

MR. CHAIRMAN : You can say that during the discussion of Railway Budget. Now please sit down...

...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have given permission to raise a specific issue but it does not mean that every member starts speaking. Same situation is prevailing in every area...

...(Interruptions)

17.34 hrs.

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

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Those who are not speaking today will lose their priority tomorrow.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : What about me, Sir ?

MR. CHAIRMAN : Yours is a different case.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (Andaman and Nicobar Islands) : I rise to participate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address, moved by my good Friend, Shri Sharad Yadav.

This is a very unique situation. The present Government, which has prepared the speech of the President for the first time ever since assuming the Office, is supported by thirteen parties in addition to the support of the Congress Party from outside. As I said, this is a unique situation ever since India's Independence that the two major parties, the BJP and the Congress, which constitute more than 300 Members in this House thus having an absolute majority are out of power and the other splinter groups have combined together to form a Government which is being supported by one of the major parties. Why has this happened ? We shall have to analyse this position.

It is only because of one point, that is whether we should practise secular politics or communal politics. The division is here and because of this division only though we have diametrically opposite views on many issues, we have combined together. We want to restore secular politics in this land of Budha and the land of Gandhi. Now, the point is, are we really serious about it ? We have to search our hearts and answer this question, the Congress position is very clear. Ever since we attained Independence, it is the Congress Party which has remained mostly in power in the Centre.

It was the then leaders, the stalwarts of the Congress Party who thought that there should not be a State policy on the basis of religion because human beings, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, are one. Their sorrows and their joys are common and that is why there should be a secular polity. It is the Congress Party and the leadership of the

Congress party which was the architect of the secular policy in the country. When you accept this position, I would like to ask my friend in the Government, are you fully aware of the significant position in this country ?

He has mentioned one thing from the President's Address and that is, "This is the time for coalition Governments." But he has not elaborated why this coalition Government has come into being. What is the reason ? There is another important aspect which has come to light in the recent by-elections. I am sorry to say that the behaviour of the secular political parties was something to be ashamed of. It is not a question of winning elections by Congress, Janata Dal or the Communist Parties. It is a question of fight between secular forces on the one hand and the non-secular forces on the other. The response which should have come from the Ruling Government was not forthcoming. Hence this is the result which we all see today. Somebody has to answer to this.

In the State of Uttar Pradesh we are all talking about democracy and democratic polity. Yes, certainly democratic polity is the best form among all the systems of governance practised in the world. That is why we had accepted it. But then, the question again arises that when you accept this position, due to personal liking or disliking, the secular forces were not able to come together and form a Government in Uttar Pradesh. What sort of secularism are we practising then ? People will not tolerate this position for a long time. When they have accepted that the country is wedded to democratic polity, the Ruling government and the Ruling partners cannot shirk their responsibility. They will have to see it happen. They will have to search their hearts. If they are not in a position to do this, they will drive the people of this country towards communal forces. I would like to warn the Government that if they do not read the writing on the wall, those things will happen. What you do not want, the country does not want. It is high time that the Government consider this point.

I would like to draw the attention of the House to another point. I can understand that the President's Address is written by the Cabinet. President is a very lovable person, a very learned personality. When we criticise some of the points stated in the address, it does not mean that we are criticising the office of the President or the person who is occupying it. What we are trying to do is we are trying to find out loopholes and the lacunae which remain in the speech.

The President has said a lot of things but he has missed some of the very important issues, as Shri Murli Manohar Joshi has rightly pointed out, like the centenary year of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose which is being observed all over the country. There is even a Union level Committee of which the Prime Minister himself is the Chairman. In spite of this, how is it that the great hero of our national life, and the greatest of the freedom fighters, could not find a mention in the President's Address ?

We are also celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of our Independence. Here, I would like to say that I come from the Union Territory. I come from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a land of martyrs. I come from the Island where the bastille of India, the Cellular Jail is situated. I come from the place where Netaji Subash Chandra Bose hoisted the tricolour for the first time on the Indian soil.

I cannot really understand why the Union Territory has not found any place in the President's Address. It has never found any place in the President's Address. The President is responsible for the administration of the Union Territory. There are four or five small territories. There is not even a single word about these Union Territories. How these Territories are administered? What is going to happen to those areas? I would like to say that after all, it is the responsibility of the Government to see that all parts of the Union is looked into in a proper perspective and given due weightage. There should have been a mention about the sacrifices of the Islanders. There should have been a mention right from the first freedom movement of 1857. Freedom fighters were taken to Andaman Cellular Jail for vanishment. There should have been a paragraph in the President's Speech. Moreover, some exemplary function should have been organised in the infamous Cellular Jail where a large number of freedom fighters laid their lives due to the tortures of British Raj.

A lot of things have been told about the judiciary in the recent past but nothing has been mentioned about it in the Address. Currently, there is a lot of press clippings and discussions have been taking place. There is a different opinion and there is a contradictory opinion about the judiciary. I definitely like to say that the State should provide better judicial arrangement for the litigants. Four or five cases get a lot of publicity, but lakhs and lakhs of cases are pending in the courts, for years together. There is no hearing and the people do not get justice in time. There should have been some mention in the Address about how the judiciary is going to be strengthened. What are the other actions to be taken to dispose of the cases pending in the court of law.

Of course, now, the judiciary have done some marvellous and good job. I must admit that some very good work is being done by the judiciary which has been pending for a very long time. There are some other issues too where the judiciary has to be properly briefed. The Government has to take the issues and problems of the people up. When there is any problem arising out of the judicial pronouncements, then it is the responsibility of the Government to take it up and to review the decisions. If the Government is not taking it up, then it would amount to the failure of the Government and we cannot support that tendency.

Regarding achieving self-sufficiency in the country, I would like to say that the word 'self-sufficient' has gone. It has been given a go-by. Earlier, it was the State policy.

That policy should again be adopted. Then the country should follow that. Otherwise, every now and then, if you depend on other countries, that will not fulfil the hopes and aspirations of our teeming millions.

Regarding Pay Commission, I would like to say that nothing has been mentioned in the President's Address. The Fifth Pay Commission's Report has already been presented to the Government but, perhaps, the Government could not decide what to do with that. According to newspaper reports, we understand that the three Service Chiefs have met the Prime Minister and expressed their unhappiness about the recommendations. So, this is the first time such a thing had taken place. So, some serious effort must be made in this regard and the Government should clarify their position. The Pay Commission had made recommendations for banning fresh recruitments and also for abolition of certain posts. If these recommendations are accepted, what will happen? They have recommended extending the retirement age by another two years. Now, there will be frustration in the Government service.

Now, I would like to say something about corruption. A few words have been mentioned in the President's Address about corruption. Let the Government come out and examine all influential people, the politicians, the bureaucrats, the judicial officers and all wealthy people as to how much they have accumulated. Let the Government come out with concrete steps. It will be welcomed by one and all.

Now, I will come to law and order situation in the North-Eastern region, Tripura and Assam. As many of my friends have mentioned here, it is deplorable. So, the Government should not look into this aspect on a piecemeal basis. There should be some rationality. The Government should take corrective steps in this regard.

Regarding infrastructural development, I would like to say that the investments that are coming from abroad are in the area of docks and ports. They are interested in power sector. They are not interested in any other sector. Take for example Railways. Indian Railways are having 62,500 kilometres of railway-lines. Now, the Indian Railways are also functioning like any other transport system. After Independence we could only lay about 4500 kilometres of railway-line. Today, Indian Railways occupy the first position in the world. It is only the Indian Railways which are paying money to the Government. It is only the Indian Railways which are earning profit. It is only the Indian Railways where the Government have reduced the Budgetary support from 75 per cent to 16 per cent. The Government wants that the Railways should mobilise money and also they should develop their infrastructure.

Is it possible? For construction of roads, Government will spend money; and for construction of runways, Government will spend money. Only in the case of Railways, Government says that it would not do anything. The Railways will have to do it on its own. The freight rates will be

[Shri Manoranjan Bhakta]

determined by the Government, fare structure will be determined by the Government and the Railways are being asked to borrow from the market. How is it possible ?

Let us come to the rational view that the Government should lay more stress because now the Ninth Five Year Plan is under preparation. So they should give more stress for the development of infrastructure and then only the Railways will be successful. Even if you want the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) to be a successful programme, then you have to take all these steps.

Now in the Common Minimum Programme, there are fifteen points which have been mentioned here. I do not know how they will do and wherefrom the money will come. It is very easy to say things. Their intention is very good, but how are they going to implement all this. If I take Rs. 1,32,000 as their revenue in a year, Rs. 62,500 crore they will pay as interest and Rs. 66,000 crore they will be paying as the principal amount, thereafter they will have Rs. 3500 crore. By that they will be meeting the targets set in the CMP! Or is it only for the consumption of the poor people of India ? This is the point which has to be understood.

Regarding security, I would like to mention that security is one of the most important aspects for any nation. All the other aspects of security have been touched, I will touch only one very simple and a small issue. For the last few years, there have been incidences of poaching in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands in a big way every now and then. The poachers have been coming with big ships waiting in the midst of the sea. The poachers enter our area taking away all the sea-wealth. This Government is not in a position to curb it. Why ? If I ask the Coast Guard authorities to take action, they say, 'they do not have the necessary equipment with them and that this has to be tackled by the Police Force and the Andaman Administration'.

Since the last two years they have been submitting a proposal for Marine Police Force in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands for the security of people and yet this Government could not decide whether this should be provided or not. They have not been able to decide whether this security is necessary or not. Nothing has happened so far. So this is the position. I do not know how things will be done if the situation remains as it is.

Now, I would like to touch the Panchayati Raj and Nagar Palika Amendments. You are also an eloquent speaker and you know that the people of India were hoping that Seventy-Third and Seventy-Fourth Amendments will be carried out and powers will be given to the Panchayats and Nagar Palikas so that all developmental works in the respective areas will be done by them.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN : How much more time you will take.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : I will take a little time more.

[English]

Sir, you are a very good Chairman. Please allow me to speak for some more time.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN : I leave it up to you.

[English]

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA : Sir, I am only airing the views, for which you have been fighting all these years on Nagar Palika and Panchayats. New election was held. Where is the power ? All powers are prescribed. On a prescription these powers are containerised. And so, they cannot do anything. They cannot undertake any development work. Even if they have money, they cannot spend because of this. What did we want ? We wanted decentralisation and we do not want centralisation. But what had happened—centralisation and not decentralisation. The authority which is enshrined in the Constitution should be transferred, that should be given honestly and not playing with the people. They should not be left like this.

Another important area is the rule of law and the human rights. If you talk about these two things, then it is absolutely necessary to understand the rule of law. While you try to impose the rule of law, all facilities should be provided to the Courts. In District Courts and in many places, even the stationeries are not available. How do they work ? That is the minimum requirement. If you analyse the Budget proposals of the Union Territories, you will find that there is no money left, Rs. 10 lakh or Rs. 20 lakh or something like that for the judiciary and nothing else. So, how things will be done if you want to impose the rule of law.

Then, Sir, at last I can only say that in this country if we want secular politics, if we want development and if we want that this country should prosper, then it is absolutely necessary that all of us, those who are sitting here, should not behave in such manner that all over the country people will look at us with contempt. We should, with all our differences of opinion, try to create a national agenda. The time has come that a national agenda has to be finalised. The Government should take care of it. They should discuss it with all the States, all the political parties and institutions. There can be a debate at the national level and then a national agenda should be finalised. Whichever Government may come and go but those identified areas of the national agenda should continue without any hindrance.

Then, Sir, the Government has mentioned only about the Women Reservation Bill but we do not know what will be the fate of it. Our Party is committed to that. We request the Government to be honest, just and should be respectful for the women of this country.

Then, Sir, I will touch upon another important area and then I will conclude. After fifty years of experience, which the country has gone through, we should now go in for the creation of a new Constituent Assembly. In the new scenario of the country, in the new system and in the new political dimension, which has come, in that perspective the country should consider this because in the present day system, you cannot do anything. You cannot change the Constitution as you like according to the wishes of the people because the Supreme Court has already said that the basic structure of the Constitution cannot be changed. Now what is the basic structure ? Anything can be termed as the basic structure. That is why, if you really want to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the people, the time has come that there should be a serious attempt and dialogue among the parties as to how the new Constituent Assembly can be created. And for that creation, if necessary, we can go to the people of India because in the present Constitution it is written that the people of India have given to themselves this Constitution. If that is so, it is the people who are supreme; they can change this Constitution and

with their views a new Constitution can be created. It should be done.

At last, again, I can only say that the Government should try that good sense should prevail on them. Simply accusing this side or that side will not do. They are in power now. They have to answer and they are answerable to the people of this country. They are answerable to the Parliament of this country. What they should do is they should correct their stand in Uttar Pradesh and they should try seriously to form a Government in the State with all the secular forces so that you should give no opportunity to the communal forces to play with the people of this country.

With these words, I thank you very much for having given me this opportunity.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The House now stands adjourned till 11 a.m. tomorrow.

18.00 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the
Clock on Tuesday, February 25, 1997/
Phalguna 6, 1918 (Saka).*
