

11.21½ hrs.

COMMITTEE ON ABSENCE OF MEMBERS FROM THE SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

10th Report

[Translation]

SHRI RAJESH VERMA (Sitapur) : Sir, I present the Tenth Report, (English and Hindi versions) of the Committee on Absence of Members from the Sitting of the House.

11.22 hrs.

MOTION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, now we come to the subject for which this Special Session has been directed to be convened by the Respected Rashtrapatiiji.

I had a meeting with the hon. Leaders this morning, and we have agreed that at least 12 hours' time be allotted for this discussion. Today, we might go up to 10 o'clock if the sense of the House is there and tomorrow also we shall continue this debate as there will be no Question Hour. We are assessing that probably at 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock, the hon. Prime Minister may reply if he wishes to reply.

Before we start this matter, I do not have to impress upon all the hon. Members as you all are fully aware of the importance of this debate. The whole country is looking at it. The hon. Leaders have rightly emphasized on the importance of time being made available to them and the Members, so that they can put forth their views. Of course, so far as the Chair is concerned, fullest opportunity will be given. My earnest appeal to all sections of the House is to please have the discussion in a manner, which adds to the dignity of the Parliament. Important issues will be raised and some *toka-tok* may be there, but please see that the House runs in as much a dignified manner for

the purpose for which it has been convened. The Nation is looking up to us. Therefore, please cooperate. The Chair has no subject of his own except to see that the House runs properly.

Yes, the hon. Leader of Opposition. I am sorry, the hon. Prime Minister please. I have been told that he will be speaking.

...(Interruptions)

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH) :

Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I beg to move :—

"That this House expresses its confidence in the Council of Ministers."

Mr. Speaker, Sir, today, our Government completes four years and two months in office. For the past couple of decades we have become used to Governments being forced to seek a Vote of Confidence within months of being in office. If we are here after a tenure of over four years, the credit for this should go to all the Leaders of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA); to the leadership of the UPA Chairperson, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi; and to the wise and visionary leaderships of Shri Jyoti Basu, Shri Harkishan Singh Surjeet, and Dr. M. Karunanidhi. They were all the architects of our coalition Government. It is their wisdom and sagacity that has helped me and our Government function for these four years....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please keep quiet. You will get full opportunity.

...(Interruptions)

DR. MANMOHAN SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I regret that this Session of Parliament has been convened at this time when the attention of the Government has been on the economy, particularly, on the control of inflation and on implementing programmes for the welfare of our people, particularly, our farmers. This exercise, I submit, Sir, was wholly avoidable. I had repeatedly assured all political parties, including the Left Parties that if the Government was allowed to complete the negotiations

[Dr. Manmohan Singh]

with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on its safeguard agreement, and after the decision of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) I would myself come to Parliament and seek its guidance before operationalizing the Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement, which we intended to enter into. This was my solemn assurance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Members are aware that the specific developments which necessitated this Vote of Confidence is the withdrawal of support by the Left parties on the issue of our initiative of seeking international cooperation in the development of civil nuclear energy. The intimation of withdrawal of this support came to me while I was in Japan attending the Meeting of the G-8. As soon as I came back, I sought an appointment with Her Excellency the President and I offered to submit myself to the Vote of Confidence in Parliament as soon as possible. This Session is being convened in fulfilment of that obligation.

Sir, I seek the support of this House today on the basis of our entire record in office over the past four years. The responsibility given to me when I assumed office as Prime Minister required that I should act at all times and on all matters in the interests of this nation. I would like to assure this august House and through this House the people of India that every single decision, every policy initiative we have taken was taken in the fullest confidence that we are doing so in the best interests of our people and our country.

In all that we have done, we have been inspired by the legacy of our glorious freedom struggle, and the pledge of Rajiv Gandhi that our mission is to prepare our country to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I, therefore, welcome this opportunity for this House to review our acts. I have no doubt that the people of India, when they consider what we have done, will reaffirm their confidence in us, in our Government, and in the Indian National Congress, which

is the oldest, the most experienced and, I believe, the most patriotic political party of this great country.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is the legacy of our freedom struggle which has sustained this Government. In my conduct as Prime Minister, I have also been inspired by the famous invocation of great Guru Gobind Singhji, and I reiterate what Guru Gobind Singhji has said enjoining us to perform our duty.

[Translation]

"Dehu Shiva Var mohe, shubh karman te kabhu na taru
Na darun arson jab jaye ladun, nischay kar apni jit karun
Ar sikh hun, apne hi man saon, ihi lalach hon, gun ton uchron
Jab aav ki aundh nidhan bane, at hi run mein tab joojh maroon."

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Motion moved:

"That this House expresses its confidence in the Council of Ministers."

The hon. Prime Minister has already moved the Motion. Now, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will speak.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI (Gandhinagar) : Hon. Speaker, Sir, I rise to oppose the Motion just now moved by the Prime Minister. Obviously, even though he said that this would be an opportunity for the House to consider the totality of this Government's performance during the last four years, not merely on the issue on the basis of which this Government has been reduced to a minority, but the totality of the performance of this Government would be debated today and tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER : This is an important debate and the Leader of the Opposition is on his legs.

SHRI L.K. ADVANI : I remember all earlier cases where a Confidence Motion has been moved and almost invariably the Prime Minister initiated the debate by giving a resume of the performance. The Prime Minister certainly is free to choose to reply to the debate, and in the beginning make brief observations as he has made.