

[Shri N. Dennis]

given to them to cooperate with the implementation of the employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Dennis, please conclude. Please take your seat.

SHRI N. DENNIS (Nagercoil) : I would like to place before the House one problem faced by the people of our region, particularly Kerala and the Kanyakumari district. The price of rubber has declined very much. The import of rubber has to be stopped. The cost of rubber per kilogram in 1995 was Rs. 64; it was Rs. 45 in 1996; and it has, at present, declined to Rs. 25 per kilogram. So, the rubber growers are facing severe financial difficulties.

Lastly, I oppose the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Member, the time allotted for this subject was eight hours. We have already taken more than 11 hours and 30 minutes. The Prime Minister is also waiting to give a reply. So, kindly cooperate with me because in the coming Budget Session, we can accommodate a number of hon. Members. Please cooperate with the Chair.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please cooperate with the Chair. I will allow you next time.

...(Interruptions)

**THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE)** : Mr. Speaker, Sir, we want to express our feelings on the President's Address which His Excellency, the President of India delivered to the joint sitting of both the Houses of Parliament. As this discussion was taken up soon after the discussion on Confidence Motion, it is quite natural that some repetition will be there. The enthusiasm with which the hon. Members participated in the debate and there are still many Members who have been deprived of an opportunity to speak proves the keenness of the Members to participate. Shri Balram Jakhar of the ruling party initiated the discussion...(Interruptions)

SOME HON. MEMBERS : The discussion was initiated by the opposition.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Yes, it was done by the opposition. Mr. Speaker, Sir, old habits die hard.

[English]

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, coming events cast their shadows before.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : He and my friend Shri Janardhan Reddy and some other Members have

observed that the National Agenda on which the Government is constituted and which will form the basis for the Government functioning is nothing but a hollow promise and have said that it is far from reality and that an attempt has been made to transform earth into a paradise. At least we have made promises and consequently the Members have drawn the conclusion that this is nothing but an attempt to mislead the electorate. I think by saying this we are not doing justice to the enlightened electorate of this country.

Recently, elections to the 12th Lok Sabha have concluded. The people might not have educational opportunities or they might not be used to high standards of living, but the common man very well know what is right and what is wrong for him. He knows what is in the national interest and what is detrimental to the interest of the nation. The voter has always demonstrated this understanding. When for a short period democracy had disappeared, the entire nation was converted into a jail. Even at that time the people remained vigilant and fought for their rights and the results of the elections conducted at that time showed the people's consciousness and their alertness. Can anyone mislead the Indian electorate with false hopes? Can't the people subject the promises to the acid test of fulfilment.

We have not promised the impossible. We have promised potable water to every village. Is it a false promise? This is down to the earth promise. We have promised drinking water to everyone. If we are unable to fulfil this, it would be a national failure. If we are able to achieve this, it would not be the success of a party or the Government but of the entire nation. We want to take concrete measures to fulfil the promises we have made. I would like to reiterate as I had stated earlier that resources are not scarce but are scattered. I am of the conviction that if these resources are mobilised, the entire machinery is geared up and dedicated to the fulfilment of the goals coupled with a political will, these promises can be fulfilled and implemented. I look forward for the cooperation of the House in this small task which is a challenge for us. If we fail to fulfil the promises that we made to the people, will they not ask us about them next time? Do we not have to face the electorate again? The people would say that as we have not fulfilled the promises made, we do not deserve their votes. The enlightened electorate would reject us. After all people must be relied upon. Nobody can throw dust into the eyes of the people of this country. There is a saying in English that you can fool some people for some time, you can fool some people for a long time but you cannot fool all people for all times. Are we going to do that? I would submit that you are not doing justice to us. We would try our level best to implement all the promises that we have made. We would need your cooperation in this regard. We never adopted non-

cooperative attitude in such constructive endeavours. Though it is a different matter that such a National Agenda was never put forward. So also a proposal to mobilise the entire country to implement such a national agenda was never made. And wherever it was made to whichever extent it was made, it succeeded. Let us not allow political dissensions to go to an extent where it may become impossible to work together even on the basic issues.

I was surprised when Shri Natwar Singh talked about foreign policy and wanted to know whether the foreign policy is being changed? When I was in opposition and used to make speeches on foreign policy, Natwar Singh ji used to congratulate me. It is not a secret. Even after remaining in opposition I was a supporter of foreign policy and the essence of our foreign policy has been the power and the capability to take decisions independently and that is non-alignment. Though no group is there today but a super power is emerging. There are several developing countries. These countries are also members of non-aligned movement. They are looking towards us. They are telling us that if we go on accepting conditions in the name of globalisation and are not able to protect the interests of our people and fail to face such challenges despite our big size what the small countries will do? Earlier also, we had given guidance to them under the leadership of Pandit Nehru. I do not keep myself in his category, but there should be no doubt that today the whole country will stand united to protect its sovereignty. We shall not be pressurised by anybody in economic or defence matters. Whatever decisions are to be taken, they will be taken by us in the interest of the country and I want that all of you should have a share in making these decisions. But I believe that foreign policy cannot be static, it cannot be motionless. It has to be changed in the changing scenario but the fundamental norms would not have any change, I assure you.

The proposal to constitute a commission for the review of constitution has become very controversial. Those who have supported such a review, are important persons of all parties. Nobody can doubt their intention. Such apprehension cannot be expressed about them that they want to undo all that Dr. Ambedkar had done. But, our constitution has completed fifty years and we have made amendments in it several times. Framers of our constitution themselves had provided the mechanism of amendment because they knew that the document they are formulating is not a static document. It is being done to protect the interests of people and if required constitution can be amended and they made provisions also, but procedure of amendment was made quite stricter — the requirement of two-third majority was made. The proposed commission will have persons whose impartiality, learnedness and knowledge of law will be beyond doubt and secondly, they will make

recommendations only. This commission would not impose any decision on the country. Its recommendations will be placed before the Parliament and certainly we have majority in the Parliament but how much, you know it. So creating such a bogey is wrong that constituting of commission is wrong and their intention behind it is this that they want to change the whole structure. India has adopted the path of democracy. It will never become a monarchy. Arif Saheb need not give us such warning. India will never be a religious country we have often said it. Untouchability would not be there legally once again, we want to remove it from our practice. Topic being discussed is devolution. Rulers in Delhi should curtail their power and resources to some extent and States should get more power, more financial resources, this is our policy. Everything will become centralised and country's face will change as a result thereof and democracy will be suffocated. Such views have no basis. I want to reassure that we do not have any hidden intention. I have said so repeatedly, so this is also really painful for me. But, we can go forward by believing one another and having mutual faith. While working honestly, we may commit some mistakes, but we would not indulge in unreliable conduct. I want to assure you that there is no need to peep into the history of Bhartiya Janata Party. During my childhood, first of all, I came into contact with Arya Samaj. I was a member of Arya Kumar Sabha and as member of Arya Kumar Sabha to take up cudgels against hypocrisy is not a dogmatic attitude. To test the facts on the basis of logic to express difference of opinion seriously and fearlessly but not to have doubt about the intention of the person in opposition and also giving no opportunity to him to doubt my intention were imbibed by me since my childhood. Thereafter when I reached college I remained in contact with Students Federation of India because already I used to take interest in students' movements, fought elections, won them and usually elected unopposed. That was a student's organisation affiliated with the communist party ... (Interruptions)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : How did you join that side?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : The communist ideology did influence me to come back but when the Communist Party supported the partition of the country on the basis of religion and termed it as self-determination, I felt that I could not associate myself with such a party.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, we never supported the partition of our country... (Interruptions)

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE : Sir, they supported the partition.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : At that time, the feeling of economic equality, end of an era of exploitation, creation of such a world where there was no dominance of any country over the other was very strong.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : This feeling still prevails.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : The Soviet Union was the centre of attraction for those countries which were fighting for their freedom. However, it was discovered later on that there was no personal freedom in that country itself. Earlier also, the attractive face of the Soviet Union used to be shown to the people and the democratic socialism, if not communalism, definitely used to inspire the new generation. Among the revolutionaries included the communists and the socialists and they made great sacrifices for the nation. When I was a member of the Students Federation, I came into contact with the RSS. It is a good organisation which teaches discipline and inspires people to do something every day for the country. There can be difference of opinion with that organisation. Many Members may not be remembering that when our neighbouring country attacked us — Shri Nehru was then the Prime Minister — the Republic Day parade was to be held on 26th January but most of the armed forces were deployed on the border and they could not be recalled in view of security. Therefore, arrangements were made to organise parade with the remaining armed forces and police personnel available. Meanwhile, someone suggested Panditji that civilians should also be allowed to take part in the parade.

Today, when there is tension on the borders of the nation, we should show unity. The RSS was called to take part in that parade. I remember that there was a protest against this step of Nehruji in the meeting of the Congress party. However, Nehruji had said that there could be differences of opinion with the RSS but when the nation was passing through a crisis, they all should forget those differences and work unitedly. Again, when the country was invaded, there was shortage of personnel in the army and the police. At that time, Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri was the Prime Minister. A problem cropped up as to who would manage the traffic in Delhi. We were facing the shortage of traffic police personnel. This task was entrusted to us and at that time, I had said :-

"Dukh mein sumiran sab kare, sukh mein kare na koi,

Jo sukh mein sumiran kare, to dukh kahe ko hoi."

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have not got drawn in this controversy because I find myself a repository of all virtues, but we have duly discharged the responsibility

of an opposition for 40 years. We hope that those who have come in the opposition after a long time will stay there for long and they would also perform their duty. The word 'Dharma' does not mean 'religion' 'Dharma' is a comprehensive term. 'Dharma Char' means 'Follow Dharma'. There is no interpretation of the 'Dharma' which is to be followed. It is said that one should follow one's 'Dharma'. It is to be decided by the person as to what his/her 'Dharma' is. My 'Dharma' is to address you and speak good thing and your 'Dharma' is to give me a patient hearing. The confusion arises when 'religion' is translated as 'Dharma'. However, the confusion would not have arisen in the translation of the word 'secular' had been "Panth Nirpeksh" or 'Sampradaya Nirpeksh', as no religion can be absolute and all religions are relative. But, there is now no need to go into that controversy. When we say we are a secular nation, you must have faith on us and we will put it into practice. I assure you that the misconception spread deliberately or inadvertently earlier will be dispelled.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri N. Janardhana Reddy has raised one more vital issue. A large number of cotton growers in Andhra Pradesh are committing suicide. This issue was raised even during the elections. I have also taken up this issue with the Andhra Pradesh Government. This is indeed a symptom of a grave malady and it will have to take into consideration as to what quality and quantity of fertilizers and manure are to be used; how much loans should be provided to the farmers, how it could be arranged and that if the farmers are not in a position to repay the loans, should such a situation compel them to commit suicide? These issues keep haunting our minds. Shri Janardhana Reddy hails from Andhra Pradesh. I would like to assure this august House that we would definitely take some urgent steps in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the cooperative movement needs to be strengthened. Cooperative societies are working successfully in some States while they are not that much successful in other States. But, we have no alternative to the cooperative societies.

What sort of participation should be there in a democracy? Participation is not an abstract thing. This is a relative concept and has a definite form. Now in what form and at what level this participation should exist? There is a public sector, then private sector is there. We have to develop a third sector which has already developed to some extent but it still calls for further attention.

We have to eliminate the shortcomings which have crept in the cooperative movement. We have to revitalize it. The interests of the people for whom these cooperative societies have been constituted or for whom the cooperative movements are undertaken should be safeguarded. It is also generally seen that the



resourceful or affluent persons capture these cooperative societies. Then they utilize these societies for their political ends. Party-politics have to be kept off the cooperatives. But the need of the hour is to expand this network of cooperative system throughout the country.

Nishad ji is present here. I would like to recapitulate his good suggestions. One of his suggestions is to provide identity cards to all the voters. We have been making this demand for years. Though this exercise was started but it was abandoned midway. If we have to check bogus voting, we will have to provide identity cards. If we want to check illegal entry into the country, we will have to provide our citizens identity cards. If people keep identity card with them at the time of emergency or crisis it would be convenient in many ways and also they can avail many other concessions and benefits. They can have ration cards on the basis of these identity cards.

I agree to his suggestion but he has given another unique suggestion that the candidate polling less than one percent votes should be awarded six months' imprisonment. Though this is a good suggestion, yet it is a bit harsh punishment. It cannot be put into practice. He has also stated that the candidate should not be allowed to spend more than Rs. 50,000/-. Nowadays, contesting elections is becoming a costly affair.

I contested election first time in 1957. I had only two jeeps at that time. I shifted my constituency from Lucknow to Balrampur. I had not gone to Balrampur before. The Party suggested me to contest from Balrampur which was thought to be an easy bet. I went there. I had one jeep and managed one more there and thus, I contested election with two jeeps only. I visited the whole constituency with two jeeps and I won that election. Nowadays, one requires a convoy of vehicles. How it could be possible? Are we not contesting elections with blackmoney? We should think over it with a clean heart. That is why, when we talk of reviewing the Constitution, election reforms are also there...(Interruptions)

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER (Tenali) : It has nothing to do with the Constitution.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : It has a link with it. If we reform the election system and introduce list system...(Interruptions)

If a person casts his vote in favour of a party only in the ensuing elections...(Interruptions) That is what my point is. I know that there are problems in it, but it would discourage casteism and a process of collective thinking will be started.

I am giving an example without going into details. However elections being a costly affair, it will make politics a slave to wealth. It is a dangerous signal. Sometimes I wish not to contest elections. But beating

a retreat is also not advisable - "Na dainyam na palayanam".

Arjun had taken two vows that he would neither show weakness nor would run away from the battle field - I do not claim myself to be Arjun but I do wish that this situation in the country must change. For me this is my last election. Today, I would like to say that after this I would not contest...(Interruptions)

SHRI P. SHIV SHANKER : Yes, election process has to be changed.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : It can be changed provided you change your way of thinking about it...(Interruptions) ours, yours and that of everyone's attitude should change. We must give it due consideration. All these things are such which we cannot relish.

We have entered into coalition as none of the parties has got clear majority and there was no other alternative before us. If we do not form the Government by making adjustments or through cooperation, then it is said our ideology is wrong, we are full of ills - Pilot Saheb, I have rich experience of it while you are new to these things.

SHRI RAJESH PILOT : I accept what the people are saying today. But you have termed it as an art of Governance which is wrong.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : You are again going by to the newspapers...(Interruptions)

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want to waste the time of this House by making detailed observations on each issue raised here. However, I would like to congratulate my young friend Shri Omar Farookh Abdullah if he is present in the House. He has been elected for the first time but he has delivered a very good speech. His reply as a citizen of Kashmir to the charges that are traded about India, should prove to be an eye opener, it should be a warning to all of us.

In this discussion, issues related to North-East have also been raised. Today, we received a shocking news from Tripura. There is unrest in some areas which have witnessed violent disturbances. All the Governments have so far been paying attention to it but the extent of success which should have been achieved has not been achieved. We want that development of North-East should receive special attention the other day also I had mentioned this thing. I would call a meeting of all the Chief Ministers of North East and shall discuss the situation of that area with them. I shall call for their suggestions and take a decision as to what steps could be taken in this regard.

Our friend from Bodoland has also raised some problems of Bodoland in his speech. Their problems are related to development. Let us discuss these problems seriously and reach to a conclusion based on consensus...(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI SANSUMA KHUNGGUR BWISWMUTHIARY : Sir, this is just to give you some sort of interpretation. Our issue is not at all related only to the socio-economic problem. This is a very-very acute and serious ethno-political crisis. It has to be resolved politically by granting a separate State of Bodoland only.

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : The Government has no intention to set up a new State reorganisation Commission. In the President's Address and National Agenda also we have mentioned about the creation of three new States. Today, an hon'ble Member from Vidarbha came to see me and he has submitted a memorandum. I would like to assure him that we will take a decision on that after considering all the aspects.

SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Please take a decision favouring creation of the said State.

SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR : Atalji, the National Commission has recommended for this...(Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : My Marxist friend had pointed out that the problems of agricultural labourers have been ignored. It is not so. In many States laws regulating minimum wages have been enacted but they are not being implemented honestly. In places where farmers are well off, labourers are being paid even more than the minimum wages. But this is not the situation in the whole country. If a consensus is there in favour of a Central Legislation in this regard, then we can consider it...(Interruptions)

I had gone to Bihar, when this incident of massacre occurred there. I asked the victim farmers near Jahanabad as to whether there is land dispute or wage related dispute. They said that it is neither land dispute nor a dispute related with wages. Certain other dispute is the root cause of this incident.

SHRI LALU PRASAD (Madhepura) : This issue is before the commission so do not talk about it.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : All right.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Subrata Mukherjee has given a very important suggestion for, converting barren land into fertile land. Already, the Government is contemplating on these lines. There is difficulty in increasing the limit of irrigated land but the barren land is lying unutilised and if a national campaign is launched taking cooperation of all and Government would have to take the initiative, then we can make barren land cultivable and achieve the target of increasing production in the country. I want to tell you that Government will take initiative in the regard.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, several issues were raised but it is not possible for me to give reply to all.

SHRI ANAND MOHAN (Sheohar) : Certain qualification for Members of Parliament should also be prescribed. Educational qualification has been prescribed in all the cases even for a peon or a Marshall or for a constable. Similarly, educational qualification for the MLAs and MPs should also be decided...(Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : As I had said in the beginning, if the electorate is illiterate, it is not necessary that the legislators should be educated.

SHRI KALPNATH RAI (Ghosi) : You please also say that the Lok Sabha should last for full five years.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I do not want to comment on this issue. I had already mentioned it on that day. They can put all these points before the Commission which will review the Constitution. They can plead their case there. Even they can get their points included and whenever these things come up before the House, a suitable decision can be taken.

With these words, I conclude.

SHRI SURENDER SINGH (Bhiwani) : That Commission must have Shri Kalpnath and myself as Members.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I raised two issues when the Prime Minister was not there. The first related to the provision of the reservation in promotion in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. An amendment in the Constitution to this effect has already been made, the Department of Personnel is still to implement the same. When we took up this issue, the elections were declared. The present Government is requested to look into it.

The second issue related to the persons detained under TADA. The hon. Prime Minister made a very good point in Lucknow yesterday and people heaved a sigh of relief hearing it. When TADA Act has already been repealed, the persons detained under TADA should be tried in the normal course. I hope the Government would consider these two points.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan has made good suggestions which would definitely be considered. I hope that he would continue to make good suggestions in future also...(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, a number of amendments have been moved.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI TARUN GOGOI (Kaliabor) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would request the hon. Prime Minister...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Tarun Gogoi, please take your seat.