

[SHRI NITISH KUMAR]

acceptance of WTO membership, the Parliament has become meaningless. Please try to understand the strength of people to protect the freedom and sovereignty of this country. Please utilise that strength to build the future of this country. Do not underestimate it. Do not think that we will get foreign funds and carry out development work. Do not be in illusion. Please do justice to the future generation of the country and help strengthen the country. Then only country's interests will be served and we can do social justice to the future generation of the country.

Madam Chairperson, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

16.33 hrs.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

**Tripartite Agreement between India, Iran and
Turkmenistan**

[English]

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): Madam, with your permission, may I have the pleasure of informing the hon. Members of this august House that on February 22, 1997 in Tehran, India, Iran and Turkmenistan signed at the level of Foreign Ministers an agreement on the international transit of goods between India, Iran and Turkmenistan?

This has brought to fruition the process begun in April 1995 when the three countries signed a trilateral MOU on this subject. The three sides have worked together in a spirit of friendship, mutual understanding and constructive cooperation in finalising this agreement. Its signing reflects the traditionally close relations India has with Iran and Turkmenistan. It is also in keeping with the vision of the Governments of these countries to promote economic cooperation amongst themselves and with other CIS countries which accede to it in future.

The cardinal objective of the agreement is to provide a suitable juridical and legal framework for the multi-modal movement of goods from India to Iran and Turkmenistan, and other countries that join the arrangement in the future, and vice-versa. The salient features of the agreement are:

It facilitates, simplifies and accelerates customs and other formalities including minimising the documentation and inspection requirements for the transit of goods. For example, it provides that the goods transiting under this agreement will not be subject to examination through the customs jurisdiction *en route* except when irregularities are suspected.

It provides for the exemption of import and export duties or other taxes for goods in transit. Only charges for specific services can be levied as stipulated by internal legislation and as applicable to all other countries.

The signatories have agreed to examine the possibility of setting up a simplified visa regime for personnel engaged in the transit of cargo under this agreement.

There will be a regular joint mechanism for supervising the implementation of the agreement, for recommending changes to it and to consider any other related matter.

The agreement meets the need for developing an efficient, reliable, dependable and cost effective route for trade and other forms of economic interaction between India, Iran and Turkmenistan and our other economic partners in the CIS region. My counterparts from Turkmenistan and Iran have joined me in underlining the importance of expanding and developing cooperative endeavours between our three countries in the field of trade and industry. I believe that the trilateral agreement on the transit of goods will be a key element in meeting this objective.

I am also happy to inform the hon. Members that the President of Turkmenistan, His Excellency, Mr. Saparmurad A. Niyazov is currently paying a goodwill State visit to India. Discussions clearly brought out the identity of views on both sides on important bilateral, regional and international issues. The two sides have warmly welcomed the signing of the trilateral agreement on the transit of goods between India, Iran and Turkmenistan. They agreed that this landmark agreement would further enhance trade and other forms of economic cooperation amongst these three countries, and CIS countries which accede to it in the future. The agreement will foster a harmonious climate for multilayered economic cooperation and strengthen the cause of peace, stability and development in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record our appreciation of the cooperation extended by the Government of Iran and Turkmenistan in reaching this agreement and of the constructive spirit in which the officials of the different Ministries and Departments of the three Governments have worked together in this regard.

16.38 hrs.

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

[Translation]

SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR SINGH (AURANGABAD): Madam Chairperson I rise to speak in support of the motion of thanks on the President's Address.

Before I come to the main point, I would like to say something about what Shri Nitish ji was saying just now. When the people quit the treasury benches and join the opposition ranks. He said so in Shakuni's style while addressing in Gandhi Maidan. Laloo ji had challenged that he would destroy their Lanka if they dared to destroy the huts of the poor. What does it mean? It means the feudal forces who constitute 10 percent of the country's total population, who ruled the country for fifty years after