising of matters under the so-called 'Zero Hour'. As agreed to at the said meeting, matters of only urgent national and international importance are being allowed to be raised after Question Hour.

The number of matters to be raised under Rule 377 has since been increased from 15 to 20 per day.

This year the country celebrated the Platinum Jubilee of the Dandi March led by the Father of the Nation. A reference on this occasion was made in the House. I may say that the challenges before the nation since that historic march have assumed new dimensions and that the onus of facing them is upon us as public representatives.

References were also made from the Chair on the occasion of Bandung Conference and celebrations held to mark the 60th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War and victory against fascism.

I have also announced the formation of a Parliamentary Forum on Water, for the proper functioning of which I seek cooperation of all sides of the House.

I would take this opportunity to thank the hon. Deputy-Speaker and my colleagues in the Panel of Chairmen for assisting me in conducting the proceedings of the House. I would like to specially thank the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leaders of various Parties, Chief Whips and Whips for the cooperation extended to me. I would also like to thank the Parliamentary Affairs Minister and his colleagues for the cooperation all of them extended to me.

I would also like to express my appreciation for and thanks to the officers and staff of the Lok Sabha Secretariat and allied agencies for their valuable support in running the House. I thank the media for effective coverage of the proceedings of the House. I thank you all for your kind cooperation

18.10 hrs.

NATIONAL SONG

(The National Song was played.)

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned *sine die*.

18.11 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned sine die.