

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------|------|----------|------|----------|------|----------|
| N.E. Region | 277 | 172.20 | 145 | 232.15 | 144 | 294.13 |
| Orissa | 468 | 472.56 | 387 | 425.39 | 343 | 601.80 |
| Punjab | 1081 | 687.71 | 1329 | 1595.54 | 1389 | 1909.84 |
| Rajasthan | 420 | 266.35 | 490 | 331.22 | 546 | 429.07 |
| Tamil Nadu | 1296 | 834.71 | 1316 | 923.92 | 1525 | 999.31 |
| Uttar Pradesh | 1011 | 1920.67 | 1230 | 3511.26 | 1353 | 3943.25 |
| West Bengal | 1223 | 14103.28 | 1232 | 18536.47 | 1216 | 17641.50 |

() = Provisional.

12.00 hrs.

MR. SPEAKER : We will take up the matters one after the other please. There are some important matters. We will take up one after the other.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Rosera) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have a very important issue.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : I will give you time.

12.01 hrs.

ALLEGED DELAY IN UNRAVELLING THE CONSPIRACY BEHIND THE ASSASSINATION OF SHRI RAJIV GANDHI

[English]

SHRI ARJUN SINGH (SATNA) : Hon. respected Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity. I had the privilege to bring this matter to your notice and I firmly and humbly believe that this is neither an occasion for acrimony nor for controversy. It is a moment for a dignified and sensitive response from this sovereign Parliament to the concern and anguish expressed by Shrimati Sonia Gandhi about the delay in bring to book those responsible for the assassination of our late Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

Sir, I will not go into anything which will even remotely suggest any kind of controversial discussion on this matter, because my purpose is not that. My purpose is only, as I said and I feel, that the House would be agreeable to this, that we should, in a very dignified manner, give a unanimous response on this occasion; and I am sure that itself will sent the right messages all around.

I have prepared a formulation which I think will serve the purpose. With your permission, if it could be said:

'This House notes with great sympathy the concern and anguish expressed by Shrimati Sonia Gandhi at the delay in unravelling the conspiracy behind the assassination of her late husband and the former Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi. The House directs

that the Government of India should move expeditiously and transparently so that the guilty are brought to book immediately'.

Sir, I would beg of the House, and beg of you, Sir, — it would be in the fitness of things and within all bounds of propriety — that the House adopts this as a response on this occasion.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR) : Of course, we are all concerned that the guilty persons should be properly, suitably dealt with immediately. It was a tragedy that had befallen on this country when we lost our young leader, a great promise and a former Prime Minister. What are concerned is that such commissions and investigations seem to take interminable time and what we really join in Mr. Arjun Singh is, in asking the Government that all possible steps should be taken to complete the enquiry, finish the investigation either through Commission or, otherwise it cannot go on protracted and no feelings should be there in the people's mind that there is some procrastination in this matter.

Therefore, to that extent the Government should expedite to the best of its ability and take the people into confidence that all possible steps are being taken. To that extent I submit that the Government should also respond and tell us what has been done. You also tell as to how long do you think that this process will take.

The trouble is that when such important and tragic events happen, the Government comes forward and says that they are doing this and they are doing everything. But there do not seem to be any results as has been the case of 1984 riots.

Therefore, there is a lack credibility so far as the Government's actions are concerned. It is for the Government to take steps and to show that they are serious as to what is being done.

Naturally an anguish has been expressed and we share that anguish. So far as the House is concerned, we request the Government to respond and to say what steps are being taken. You also say as to how long do you think that this inquiry will go on and whether it will see the end of the tunnel or not, because we want that guilty persons should be appropriately dealt with.

[Translation]

SHRI SHARAD YADAV (Madhepura) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, hon. Arjun Singh has raised a very serious matter in the House. We all feel sorry for the inhuman and heinous murder of the late Prime Minister of the India, Shri Rajiv Gandhi. Now his widow has expressed her anguish over the tardy manner in which this Government has handled this case and the entire nation shares her concern. I feel Government must place all facts of this case before this House. The Commission appointed to go into the case will submit its report based on the evidences given by witnesses. Many names of witnesses have appeared but I do not want to go into it because the matter is before the Commission. But I would certainly say that Government must place before this House and explain to the people all the facts keeping in view the statement made by Smt. Sonia Gandhi. The hon. Home Minister must explain to this House and to the people of the country as to how seriously and honestly Government are dealing with this case. The Government must make a statement and take the people into confidence because the case is of murder of a former Prime Minister of this country. We have not been able to apprehend and punish any culprit and assassin during the last four years, nor have we reached any conclusion. It is a sad commentary on the affairs of the country. I would submit that Government should make a statement on this issue.

[English]

SHRI JASWANT SINGH (CHITTORGARH): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have heard with great care what hon. Shri Arjun Singh, a very senior Congressman, uptill lately number two of this Cabinet, has proposed to be the wish of the House.

Sir, I must, at the very outset, say that we share the grief of the bereaved family. We do believe that guilty persons ought to be brought to book expeditiously. I must, nevertheless, with due regard, add two or three observations.

And if I say due regard, I say due regard to the sentiments not only of the House but sentiments of the bereaved family also. I must, Sir, in all earnest, because I will be dishonest to my creed and my belief and I will not be stating the correct thing if in this House, in this very formulation that is coming up I did not get a whiff of Congress Party's inner political turmoil. We personally wish to have nothing at all to do with the Congress Party's inner turbulence or turmoil. That is for them to settle and it is entirely their matter — whether they choose to have this or they choose absurdity like renaming old historical sites in the capital city. In all this I sense symptoms of Congress Party's inner turmoil. I did start by saying that we share the grief of the bereaved. And also I share with

what Shri Somnath Chatterjee has said that when people in high places who have served the country with distinction are taken away from our midst by dastardly crime, and the assassination of the late Prime Minister, late Rajiv Gandhi was, without any doubt, a dastardly crime deserving not simply of the highest condemnation but the most expeditious and salutary punishment. That having been said, how am I, as a Member of Parliament or as a Member of this Assembly to weigh in the scale of my concern the bereavement of one against the other?

I believe that the grief, for example, that was caused by a much larger carnage that took place in 1984 when the official figures, the figures given by the Government, say 3,000 citizens of the sikh community were killed in various parts of India in November, 1984, is equally important. To my knowledge not one single guilty for that, leave alone being punished, has been charged even. I do take into account the grief of the families of those 3,000 persons. I think the Government stands charged. This Government stands charged with dereliction. Successive Governments stand charged with that dereliction.

And if I do not refer to the assault against India, which is virtually an assault against India in March, 1993 by the Bombay bomb blasts killing over 360 Indian citizens and the grief to those families, I will be failing in my duty. There again I charge the Government with inaction.

Therefore, if I were to take the name of a distinguished lady, at one time a first lady and use the anguish that she has poured at a place which was the place that returned her late husband to Parliament, which Parliament the late husband served with great distinction, I do not know if we are not actually using this to play the inner Party politics of the Congress Party.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS : There are no inner Party politics (Interruptions)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH: Sir, I am relieved to hear that they say that there is no inner Party politics in which case some authorised spokesman from the Government ought to stand up and should give reaction to these three issues, one issue has been pointed out by a one-time Number two in your Cabinet and the other two issues which I, as an ordinary Member of the Opposition, have now brought to your notice. Let the Government first stand up and give their reaction. Then we will also, with utmost seriousness, apply ourselves to that because unless we know what the Government does, what am I to say other than what I have just said? ... (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): Sir, something has been said about Delhi riots. I was listening very carefully about what the hon. Member said about the 1984 riots. Tomorrow morning I will lay on the Table of the House the whole report as to what action we have taken

against those who were found guilty. Even we have ordered an enquiry against one of the M.Ps., who belongs to our Party, and we have cleared the Court to go ahead as per the law to take its course. We will put it on the Table of the House.....(Interruptions)

[Translation]

MAJOR GENERAL (RTD.) BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI (GARHWAL):

You are placing it on the Table after 12 years.

[English]

(Interruptions) You cannot Conceal your sins

SHRI RAJESH PILOT: We have taken action.

(Interruptions)

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): What is the result of your inquiry which is going on for 11 years? How many have been arrested and how many have been punished?

[Translation]

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (Aawla): Who were the persons involved in 1984 riots? How many of them were arrested.....(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI P.G. NARAYANAN (Gobichettipalayam) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is matter of great concern that Rajiv Gandhi was killed four years back. But there is delay in the investigation process and the inquiry is going on very slowly. It shows that the Government is not taking this inquiry seriously. There is apprehension in the minds of the people that the Government is protecting the guilty persons in this case. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi is very much worried on the attitude of this Government. So, steps must be taken speedily to bring the culprits to book as soon as possible.

SHRI LOKANATH CHOUDHURY (Jagatsinghpur): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi is a great tragedy to our country, because he was not only our former Prime Minister, but he was also a visionary who wanted to take the country to a particular time — we may not agree with him—and he was encouraging the scientific temper. So, the loss of such a man, not as the Prime Minister alone, is a loss for the whole country. This is what I feel. Now, four years have passed and naturally there is a doubt that perhaps the inquiry is delayed and

the Government is not taking any action. Moreover, it is further highlighted by the reaction of his wife, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi.

So, my point is that such processes are generally delayed. But certain issues should be dealt with expeditiously when the former Head of the Government is assassinated. If the matter is not pursued quickly, naturally the morale of the country will go down. So, it is not the question of the cases, as Somnathji has said; cases may be there. Since he was the head of the Government; naturally the process of inquiry should have been expedited long before and by not expediting the process, the Government has created a basis for suspicion. So, the Government should have explained to this House as to why it has not expedited the process, before Mrs. Sonia Gandhi expressed her remarks. Now it is late.

As Shri Jaswant Singh has said that Shri Arjun Singh who was number two in the Government earlier has raised this question today in the House and whether he has raised it with honesty or with a political motive that also becomes suspicious and that brings down the gravity and the importance of the question to a low level.

So, naturally I would demand that the Government should apprise the House as to what has happened and why it has been delayed so that the House will know the causes for the delay and the suspicion from the minds of the people will evaporate. If the Government does not put the facts before us clearly, the suspicion will become a political suspicion which virtually, in practice, minimise the importance of finding out the culprits who had assassinated the former Head of the Government. So, naturally the Government has to give a reply to satisfy the country and satisfy Madam Gandhi and also to satisfy this Parliament as to what steps they have taken.

Why is this suspicion coming? I would like to know whether they have faulted somewhere due to which they have failed to take act on during the last four years against the culprit who has assassinated the former head of the Government? If the assassin will not be found, if the guilty who might have conspired will not be found and if the matter is allowed to go on like this, it will definitely bring down the morale of the people as also the dignity of the country.

[Translation]

SHRI CHANDRA JEET YADAV (Azamgarh) : Sir, this House had expressed its concern earlier also about the undue delay being caused in the inquiry being conducted in the case of assassination of the former Prime Minister Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi. It is necessary to identify the culprits involved in it and to punish them. Today, the House again has a motion before it expressing concern

about undue delay. It seeks to direct the Central Government to take all possible steps to identify the people involved in this murder conspiracy. This House and the entire nation is concerned over it. It is natural that his widow, his family are worried over it. I, therefore, fully support this motion and request the Government to make a statement explaining the reasons for delay in completing the inquiry and take immediate steps in the matter.

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Mr. Speaker, Sir, a number of hon. Members have expressed their concern on what they believe to be avoidable delays in **punishing the guilty** for the assassination of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

Sir, I have also noted the observations made by Shrimati Sonia Gandhi in the course of her speech at Amethi yesterday. She said, '*vedna*'. I think, it means anguish. Some months ago she at a private meeting expressed her anguish to me. I shared her anguish and concern. In fact, I found that everyone in the Government, the Prime Minister, Ministers and Members of Parliament share these concerns. It is because I share Mrs. Gandhi's anguish and concern, I accepted the assignment entrusted to me by the Prime Minister to coordinate all matters relating to the assassination of late Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

Since 24th May, 1995 I am responsible. The Government is collectively responsible but I have a special and direct responsibility. In the last 90 days, the Government has taken a number of steps to quicken the process of the trial as well as the inquiry by the Jain Commission, Sir, with your permission I will just take two or three more minutes to spell out the stage of each investigation or trial.

So, within days after I accepted this responsibility, on the 3rd June, 1995 a formal request for extradition of three accused was sent to Sri Lanka and I made a statement before this hon. House on the events and circumstances leading to that request for extradition.

There is a trial of 41 accused before the designated court in Poonamalle. Of these, 41 are accused, 12 are dead, three are absconding and 26 are facing trial. In my statement made to Parliament on the 3rd of June, I indicated the enormous legal and procedural hurdles that were placed and are being placed in the conduct of the trial by the designated court.

Just to give you an idea, there have been in the last few years since the trial began, 399 petitions involving procedural and substantive matters before the designated court, 25 petitions in the High Court and three petitions

in the Supreme Court. Tremendous amount of preparatory work had to be done with the cooperation of the Government of Tamil Nadu for the trial to proceed because these are among the most hardened and ruthless killers that the world knows with a special prison, a special court and very high security requirements. Nevertheless, the judge whom I believe to be a very courageous, straightforward and honest judge, has conducted 212 days of hearings in the trial, 183 witnesses were examined and so far 908 documents and 557 material objects have been marked.

I have laid down a very tight time-table for the conclusion of the evidence on behalf of the prosecution. The Senior prosecutor is a very experienced lawyer, a very distinguished criminal lawyer and despite his very advanced age, he has devoted his full time to this case. I am confident, God willing, the evidence will be completed by December, punishment is certain for the guilty and punishment will be severe for the guilty. I only pray that **no further impediments** come up in the way of trial.

As far as the Jain Commission is concerned, it has held 65 sittings so far. Today is the 66th. The Jain Commission of Inquiry is required to look into the matters, not covered by the Justice Varma Commission of Inquiry whose report has already been tabled before this House. The Jain commission also, by its own self-restraint order as well as an order of the Delhi High Court is prohibited at this stage to go into the matter prior to 29th of July, 1987. The Jain Commission is, therefore, not concerned with criminal trial, nor can it go into all the matters covered by the Justice Varma Commission. Justice Jain had, on more than one occasion, expressed some unhappiness about the lack of information and documents which he or some other counsel had sought. After I have accepted this responsibility, I have ensured that every document, every paper and every report which Justice Jain wants or wanted, has been made available or will be made available, subject only to two reservations.

The first reservation is, as anyone acquainted with criminal law will know, the case records and case diary cannot be produced before Justice Jain at this stage. The learned Judge has appreciated it and has upheld this contention for the present. The second reservation is in respect of a very few, a very small number of documents in which the claim of privilege has been upheld by Mr. Justice Jain or the claim or privilege has not been decided by Mr. Justice Jain. Except the Judge himself, other Counsels are not given access to those documents. But that is a very small number. Every other document, every other report has been made available or will be made available to Mr. Justice Jain.

Sir, Justice Jain is a respected Judge. He has been the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court. I believe, he

knows what he is doing and what he would like to do. Before the Commission, time has been consumed by a number of people claiming to have knowledge or information. The Judge will, no doubt, sift the grain from the chaff and then make his report, I have promised Justice Jain every cooperation in completing his task and submitting his report, presenting his report.

In conclusion, I only wish to say this that we all share the grief of the family. For me, it is a deep personal loss. I accepted this assignment only because I believe I enjoy the confidence of the Prime Minister and I believe I enjoy the confidence of Mrs. Gandhi. I will do everything possible, everything humanely possible to ensure that the trial is completed according to the time-table which I have discussed with the Prosecutor and I will do everything possible to help Justice Jain to give his report as early as possible.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Sir, I heard very carefully what the hon. Minister has said. And, as I said in the very beginning, I would like to stick to what I said in the beginning that this is not an occasion for acrimony or controversy. The hon. Minister has given many details. If I were to go into those details, that acrimony and that controversy, which I want to avoid at any cost, would arise. Therefore, I would deny myself this opportunity.

What has been said is with some qualification. Yes, I think the hon. Members have every right to point out certain things which are there in their minds. That is very right. But everyone has said that he shares the agony, the anguish and concern. If you look at the wording that I have read out, there is not a single comma, full-stop or word which is accusatory in contempt. There is nothing like that. As it now appears to be the position, from all quarters of the House that agony and anguish is being shared, I see no difficulty that, with your permission, this expression in the words that I have suggested to you has been the consensus that the House has. I would like to assure hon. Member Shri Jaswant Singh that his doubts and suspicion about inner things are not correct, I think definitely there are pull-strings in the hearth. I am sure - every Member here in some way or the other - those strings of the hearth are certainly stirred and pulled.

There is no political controversy. This is an appeal which I would again beg that the House in its wisdom agree to and I am sure, Sir, you yourself would apply your mind to it and give us the opportunity to say what everybody here feels. (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: If I have understood correctly, Arjun Singhji is trying to say that his notice should be accepted and passed. Is it correct?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : Naturally, when I make this request to you in what manner.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Is my understanding correct or not?

....(Interruptions)

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : In what manner it is done is entirely your discretion so that the impression of the House comes forward, I have suggested a formulation. It is obvious....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: There is no insistence on formal acceptance. It is left to the Chair.

....(Interruptions)

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: **Everything is left to the Chair** but I hope the hon. Chair will also remember that in **what manner** and in what form is definitely your discretion, but the feeling have to go in a manner (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: If it is naturally left to the Chair, Chair will try to do justice. If insistence on this is there, then I will seek the consensus of the House and act accordingly.

....(Interruptions)

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : I think the Chair can formulate it in a 'language' it wants.

MR. SPEAKER: No, I am not asking for the 'language'. I am asking about the 'form'.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I am saying in whatever 'language' or 'form', the Chair feels right...(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI (Gandhi Nagar) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Arjun Singh has moved an informal motion and not a formal motion. He has said that he has not levelled any allegation therein against any one. He has expressed his concern which is shared by the entire House including Shri Chidambaram. This motion has charged the Government of delay. The word 'delay' has been used. I think, this word has prompted Shri Som Nath Chatterjee and my colleague Shri Jaswat Singh to remind the House that in such cases, if the culprits are not punished immediately, it harms the interest of the nation and results in greater mental agony. The crime was committed in 1991 but the culprits have not been punished so far. This naturally causes concern. In 1984 also, heinous crimes were committed which resulted in the killings of three thousand persons. Later, 300-350 persons were killed in Bombay in 1993.....(Interruptions)

SHRI CHHEDI PASWAN (Sasaram) : He has forgotten what happened in Ayodhya on 6th December, 1992.. (Interruptions)

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI : I am also talking of what happened in Ayodhya. Wherever the crime is committed, if the culprits are not punished, it will have an adverse effect on law and order situation. I can understand if the

House expresses its concern over this. I think the statement made by Shri Chidambaram needs discussion. It will be known whether adequate action was taken or not. Broadly, it transpires from what he said that the Government is proceeding in that direction. I think the motion should be formal to express this House's concern over 1984 riots, on Bombay explosions and also on Ayodhya, as has been said by my friend..... (*Interruptions*) I have no objection. But I fully support the contention that wherever this sort of heinous crimes are committed, the perpetrators of crime must be punished, otherwise this will have an overall adverse impact on country's tranquility.

[*English*]

MR. SPEAKER : I would now seek the Government's response on what Arjun Singhji has suggested. ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, we all certainly share the concern expressed on the floor of the House that this tragedy had taken place. All steps have to be taken for finding the persons guilty and providing combined punishment to them. Of course, we have expressed our views and those are all part of the records of this House.

Sir, so many other issues are there. The events of 1984, the events of 1991 and the events of 1992 would also come up. Therefore it is not right that we shall isolate only one incident, however important it might be, when the concern is about the delay in punishing the guilty. If it is done, then all sorts of controversies will arise. Therefore, let this be put on record and let the Government give its response.

[*Translation*]

How long will you keep *mum, you must speak on such issues.

[*English*]

SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM : I have spoken, Somnathji. You were not there.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : They should say that they are committed to it.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have shared with the House, the information which was in my possession. I think, Somnathji may not have been here when I spoke (*Interruptions*)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : It appears that something is being done.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM : Sir, the Hon. Member, Shri Arjun Singh, has suggested a particular course of action.

One can hold two mirrors — there is truth; there is

perception. I realise that it is not enough to be truthful, but one must be perceived to be truthful. I have stated truthfully the position obtaining today and the steps taken by Government in the last three months to quicken the process. I most humbly appeal to Mr. Arjun Singh and others to accept my statement as a truthful statement of the position and a promise to continue the process until it reaches its logical conclusion.

Sir, every section of this House has already expressed its sense of anguish and concern. Instead of a resolution or a motion to be moved by Mr. Arjun Singh, I would humbly appeal to you to consider if the Chair can sum up the sense of the House and I will take it as a direction to the Government, to me to continue to find a way to expeditiously conclude the trial and the enquiry. I would request you, if you consider it appropriate, to sum up the sense of the House.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH : Sir, I have already left it to the hon. Chair to sum it up in whatever way you wanted to do it. I am denying myself time and again from going into this matter in detail because it would raise a controversy and controversy is the last thing that I want to raise at this moment of time. Mr. Chidambaram has said, and I use his word, that dividing line is certainly also to be perceived. Now, I do not want to go into that dividing line on which side is perception and on which side is truth because that is what I want to deny myself on this occasion. Therefore, I have not challenged his statement. But the fact is that there is something which can be perceived and which some people consider to be truth and that dividing line. I would not like anybody to have the right to draw. I again say, I am not pressing for anything. The Chair should do it in its own wisdom.

MR. SPEAKER : Well, I would like to say that the way in which the matter has been discussed on the floor of the House is quite appreciable and understandable; and it is on occasions like this that the House appears to be rising to very high levels. So, I thank all the hon. Members. We should do our best to book the culprits and punish them as per the law of the land expeditiously. That appears to be the wish of the majority or I would say, nearly all the Members or all the Members of the House. (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : The Government has explained all that it has been doing. All these facts may be taken note of by all concerned for correct and speedier action. We all very sincerely share the grief and anguish involved in the poignant and the great tragedy. This is what I have derived from the discussions that have occurred here. ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI JASWANT SINGH : Sir, it is not a comment on

what you have observed from the Chair; and we share all that. But there were some views expressed by us from this side of the House which have perhaps inadvertently not found reflection in what you have said. I wish to only leave it at that, Sir.....(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : This is exactly for this reason why I wanted to hear your views; and my impression was that we are dealing with a particular issue and not all the issues.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : But I do feel that - if any Members say that - the offence against any individual or against many other individuals is equally to be investigated in a proper manner and appropriate action is to be taken.
...(Interruption)

12.49 hrs.

RE : GIVING BENEFITS OF SCHEDULED CASTES TO DALIT CHRISTIANS.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN (Rosera) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to draw your attention to a very vital issue, which is above party lines. The Constitution of India enshrines special provision for Dalits and socially and educationally backward people. Para 3 of Presidential Order, 1950 promulgated under the above provision of the Constitution provides for reservation for those who have changed their religion. The Sikh Community has already been covered under this order. When there was our Government, we provided for reservation for convert Buddhists. We have been similarly demanding reservation for dalit christians. I am happy that Union Welfare Minister, Shri Sita Ram Kesari is sitting here. The dalit christian population accounts for 60 per cent of total christian population. I want that reservation should be extended to the socially and educationally backward christians also. Shri Sita Ram Kesari has given repeated assurances about this. In the Dalit Christian conference held in Vijayawada on 21st November 1992, he had as a Minister of Social Welfare, said that he would endeavour to bring about a Bill in this regard in the coming session of Parliament. But I am sorry to say there is a lot of difference between Governments saying and action. Three years have passed since 1992 but Government has failed to bring a Bill or promulgate an ordinance in this regard. This is not a constitutional amendment which needs two third majority. This can be adopted by a simple majority. We are prepared to extend our full cooperation in the matter. We know the incident that took place in Chundur, Karmcheru and Nirukonda which involved the dalit christian community. The Supreme Court has clearly said in its judgement that :

[English]

"To deny the SCs constitutional protection of reservation solely by reasons of change of faith or religion is to endanger the very concept of secularism and religion that way on the reservations."

[Translation]

There is great resentment among dalits on this issue. All the political parties had urged Shri Sita Ram Kesari to bring forward a Bill or an order in this House by 26th of this month, which is the last day of the Session so as to provide justice to dalit christians also and to do away with the resentment among this community. Shri Sita Ram Kesari is sitting here and I would like to know the Government's mind in this respect. Whether it will honour the commitment made by it and introduce a Bill in this session?

[English]

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (Muvattupuzha): Sir, this is a grave issue which has been submitted by all of us many a time in this House. You have been pleased to give us opportunity as we have stated in this House. It was heard by the Government and the Government had given very many assurances.

Yesterday, some of the MPs met the Prime Minister on this issue. We are happy that the Prime Minister was gracious enough to give a word to us: this is a grave issue to which the Government has given a very serious thought, and the Government will bring a Bill to include the Christians of Scheduled Caste origin also in the Schedule and thereby a motion to amend the Scheduled Castes Order of 1950 so that this grave issue will be solved.

There is only one more day. As per the assurance given by the Prime Minister, I would urge upon the Hon. Minister, Shri Sitaram Kesri, to bring this Bill if not today at least tomorrow because tomorrow is the last day.

I want to raise one more point. The urgency is that this Government has been gracious enough to declare crores of rupees for the poor, the downtrodden and also the Dalits of this country. Those crores of rupees are going to be spent for these downtrodden people.

MR. SPEAKER : Please be brief. There are many hon. Members.

SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Sir, I am finishing. These poor persons also, who just happen to have a faith in a particular religion, may be allowed to come under this Schedule.

MR. SPEAKER : Now I propose to allow almost all the Members to raise their points today because this happens to be the penultimate day of this session. That is why please have patience. But at the same time, do realise