

LOK SABHA DEBATES

Vol. XVII, Special Sittings to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of India's Independence, Nos. 18 to 23

LOK SABHA

Tuesday, August 26, 1997/Bhadra 4, 1919 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

OBITUARY REFERENCE

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I have to inform the House of the sad demise of one of our friends, Shri Dwarka Nath Das.

Shri Dwarka Nath Das was a sitting Member of Lok Sabha representing Karimganj parliamentary constituency of Assam. He had represented the same constituency during Tenth Lok Sabha also from 1991 to 1996.

A teacher by profession, he had served as a principal in a school in his native district.

A well known social worker, Shri Das contributed a lot towards socio-economic development of South Assam Barak valley. He had special interest in the field of education, psychology, economics and philosophy.

An active parliamentarian, he served as a Member of Standing Committee on Petroleum and Chemicals and Select Committee on the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 1996. He also served as a Member of Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in 1994-96.

Shri Dwarka Nath Das passed away at Calcutta on 18 August, 1997 at the age of 68 years.

We deeply mourn the loss of this friend and I am sure the House will join me in conveying our condolences to the bereaved family.

The House may stand in silence for a short while as a mark of respect to the deceased.

11.03 hrs.

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

11.04 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE: BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, it is with a great sense of pride that we have gathered here for the Special Session on Lok Sabha to commemorate the golden jubilee of our Independence.

As you are aware, I have had prolonged discussions with leaders of parties and groups about the format of the discussion to be held during the special session. It was ultimately decided to have the discussion on a Motion as listed in today's List of Business. It was also decided that no formal business will be transacted during the Special Session.

Hon. Members will appreciate that the Motion has been drawn in very wide terms and has a very large canvass. I would rather not lay down specific guidelines for the discussion but it would be my earnest appeal to all sections of the House, that it would not be necessary for each speaker to try to dilate on all the aspects of the Motion.

In order to have a meaningful discussion within the time at our disposal, the Members would do well to concentrate while speaking only on one of the subjects listed in the Motion which may be the area of their special interest. This, I feel, will minimise repetition and at the same time provide opportunity to a greater number of Members to participate in the discussion.

I may further inform the House that it was also decided during deliberations in meetings with Leaders that the discussion on the Motion may not be on Party lines. Free and frank expression of views with constructive criticism, as well as appreciation, wherever called for and concrete suggestions for improvement would, therefore, best set the tone for the discussion. For enabling as many Members as possible to speak within the limited time available, it has been agreed at the leaders' meeting that the time limit for each Member may be restricted to ten minutes. Leaders would, however, be allotted more time. The decision in the morning is that the Leader of

each political Party will get twenty minutes besides Shri Vajpayee who will move the Motion. I do not want to limit time for him. Others will be confined to within ten minutes.

I solicit kind cooperation of members in sticking to the time schedule. The entire proceedings of the special Session are being telecast live. In order that the daily schedule news bulletin in Hindi, English and Urdu which are telecast from 2 O'clock to 2.35 P.M. are not disturbed, it has been decided that the House may observe lunch time from 1.35 P.M. to 2.35 P.M. instead of from 1 P.M. to 2 P.M. It has also been decided today that in order to enable more Members to participate, the House will sit one hour more everyday, that is, up to 7 O'clock. I may also add that it becomes a duty of each one of us to maintain the dignity and decorum of the House during the special Session to enhance the solemnity of the occasion.

SHRI P. UPENDRA (Vijayawada) : Sir, I would like to make a submission. The Secretariat has circulated a document namely, 'Fifty years of Parliamentary Democracy'. It is well produced and very informative. It will best set the tone for the debate in these four days. I suggest that the document be placed on the Table of the House so that it can form part of the proceedings.

MR. SPEAKER : I think, that is not necessary. It has already been circulated. It is only a background paper.

11.08 hrs.

ADDRESS BY THE HON. SPEAKER



SHRI PURNO A. SANGMA

MR. SPEAKER : It is going to be my maiden speech and since it is my maiden speech, I am sure, I will not be disturbed.

Hon'ble Members, let me first place on record my deep gratitude to all of you in having granted me the

indulgence of remaining in the Chair and taking the Floor for the first time in the history of this House.

We are assembled here in this Special Session organised as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of our Independence—to take stock of our achievements since becoming free, introspect on our inadequacies and set for ourselves an agenda for future.

POLITICAL LIFE

Popular elections and sustenance of democracy

Since Independence, we have had eleven General Elections and over 300 State Elections. Transfer of power to successive Governments has been smooth and peaceful. This is no mean achievement. We can be proud of being a true democracy, when the world, cutting across regions, is dotted with countries where access to power is often through *military coups* and *revolutions*. The voter turnout averaging at around 60% since 1984 as against 45% during the first General Elections of 1952 reflects the increasing political awareness of our people. Our style of practising democracy has also proved that political consciousness is not necessarily a function of literacy.

Conduct of business of the House

While universal adult suffrage has been a resounding success, the grass-root signals I have been receiving as the Presiding Officer of this popular Chamber about the conduct of our business indicate that generally the people are deeply concerned. They are highly resentful of frequent bouts of pandemonium in the House, Members collectively rising to attract the attention of the Chair, repeated marches into the well of the House, cross-talk and interruptions of Members' interventions, etc., and feel that the expenditure on Parliament of the order of about Rs. 7,000/-per minute of its time is a costly luxury that our country can ill-afford. It is quite understandable that the complexion of this Eleventh House is significantly different in that a large majority of them are the real sons of the soil in their constituencies and first-timers as well; and that they are impatient to improve the lot of the masses they represent and hence their tumult and tempestuousness. Our political parties have a great role to play in this context. They need to organise pre-electoral training for the aspirants for positions in this House.

Accountability

The interface between the Parliament and the Executive has, no doubt, been by and large one of mutual understanding and complementarity. Nonetheless, of late, people have increasingly tended to seek adjudication in courts of law on issues of public grievance against holders of public offices through a spate of public interest litigation.