

LOK SABHA

SYNOPSIS OF DEBATES

(Proceedings other than Questions & Answers)

Thursday, February 23, 2006 / Phalguna 4, 1927 (Saka)

AFFIRMATION BY MEMBER

Shri Purno Agitok Sangma took oath, signed the Roll of Members and took his seat in the House.

*MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN laid a statement on a matter regarding need to make it mandatory for every eligible person to vote in General Elections.

SHRIMATI PRATIBHA SINGH laid a statement on a matter regarding need to set up an Ordnance Factory in Himachal Pradesh with a view to generate employment opportunities in the region.

*Laid on the table of the House as per the direction of the Chair.

SHRI YOGI ADITYA NATH laid a statement on a matter regarding need to include Bhojpuri language in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.

SHRI G. KARUNAKARA REDDY laid a statement on a matter regarding need to

increase supply of SIM Cards of BSNL in Bellary, Karnataka and improve the mobile services in sub-urban and rural areas of the State.

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY laid a statement on a matter regarding need to expedite setting up of Regional All India Institute of Medical Sciences at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR laid a statement on a matter regarding need to take over M/s Synthetic and Chemicals Limited located Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh with a view to protect the interests of labourers working in the factory.

SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY laid a statement on a matter regarding need to provide funds to Madhwalia Gosadan working for the welfare of sick cattle in Mahrajganj district, Uttar Pradesh.

PROF. MAHADEORAO SHIWANKAR laid a statement on a matter regarding need to formulate policies for the welfare of farmers in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

SHRI P. MOHAN laid a statement on a matter regarding need to release funds for doubling of broad-gauge rail track on Madurai-Dindigul sector.

SHRI P. RAJENDRAN laid a statement on a matter regarding need to reduce the exorbitant charges for the to and fro flights between Kerala and Gulf Countries.

SHRI RAJESH KUMAR MANJHI laid a statement on a matter regarding need to set up a Granite polishing industry in Gaya district,

Bihar.

SHRI ARJUN SETHI laid a statement on a matter regarding need to include Nilgiri Block in Orissa under National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme.

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY laid a statement on a matter regarding need to provide three crossing points on the Barasat-Hasnabad Section of railways under Sealdah Division for the benefit of local commuters.

SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY laid a statement on a matter regarding need to ensure proper implementation of rural development schemes in Chidambaram Parliamentary Constituency, Tamil Nadu.

SHRI SUNIL KUMAR MAHATO laid a statement on a matter regarding need to implement 'Food for Work' and 'Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme' in East Singhbhoom district in Jamshepur Parliamentary Constituency, Jharkhand

SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR laid a statement on a matter regarding need to bring Calicut Medical College in Kerala at par with All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi.

MOTION OF THANKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS –Contd.

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH) replying said : I do believe that the hon. Rashtrapatiji has presented before us an important statement that should make every Indian proud and reassured. Our Government came to power on a pledge to care for the *aam aadmi*, on a pledge to make India shine, but shine for all. The Opposition have difficulty in appreciating this because their focus was on a socially divisive agenda, on a non-developmental agenda, on an agenda that mired the country in a low growth syndrome and an agenda that was backward looking.

India is a proud democracy. Ours is a Parliamentary Democracy. This issue of strength and weakness is

raised to deflect public attention from the real issues that concern our people. This Government has delivered eight per cent growth. We are seeing the highest savings rate of 29 per cent ever seen in our history and a record investment rate of 31 per cent. If we sustain this for the next few years, it is possible that we can eliminate poverty, ignorance and disease which afflict millions of our people. This Government has economically and socially empowered Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, religious and linguistic minorities, farmers and the working class, the unemployed and the poor. Several Members have drawn our attention to the importance of proper implementation of various programmes. I assure our Government will pay utmost attention to the proper implementation of welfare schemes and we have enacted the right to Information Act, 2005. We will be closely monitoring the implementation of these programmes and work closely with State Governments to achieve our goals.

Many Members have raised the issue of regional imbalances. Our Government will ensure that the least developed districts and backward regions of the country get the attention and the investment they require. An hon. Member has mentioned that Sam Vikas Yojana has no involvement of people's representatives. I mention that RSVY is being subsumed under the Backward Region Grant Fund which will be implemented through the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The issue of having equitable development and ensuring that all sections of society enjoy the benefits of growth is important. The Bill to give land rights to tribals in forest areas, the filling of the backlog of government jobs for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the range of legal measures for women's rights – these are all steps towards ensuring the empowerment of all marginalized and weaker groups. Many hon. Members have drawn attention to the difficulties being faced by farmers in different parts of the country. Our Government has given topmost priority to agriculture and farming and a number of steps have been taken which will show results in years to come and the flow of agricultural credit has improved. An hon. Member has raised the issue of giving the fertilizer subsidy directly to farmers. I state that it is an idea worth considering and I have asked the Minister of Agriculture to prepare a package for addressing the problems of marginal farmers. Further, we have been able to keep prices under check despite unprecedented pressure on account of rising world oil prices. On pricing of petroleum products, we will continue to pursue a judicious policy. Keeping in mind the needs of the consumer, the requirements of energy security and the health of our public sector oil companies. I must assure hon. Members that the decision to import wheat was taken as a precautionary measure and to ensure that we maintain a minimum level of buffer stocks. This decision will benefit consumers without hurting farmers. Regarding universalisation of the public distribution system, let me say that it is the duty of any Government to ensure that the genuinely poor across the country benefit from our public distribution system. As for food security, that is being addressed through the Rural Employment Guarantee, the universalisation of the Mid Day Meal and the ICDS programmes and expanding the number of Antodaya cards.

Bharat Nirman is not a repackaging of existing schemes. Bharat Nirman is a governmental initiative that drives its inspiration from the Rashtrapatiji's PURA vision. I sincerely believe that through Bharat Nirman, we will be able to transform our rural economy. The President's Address gives a detailed account of the important steps taken by our Government to improve the quality of infrastructure in the country. It is this effort that has contributed to the unprecedented increase in the rate of investment in the economy in the last two years. Moreover, I would like to point out the remarkable turnaround achieved by the Indian Railways in the last two years. As far as FDI in retail is concerned, I would like to assure

that we will not act in haste in this matter. Regarding dissolution of the Bihar Assembly and the subsequent judgement of the hon. Supreme Court, I would not like to go into the merits of the judgement and we respect the wisdom and decision of the hon. Supreme Court in arriving at the conclusion it did. After the judgement of the hon. Supreme Court, the Governor decided to tender his resignation out of his own volition. As far as unemployment is concerned, I must add that the overall impact of all our initiatives will be to generate more and more employment and to modernize the economy. The NREGA alone will be a major initiative. Our Government is committed to the welfare of all our citizens and our Government condemns the practice of female foeticide. We are also committed to one-third reservation for women in Parliament and State Legislatures.

The Rashtrapatiji's Address has given a detailed account of the measures being taken by our Government in Jammu and Kashmir and the North-East. We are firm in our conviction that violence of any kind is not in consonance with the principles of our democracy and will be dealt with firmly. Even in the case of naxalism, we are committed to dealing with violence firmly. Regarding the problems of Muslim minorities, I would like to once again reiterate our commitment to the welfare of our minorities, particularly the Muslim minorities. The creation of a Ministry of Minority Affairs is to ensure that their problems get focussed attention. Let me also assure that the Armed Forces will continue to be apolitical, secular, professional and merit based. I urge the hon. Members to make a distinction between empowerment and appeasement. As for the Aligarh Muslim University is concerned we are committed to retaining its minority character.

On the specific issue of certain disparaging cartoons appearing in some publications abroad, I share the concern expressed in the House. Our Government is deeply concerned about the growing controversy about the publication of cartoons that have offended the Muslim Community worldwide. We condemn all action which hurt the religious sentiments of any community. I also urge the hon. Members to appreciate the fact that by and large we have had a national consensus on our foreign policy orientation. So, I sincerely appeal to all our political parties to respect this tradition, so that the hands of the Government are strengthened in dealing with the world.

The world today views India with great regard and respect. This is because the people of our country have demonstrated to the world that they are second to none. No Indian need feel any sense of inferiority or insecurity in today's world. India stand tall and we stand proud as an open society and an open economy. I am sure hon. Members rejoice in this sense of self-confidence of our people.

All the amendments negatived.

The motion was adopted.

P.D.T. ACHARY,

Secretary-General.

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NOTE : It is the verbatim Debates of the Lok Sabha and not the Synopsis that should be considered authoritative.