

occasions, when attempts were made to establish democracy, those attempts have been invariably stepped upon and crushed by the heavy military boot. In this House and outside, we remain beholden to and we salute all those in the Security Department of Parliament, the paramilitary forces and the Delhi Police who laid down their lives in the line of duty on that dreadful day.

The task before the Government and before all of us belonging to different political parties is to ensure that their families are given the support they deserve from a grateful nation.

Madam, the incident, which took place on the 13th December, uncovers many issues relating to the security of the nation and the security of our people. I sincerely hope that the Government will look into and share with the nation the reasons why the terrorists could make all preparations unhindered and actually enter into the precincts of Parliament and literally knock at the doors of Parliament House, despite of course, prior intimation.

11.45 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

I regret to point out that the Government's statement on the incident is more notable for conspicuous omissions rather than for new revelations. It is obvious that the security arrangements in Parliament and in other numerous sensitive places need to be reviewed and revamped.

Sir, at this critical juncture, the need of the hour is for the Government and for all political parties to rise above partisan considerations. The need of the hour today is for all concerned to desist from using this occasion to raise contentious issues that divide our plural society. This is a moment when the entire country must stand together in solidarity. The responsibility for creating that solidarity lies mostly on the shoulders of the Government.

I wish to assure the Government, through you, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the Congress Party will back the Government in its effort to track down and bring to justice terrorists who threaten the nation's integrity today. We also believe that the Government must keep in touch and must consult and interact with all other political parties. On key strategic issues, we believe, it is necessary to think through all the pros and cons.

Finally, we feel that much greater efforts are required at this moment to mobilise world opinion in our favour. Since we have been at the receiving end of terrorism for

so many years culminating, of course, with the dreadful incident on the 13th of December, we should certainly be able to embark upon a very concerted diplomatic offensive and garner the full support of the international community for our nation's just cause.

[*Translation*]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the august House is discussing a matter on which the division between the ruling and the opposition parties gets blurred, if not erased. In such a scenario, people who are neutral and unbiased should provide right direction to the country and boost its morale.

Yesterday's speech of Shri Chandra Shekhar was reminiscent of Arjun of Mahabharata. Going to war or not is not the issue. The issue we need to discuss is the circumstances in which the war should take place, whether we need to go to war or not. Nobody wants war in the country.

I had written a poem, 'Jung na hone denge', but Kargil war took place soon after that. If the country had not been ready and prepared but only absorbed in the poem 'Jung na hone denge' then a gross injustice would have been done to the nation. I had gone there with the message of peace, but could not succeed. Now I am being asked why did I go at all? It is a no win situation. If I go I am criticised for that and if I don't go even then I am criticised. But this discussion has centred on a positive approach.

I would like to thank leaders of all the parties. As I said at the outset, this is not the time to stick to our party lines. The need is of finding a way out collectively. We have always tried to consult all. As for the incidents occurring in the Parliament House complex, initially we could give no information as the Government and the administration were trying to gather full information. Initially we had no information except what was already being disseminated by the media and the newspapers. That is the reason for delay in calling the all party meeting. We remained in contact even though there were holidays in between. The Hon. Minister of Home Affairs would elaborately throw light on this point. The House is indeed facing a grave situation. So far, the menace of terrorism was limited to Jammu and Kashmir. Now it has come knocking at the gates of Parliament House. I congratulate the jawans of our security forces and the Watch and Ward staff who defended Parliament House at the cost of their lives.

[Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee]

How the terrorists managed to reach Parliament needs to be thoroughly investigated and at the same time we should not undervalue the sacrifice and grit and resolve of the security forces and the Parliament's Watch and Ward staff and our administration. I believe that nobody in the House has the intention to derive political mileage from the incident.

As I have said in the beginning, it is not the time to play politics as the existence of our country, our sovereignty has been challenged. Why Parliament House at all there are other places in the country, too. Parliament House was deliberately chosen, since the terrorists know that the Parliament is the core of Indian Republic, the axis of our unity, the symbol of our democracy and represents the whole country. They wanted to attack everything which symbolises and guarantees democracy. It has been done deliberately. I don't think the attack was unplanned and spontaneous. I don't think that the gun-wielding terrorists had come just to commit suicide and the people who sent them, had not pondered over this question. They have taken this dangerous step deliberately. This is a challenge to the whole country and we have to face it squarely.

I congratulate the hon. Members for their speeches during the discussion. Shri Shivraj Patil spoke in a positive manner and I would like to quote one thing from his speech I am quoting the words of Shri Patil:—

"Sir, we had opposed the earlier moves to strengthen the security of the Parliament which we should not have done. We should keep at least that in mind today. Action has not been fully taken on the plans chalked out for the security of the Parliament."

It is a matter of pleasure that the hon. Speaker said in a meeting this morning that following the incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, he had appointed a committee which is expected to submit its report shortly and all the recommendations contained in it would be implemented and the security of the House strengthened. But we still face difficulties, obstructions.

12.00 hrs.

We are still novice to act and express our views in the present atmosphere of insecurity. Perhaps it is because of our attitude towards life. Our ideology is that everybody has to die one day, so what is the need of making umpteen efforts to save this life. However, this attitude is not correct. Every life is precious. Terrorists are trying to spread terror among the people to attain their objectives and designs. We have to fail their designs.

Every effort made for security should be implemented firmly. Time and again, this issue should be discussed in the House, cutting across the party lines, as representatives of the highest body of the country and not as Members of ruling party or opposition. The issue of safety and security is uppermost. It is not only the question of safety and security of Parliament and this House but it is the question of safety and security of the country. A crisis is looming large over the country and those who are responsible for it are playing a dangerous game.

Now we are being given sermons that we should act in a controlled and restrained manner. We have always behaved in a restrained manner but our attitude was taken as our weakness. Our country is a democratic country where people's feelings should be respected. Also there is a need to judge what is wrong and what is right. Nobody in our country is pressurising for war and war should not be there. Decisions regarding war and peace are not taken in haste. A policy would be formulated in this regard. Keeping in view the whole scenario and after reviewing the options before us, the country's interests will be safeguarded while taking such a decision. Further, cooperation of all would be sought. No party can take such a decision all alone. That would be the decision of the country.

I congratulate the members of the Congress Party. I heard the speeches of various members along with Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmuni. Shri Omar Abdullah put forth the Government's views very effectively. Every step in this regard would be taken keeping in view the country's interests. Shri Mulayam Singh ji should not have any misunderstanding and misconception in this regard. But it would be inappropriate to mix the two varied issues of election and terrorism. Elections would be held on time. Democracy is our biggest assets, our biggest strength. That's why they targeted Parliament. They hatched this conspiracy to disintegrate the country. There are some elements in Pakistan who talk about ancient history; proclaim to unfurl the flag over the entire nation. When the country was once divided, we accepted it.

On my visit to Lahore I got an opportunity to visit Minar-e-Pakistan. I was advised not to go there but I said that it would be wrong if I did not visit. I visited the same and said that we needed a neighbour that could prosper, progress and at the same time, is powerful. At times the weakest develop a tendency of misadventure. Pakistan has developed such a complex that India has not accepted the partition of the country. This is a wrong perception. I had told General Musharraf that the chapter was closed for us but desired to know whether he has

accepted the partition of the country or not. Though unfortunate, the partition took place. We were opposed to it. Today, we are following the same because it has become the policy of the nation. Government of Pakistan are aware that there are such elements active in Pakistan. We also know it following this incident, we have asked Pakistan to take action against the terrorist organisation which was involved in undertaking and planning this misadventurous act. We hope that action would be taken but, at the same time, we are not depending only on diplomatic process. We are creating world opinion as has been suggested and the public opinion on this issue is in our favour. We should have this self confidence and self reliance. Meanwhile, I have undertaken journeys to a number of countries. The world is looking to India with confidence. Indian democracy is a prospering democracy. India can face challenges which is becoming obvious but we will have to fight terrorism on our own. All the countries of the world have been apprised of our position in this regard. These countries agree that we have every right as well as permission to take steps for our self defence but, at the same time, the same nations ask us to take action with restraint. We are taking all the steps wisely. In future also, we will take every step after considering each aspect in this connection but those talking about restraint, should ask our neighbour as to how long it will continue this game. If they want a neighbour then the neighbour wants that terrorism is rooted out. An international alliance has been formed for this purpose with most of the nations as its members. Does terrorism in India need any proof? The bullet marks on Parliament House, dead bodies of the terrorists lying outside Parliament House, the fact that they were Pakistanis—all these are proof in itself. There is no question of joint investigation. The Security and the sovereignty of our nation has been challenged. We are ready to face it and expect the support of all the vigilant nations of the world. We don't look forward to any nation to fight on our side. I reiterate what I have already said, we will root out terrorism on our own. But other nations in the world too are to understand that terrorism cannot be seen in isolation. It cannot be defined differently. Terrorism cannot be divided into fragments. One cannot presume that terrorism takes one form in one nation and another in the other. A move is going on in the world to root out terrorism. The incident that took place that day was a stark expression of terrorism. We believe, other nations will realise our feelings in this regard and extend their support. We have already had fight with terrorism. We have since got victory over terrorism in Punjab. There was a situation when all had apprehensions about the future of Punjab. There was a situation when unity and integrity of the nation was at stake. Such were the apprehensions. But firm measures were taken and

terrorism was crushed. Today peace and brotherhood prevails in Punjab. The people of Punjab deserve an applause for this. We know how to deal with terrorism and we will deal with it. But on this occasion, other nations in the world are put to acid test too. They are being exposed as to what they say and what they do. There cannot be different standards. There will be only one standard to gauge terrorism.

India is a democratic nation. Ours is a multi-party democracy. When I went abroad, I told the guests abroad that we had very old relations with Afghanistan. I visited Afghanistan twice as Minister of External Affairs. We have started a hospital there. We are planning to give more aid. After the emergence of Taliban regime, all situations were turned into such a state that the people were deeply shocked. Therefore, we are supporting the steps taken to finish Taliban. An attack was carried on Parliament of India about which several Hon'ble Members have detailed discussions that anything could have happened that day. However, due to the preparations made to fight terrorism, we succeeded in averting a tragedy. Terrorists were not able to succeed in their plan. We should not ignore those arrangements and we should point out the shortcomings. Suggestions are welcome to overcome these shortcomings, but this is not a question of ruling party and opposition party. The first thing is to ensure peace and brotherhood in the country. If anybody tries to take benefit of the situation arisen in the country or if any organisation or party tries to create enmity among the communities, they are working against the country's interest. We will not tolerate such activities. We hope that good sense will prevail among the people. This is a testing time. That day we escaped perhaps only to perform our duties in future. I am confident that the attitude shown today during discussion in this House will strengthen our efforts. The entire world, all the countries are looking towards us. Party politics will continue as it has its own place, but this country has a special characteristic that at the time of crisis, the entire country, unites leaving behind all differences and faces the challenge unitedly.

Sir, when I was in opposition, I congratulated Smt. Indira Gandhi on independence of Bangladesh. The feelings expressed by me were not only mine, but of all of us. We have shown much restraint. Now we are trying to solve the problem diplomatically and we will take the decision after going through all the options. I hope the august House would support the Government and its policies in this regard.