

There are some policies in the country, on which there is a broad consensus. The former Government also sought consensus. It has been from the days of Nehru. When I spoke for the first time on foreign policy, I told Panditji that the non-aligned policy was not his personal policy. Even if you had not been here, the country would have followed the path of non-alignment. The country cannot make the mistake of aligning with any particular group. We are a very strong and vast country and can not be cowed down. We fought for our independence and for the freedom of other nations. How can we align with any group? Non-alignment was the right policy which the nation has pursued.

13.00 hrs.

But due to the end of the cold war, new problems are emerging. Security situation has deteriorated all around us. In such a transitional phase, pressures are expected to rise - economic pressure as well as security pressure. As far as our Government is concerned, we will not succumb to any pressure. This assurance I want to give you. And I am sure that the entire nation and the House will extend its cooperation to me in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would conclude my speech after lunch.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Prime Minister, I should inform you that the total time available for the BJP is one hour and fifty-six minutes out of which one hour and seventeen minutes have already been consumed.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : I am just informing. The Prime Minister can take any amount of time.

(Interruptions)

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : What about the interruptions?

13.01½ hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE: PANEL OF CHAIRMEN

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I have to inform that under Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure, I have nominated the following Members as Members of the Panel of Chairmen :

1. Shri Chitta Basu
2. Shri Nitish Kumar
3. Shrimati Geeta Mukherjee

4. Shri P.M. Sayeed
5. Shrimati Vijaya Raje Scindia
6. Prof. Rita Verma

13.02 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned for Lunch till Fourteen of the Clock.

14.01 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled After Lunch at One Minute past Fourteen of the Clock

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

MOTION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS - CONTD.

[Translation]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, while concluding my speech, I want to raise one issue.

There is unanimity in the House and in the country that due to historical reasons and due to the shortcomings in our social set up, justice has not been meted out to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Equal opportunity was not available to them and therefore they kept on lagging behind. They could not keep pace with the other groups of the society. The framers of our Constitution had reflected on this and provided for reservations, for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes, who are socially and educationally backward. All decisions on reservations were taken unanimously. There has been a consensus on this. After the verdict of the Supreme Court on this issue, it has been decided that regarding reservations for the Backward Classes, status quo would be maintained, i.e., in those states where reservation is more than 50 percent, it would continue. But in other States, reservations for the Backward Classes should not exceed 50 percent. Dr. Ambedkar also, in the Constituent Assembly supported the view that the reservation limit should be 50 percent. The remaining 50 percent should be left for competition. In this, the Supreme Court also discussed the issue of creamy layer. It was of the view that a Committee should be set up to identify the creamy layer. The backwards among the Backwards should be benefited first. Late Shri Karpooi Thakur of Bihar was concerned for the poorest among the poor. Those among the Backward Classes who are prosperous, who have lands, have influence in the village, are capable of progressing on their own. They are capable of standing on their