

LOK SABHA DEBATES

(English Version)

First Session
(Fourteenth Lok Sabha)



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OFFICERS OF LOK SABHA

THE SPEAKER

Shri Somnath Chatterjee

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER**

Shri Charnjit Singh Atwal

PANEL OF CHAIRMEN***

Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil

Shri Giridhar Gamang

Shri Manabendra Shah

SECRETARY-GENERAL

Shri G.C. Malhotra

****Elected on 9.6.2004**

*****Nominated on 29.05.2004 by President**

The following order was issued by the President of India on 29.05.2004 :

"I hereby appoint S/Shri Somnath Chatterjee, Balasaheb Vikhe Patil, Giridhar Gamang and Manabendra Shah to be the persons before any of whom members of the House of People may make and subscribe the oath or affirmation in accordance with the provisions of article 99 of the Constitution of India.

**A.P.J. ABDUL KALA M,
PRESIDENT OF INDIA"**

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday, June 7, 2004/Jyaishta 17, 1926 (Saka)

*The Lok Sabha met at twenty five minutes
past twelve of the Clock*

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : The Secretary-General may please call out the names of those Members who have not yet taken their oath or made affirmation.

MEMBERS SWORN

Shri Mohan Rawale (Mumbai South Central)

Shri L. Ganesan (Tiruchirappalli)

12.30 hrs.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS*

[English]

SECRETARY-GENERAL : I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the President's Address** to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on the 7th June, 2004.

Honourable Members,

I am delighted to address the first session of both Houses of Parliament after the elections to the 14th Lok Sabha. My greetings to all the members, particularly to the newly elected members of the Lok Sabha. You had all worked during the last three months in the scorching heat of the summer, had many sleepless nights, travelled hundreds and thousands of kilometres, met thousands of voters and explained how you will shape the future of the people and the country. On your successful election to this august body, I congratulate you all.

Before I dwell on the task ahead of us, I would like to congratulate the Election Commission of India for smoothly conducting the 14th Lok Sabha elections using Electronic Voting Machines in all the booths for the first time.

*The President delivered the Address in English. Hindi Text of the Address was read by the Vice-President.

** (Also placed in Library. See No. LT 2/2004)

The first general elections of this millennium reflect the firm conviction of our people in the democratic process of change. These elections have demonstrated the vibrancy of our democracy. The outcome of the elections is indicative of people's yearning for inclusiveness – economic, social and cultural and their rejection of the forces of divisiveness and intolerance. The verdict is for establishing the rule of law and repairing our secular fabric. This Government is committed to providing the right ambience for fulfilling the aspirations implicit in the people's mandate.

The Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance, supported by the Left and other like-minded parties, reflects the commitment of all participants to implement this programme and making it the foundation for collective maximum performance. Only through your active participation in discussions pertaining to national development and your determination to resolve all the problems coming in the way of implementing development programmes, will we be able to achieve the goal of making a billion people smile.

The Common Minimum Programme is indicative of the board thrust if the priorities of this Government. It will be the sincere effort of the Government to implement the Programme during the next five years. However, the precise content and phasing of programmes will depend on both the availability of resources and the pace of improvement of the absorptive capacity of various sectors. Our effort will be to move forward on the twin roads of efficiency and equity while maintaining a high degree of fiscal and financial discipline. My Government will need to devise imaginative measures to ensure that our macro economic policies balance appropriately the concerns for rapid growth, stability and social equity.

My Government is committed to preserving, protecting and promoting secular values and enforcing the law without fear or favour to deal with all obscurantist and fundamentalist elements that seek to disturb social amity and peace. We will ensure that the economy maintains a growth rate of at least 7-8% per year for a sustained period and in a manner that generates employment and provides assured livelihood for each family. While doing so, my Government will focus on improving income and welfare of farmers, farm labour and workers; empowering women and providing equality of opportunity for people belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and religious minorities.

My Government will carry forward the process of social and economic development so that the 21st century becomes India's century. This calls for speeding up economic reforms that ushered the country into an era of rapid economic growth. Further reforms will be carried out in agriculture, industry and services. The reforms will have a human face and will ensure that the benefits flowing from such reforms reach the urban poor and rural areas, where the vast majority of our population lives.

The Government stands committed to accelerating the pace of rural development through grassroots democracy in consonance with the letter and spirit of the constitutional provisions in this regard. Our country has approximately 2.3 lakh Village Panchayats and Panchayati Raj institutions at intermediate and district levels. These will be empowered through effective devolution of functions, functionaries and finances to emerge as true institutions of participative democracy. The Gram Sabha will be empowered to emerge as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system. The Government will ensure that all funds for poverty alleviation and rural development programmes get directly credited to Panchayat bodies to enable them to serve the people better. Appropriate guidelines will be prepared for effective utilisation of such funds.

A substantial portion of Government's investment will be channelled to the villages, with special emphasis on improving basic infrastructure such as roads, power and drinking water in rural areas. Connectivity of village complexes for providing economic opportunities to all segments of people will get special emphasis to bridge the rural-urban divide. Let us not have a mindset that poorer quality rural infrastructure or poor products would suffice for rural consumption .

Public investment in agriculture will be stepped up significantly with focus on the backward and poor regions so as to substantially boost farmers' income. The Government will ensure that the flow of agricultural credit is significantly stepped up and the coverage of small and marginal farmers by institutional lending expands substantially. The entire rural credit system will be restored to health. Government is sensitive to the debt-burden of farmers and will take suitable steps in this regard. Farm insurance

schemes will be made more responsive to the needs of farmers. The Government will actively encourage investments in agro-processing industries to reduce wastage and encourage value addition benefitting farmers.

The Government will introduce a special programme for dry-land farming. An intensive agricultural development programme for the districts in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country will be put in place. Watershed development projects will be promoted on a large-scale, and the wasteland development programme lying dormant these past few years will be revived.

My Government will ensure that farmers all over the country receive fair and remunerative prices and the Government agencies, entrusted with the responsibility for procurement and marketing, pay special attention to farmers in poor and backward states and districts. Our negotiations in the World Trade Organization will be such as to fully protect the interests and livelihood of our large farming community, which is the backbone of our country. The Government will ensure proper implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labour. Effective measures will be taken to protect the interest of all agricultural workers. The process of land reforms will be speeded up and efforts to distribute surplus productive land to the landless will be redoubled.

The Government will accelerate the development and use of the country's irrigation potential. Starting with peninsular rivers, the environmental, ecological and techno-economic feasibility of linking the rivers of the country will be carefully examined. Steps will be taken to ensure that long-pending inter-state disputes on rivers and water-sharing, like the Cauvery Water dispute, are settled amicably keeping in view the interests of all parties to the dispute. All ongoing irrigation projects will be completed in a time-bound manner.

The Government is concerned that a significant portion of our population does not have access to safe drinking water. My Government will work with the State Governments to draw up innovative schemes including harvesting rainwater and de-silting existing ponds. Effective measures will be taken to put an end to the acute shortage of drinking water in drought prone areas and in cities like Chennai,

including through setting up desalination plants wherever found viable. Special problems of habitations in hilly terrains will be addressed immediately.

The Government is painfully aware of the shrinking employment opportunities for the youth. The Government will adopt policies to expand employment opportunities by creating a climate conducive to investments in the organised sector. Along with vastly expanding credit facilities for small-scale industry and self-employment, the services sector will be given all support to realise its true employment potential. New jobs will also be created in other areas like village industries, textiles, handicrafts, horticulture, aquaculture, forestry, dairying and agro-processing so as to benefit the rural and urban youth. With a view to providing guaranteed employment for 100 days in a year to at least one able bodied person in each rural household, a national Employment Guarantee Act will be legislated soon and implemented in a phased manner.

To enhance the employability of our youth, systematic efforts will be made to appropriately vocationalise secondary education and to establish at least one industrial training institute in each development block of the country through creative public-private partnerships.

Women and children, particularly those belonging to poor households, are the most vulnerable groups of our society that need special attention. Government will earmark at least one-third of all funds flowing into panchayats for programmes relating to the development of women and children. Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition. There will be a major expansion in schemes for micro-finance based on self-help groups, particularly in the backward and ecologically sensitive regions. The Government will take the lead to introduce legislation for one-third reservation for women in Vidhan Sabhas and the Lok Sabha. Legislation on domestic violence and against gender discrimination will be enacted. Complete legal equality for women in all spheres will be made a practical reality.

It is a matter of concern that even today over a third

of babies born in India are under-weight reflecting acute malnourishment, particularly of the girl child. Nutrition programmes, will be expanded on a significant scale with special focus on the girl-child. A national cooked nutritious mid-day meal scheme, funded mainly by the Central Government will be introduced in a phased manner in primary and secondary schools. The Government will progressively universalise the Integrated Child Development Services scheme.

The State has an important role to play in providing requisite support to the disabled so that they do not get left out of the mainstream. The Government will initiate special measures to ensure that the disabled get equal opportunity and are in a position to meaningfully contribute to the task of nation building. Trade and industry will be sensitised to their social obligations in this respect. Our senior citizens also deserve special care. The Government will consider their problems and initiate measures that would make their lives more comfortable in their old age.

Health is an essential element in the development process and a crucial input for improving the quality of life. The Government will increase public spending on health to at least 2-3% of GDP over the next five years, with the focus on primary health care. Universal immunisation programmes will be effectively implemented throughout the country to eliminate avoidable child-diseases. The Government will step up public investment in programmes to control communicable diseases. A special thrust will be given to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country. A national scheme of health insurance for poor families will be introduced. The Government will take all steps to ensure the availability of life-saving drugs at reasonable prices. The Family Welfare programmes will be strengthened and revitalised.

India's greatest resource is its people. The full potential of our human resources has yet to be effectively utilised. High priority will, therefore, be accorded to education. The Government will aim at increasing public spending on education so as to ultimately reach at least 6% of GDP, with half the amount earmarked for primary and secondary education. A cess will be proposed on all central taxes to

finance the commitment to universalise access to quality basic education. A National Commission on Education will be set up to allocate resources and monitor programmes.

My Government is aware of the systematic erosion of autonomy of our institutions of repute in recent years. My Government will ensure that all institutions of higher learning and professional education get back the autonomy that they enjoyed earlier. At the same time, the Government will ensure that nobody is denied professional education because he or she is poor. Apart from increasing the supply of loan scholarships and refinance through banks, the Government will put in place institutional mechanisms to provide loans at affordable rates to those who cannot afford the costs of college and university education in science, engineering, medicine and management studies.

Academic excellence and professional competence will be the sole criteria for all appointments to bodies such as the Indian Council for Historical Research, Indian Council for Social Science Research, University Grants Commission, National Council for Educational Research and Training etc. Steps will be taken to remove the communalisation of the school syllabus that has taken place in recent years.

It is a matter of serious concern that the forces of communalism have been able to vitiate the atmosphere in the country leading to out-break of riots, the most gruesome face of which was witnessed recently in Gujarat. My Government is determined to combat such forces. The Government will adopt all possible measures to promote and maintain communal peace and harmony so that minorities feel completely secure. My Government will enact a model law to deal with communal violence and encourage states to adopt it. The Government will examine the question of providing constitutional status to the Minorities Commission and will strive for recognition and promotion of Urdu language under Articles 345 and 347 of the Constitution.

On Ayodhya issue, my Government will await the verdict of the courts while encouraging negotiations between parties to the dispute for an amicable settlement, which, in turn, must receive legal sanction. The Government is also committed to implementing the Protection of Places of Worship Act, 1992.

Steps will be taken to establish a Commission to look into issues relating to direct affiliation of minority professional institutions with central universities. Measures will also be taken to spread modern and technical education among minority communities. A National Commission will be established to make recommendations on how best to enhance the welfare of socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities, including through reservation in education and employment.

The Government is sensitive to the issue of affirmative action including reservations in the private sector and it is committed to faster socio-economic and educational development of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. My Government will initiate a dialogue with political parties, industry and other bodies on how best the private sector can fulfil the aspirations of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Reservation quotas in Government, including those relating to promotions, will be fulfilled in a time-bound manner. To codify all policies on reservations, appropriate legislation will be enacted. The Government will launch a comprehensive national programme for minor irrigation of lands owned by people belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Landless families will be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and redistribution legislation. No reversal of ceilings legislation will be permitted.

State Governments will be urged to bring about a legislation conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce on people from weaker sections working in forests. Eviction of tribal communities and other forest-dwelling communities from forest areas will be stopped. The Government will reconcile the objectives of environmental conservation and faster economic growth without jeopardising the ecological balance or diluting the objectives of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. An effective system will be put in place for rehabilitating the tribal communities displaced by development projects.

My Government is concerned about the growth of Naxalite violence in various parts of the country. Rather than being an ordinary law-and-order problem, such violence is symptomatic of a much deeper socio-economic malaise, which needs to be treated systematically. My Government

will, therefore, look into the causes behind the growth of such senseless violence and take steps to put the Naxalite-affected areas on a higher trajectory of economic growth so that they catch up with the rest of the country.

The Government will strengthen the public distribution system particularly in the poorest and backward blocks of the country and also involve women and ex-servicemen's cooperatives in its management at the local level. Special schemes will be launched to ensure that foodgrains reach the most destitute and infirm. Grain banks in chronically food-scarce areas will be established. Antyodaya cards for all households at risk of hunger will be introduced.

The Government is firmly committed to ensuring the welfare and well-being of all workers, particularly those in the unorganised sector who constitute over 90% of our workforce. Social security, health insurance and other schemes for such workers, fishermen and fisherwomen, toddy tappers, leather workers, plantation labour, beedi workers etc. will be expanded. The Government will establish a National Commission to examine the problems that the enterprises operating in the unorganised sector are facing.

My Government recognises that some changes are needed in labour laws so that the manufacturing sector grows rapidly with concomitant expansion in the employment opportunities. However, such changes must ensure that workers and their families are fully protected. The Government will pursue a dialogue with industry and trade unions on this issue before coming up with specific proposals. The Government firmly believes that labour-management relations in our country must be marked by consultations, cooperation and consensus. Tripartite consultations with trade unions and industry on all proposals concerning them will be actively pursued.

Development of infrastructure will get a high priority. Public-private partnerships will be encouraged for expansion of physical infrastructure such as roads, ports, airports, power, railways, water supply and sanitation. Public investment in infrastructure will be enhanced and subsidies in such investments will be explicitly provided through the budget.

The railways have suffered immensely over the past few years with rail safety being a prime casualty. The Government will move purposefully to modernise the vast railway network, keeping both the economic and social dimensions of the railways in mind.

The Government will put in place policies to enhance the country's energy security with special emphasis on petroleum and natural gas. Overseas investments in the hydrocarbon industry will be actively encouraged. A special programme will be launched to ensure that each household has full access to reliable power. Public investment in the power sector will be stepped up substantially. Private sector participation in generation and distribution will be actively encouraged. Power sector reforms will be continued in such a way that all sections of society get quality power at affordable price. Energy conservation will receive priority attention to the Government.

The Government will launch a comprehensive programme of urban renewal and expansion of social housing in towns and cities, paying particular attention to the needs of slum-dwellers. Housing for the weaker sections in urban and rural areas will be expanded on a large scale. While undertaking urban renewal, forced eviction and demolition of slums will be avoided.

It is a matter of concern that regional imbalances have been accentuated not only by historical neglect but also by distortions in Plan allocations. The Government is committed to redressing growing regional imbalances both among states, as well as within states, through fiscal, administrative and other means. A structured and transparent approach to alleviate the burden of debt on states will be adopted so as to enable them to increase social sector investments. All non-statutory resource transfers from the central Government will be weighted in favour of poor and backward states. The Government will consider establishing a Backward States Grant Fund that will be used to create productive assets in these States but with performance parameters as well. Appropriate measures will be initiated to speed up the industrialisation of the eastern and northeastern region. The Government will start a Flood-prone Area Development Programme and support the flood control works in inter-state and international rivers. A single

major national programme will be launched after reviewing the existing schemes for drought-prone area development. Steps will be taken to implement expeditiously special economic packages announced in the past for different regions and States.

The Sarkaria Commission had last looked at the issue of Centre-State relations over two decades ago. The Government will set up a new Commission for this purpose, keeping in view the sea-changes that have taken place in the polity and economy of India since then. The National Development Council (NDC) will be made a more effective instrument of cooperative federalism. The Inter-State Council will also be activated. The Government will consider the demand for the formation of a Telangana state at an appropriate time after due consultations.

The Government will respect the letter and spirit of Article 370 of the Constitution that accords a special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Dialogue with all groups and with different shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir will be pursued on a sustained basis, in consultation with the democratically-elected State Government. The state will be given assistance to rebuild its infrastructure quickly. The Government is determined to tackle terrorism, militancy and insurgency in the northeast as a matter of urgent national priority. The Northeastern states will be given special assistance to upgrade and expand infrastructure.

The Government will set up a committee to examine the question of declaring all languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution as official languages. Tamil will be declared a classical language.

Our rich cultural heritage is a matter of national pride and the foundation of our unity in diversity. The Government will actively strive to preserve our national heritage in all its manifestations. In the same vein, the Government will take all possible steps to preserve the richness of our bio-diversity, with special emphasis on preserving the wild life.

The Government recognises the importance of Tourism in providing gainful employment to a wide spectrum of job-seekers from the unskilled to the specialised, even in remote parts of the country. The Government will provide appropriate incentives to promote rural, heritage, adventure and eco-tourism and establishing high quality tourist

destinations. The potential of our film industry, with its universal appeal, will be realised through suitable policy initiatives.

The youth constitute a large and vibrant segment of India's population. Their energy, zeal and motivation will be harnessed through special programmes to enable them to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions in all activities, ranging from economic and social spheres to the arts and sports. We extend the very best wishes to our sportspersons participating in all forthcoming events, in particular, for the Olympic Games in Athens this August.

An Administrative Reforms Commission will be established to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping public administration completely so as to make it more performance-oriented and accountable. While improving the quality of basic governance will be the priority, e-governance will be promoted on a massive scale in areas of concern to the common man. The government will ensure that its agencies operate in a responsive and accountable manner. The Right to information Act will be made more progressive, participatory and meaningful. The Government will take the leadership role to drastically cut delays in High Courts and lower levels of the judiciary. Legal aid services will be expanded. As part of its commitment to electoral reforms, the Government will consider steps to introduce state funding of elections.

The Government is determined to rid the country of the scourge of corruption. The root causes of corruption and the generation of black money will be effectively tackled. For this purpose, procedures will be streamlined and processes will be appropriately re-engineered to bring in transparency in governance.

The Government will follow policies and introduce programmes that strengthen India's vast science and technology infrastructure. Science and technology development and application missions will be launched in key areas. The Government will mobilise the skills and expertise of Indian scientists, technologists and other professionals working abroad for institution-building and other projects in the country.

Revival of industrial growth is of paramount importance. Incentives for boosting private investment will be introduced. Foreign Direct investment will continue to be encouraged.

Indian industry will be given every support to become productive and competitive. Competition, both domestic and external, will be deepened across industry with professionally run regulatory institutions in place to ensure that competition is free and fair. The Government will establish a National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council to provide a continuing forum for policy interactions to energise and sustain the growth of the manufacturing industry. Manufacturing by artisans and households will be given greater technological, marketing and investment support. A major promotional package for the SSI sector will be announced soon.

The textile industry will be enabled to meet new challenges imposed by the abolition of quotas under the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing in January 2005. Given its special ecological importance world-wide and within the country, the jute industry will receive a fresh impetus in all respects.

The Government is committed to a strong and effective public sector, whose social objectives are met by its commercial functioning. But for this, there is need for selectivity and a strategic focus. My Government will devolve full managerial and commercial autonomy to successful, profit-making companies operating in a competitive environment. Privatisation will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Chronically loss-making companies will either be sold-off, or closed, after workers get their legitimate dues and compensation. Private industry will be inducted to turn-around companies that have potential for revival.

My government believes that privatisation should increase competition, not decrease it. We also believe that there must be a direct link between privatisation and social needs, like the use of revenues generated through privatisation for designated social sector schemes. Public sector companies and nationalised banks will be encouraged to enter the capital market to raise resources and offer new investment avenues to retail investors.

For boosting the growth rate of GDP, the rate of investment has to be pushed up by rejuvenating the capital markets. The Government is deeply committed to the orderly development and functioning of capital markets that reflect the true fundamentals of the economy. Financial markets will

be deepened. Foreign Institutional investors will continue to be encouraged. Interests of small investors will be protected and they will be given new avenues for safe investment of their savings. The Securities and Exchange Board of India will be further strengthened.

Indians abroad have not only been successful in many walks of life, but have also been a source of inspiration for their brethren back home. The new Ministry of Non-Resident Indians Affairs, which reflects our recognition of their value, will tap their potential for contributing to our economic growth.

Large scale changes in the global trade environment have been witnessed in the last decade. Our share in the global trade has been rising at a very slow pace. The Government will provide an atmosphere conducive to rapid growth of our exports. For this purpose, procedures will be further simplified, tariffs will be appropriately harmonised and efforts will be made to strengthen infrastructure and to reduce transaction costs.

The Government will undertake major tax reforms to significantly expand the base of taxpayers, to substantially increase tax compliance and to make the tax administration more citizen-friendly. Tax rates will be stable and conducive to growth, compliance and investment. Value Added Tax will be introduced in close cooperation and consultation with trade and industry.

My Government is committed to eliminating the revenue deficit of the Central Government by 2009 so as to release more resources for investment in social and physical infrastructure. Subsidies will be targeted sharply at the poor and the needy. A detailed roadmap will be prepared for this purpose. The Government will take effective steps and strong measures to control the price hike of essential commodities. Provisions to deal with speculators, hoarders and black-marketeteers under the Essential Commodities Act will not be diluted in any way.

We are proud of our armed forces. They have risen to the occasion whenever called upon to defend the territorial integrity of our country and assist the civil authorities in maintaining law and order and organising relief and rescue measures. My Government will eliminate all delays that hamper the modernisation of our armed forces and ensure that funds earmarked for modernisation are utilised fully for

the purpose for which they are meant. The welfare of ex-servicemen will get priority and they will be involved in crucial nation-building tasks.

My government is concerned about the misuse of POTA in the recent past. While there can be no compromise on the fight against terrorism, the Government is of the view that existing laws could adequately handle the menace of terrorism. The Government, therefore, proposes to repeal POTA.

The Government will give the highest priority to building closer political, economic and other ties with its neighbours in South Asia and to strengthening the SAARC. Particular attention will be paid to regional projects relating to water resources, power and ecological conservation. Dialogue with Pakistan on all outstanding issues will be pursued on a sustained basis within the framework of the Shimla Agreement and all subsequent agreements between the two Governments, including the Joint Statement of January 6, 2004. My government will support the peace initiative in Sri Lanka that fulfils the requirements of all sections of the people of Sri Lanka for a life full of dignity and self-respect and meets the legitimate aspirations of all linguistic and religious minorities, while respecting the territorial integrity and solidarity of Sri Lanka. My government shall seek to resolve outstanding issues with Bangladesh and strengthen our relations with this important neighbour. It will continue to attach great importance to our close and vibrant partnerships with Bhutan, Nepal and Maldives. Trade and investment with China will be expanded further and talks on the boundary question will be pursued purposively. India will also expand political and security exchanges with China to ensure regional security. We welcome moves for an early restoration of sovereignty to the people of Iraq. We note with satisfaction the UN involvement in this process. Our traditional friendship with Afghanistan has been revived under the Government of President Karzai. My government has developed multi-faceted cooperation with Myanmar, Iran and all the countries of Central Asia. India attaches high importance to its relations with the United States of America. We will pursue a closer strategic and economic engagement with USA, the European Union and Japan. The Russian Federation remains an important entity in India's foreign policy orientation, given the long-standing and multi-dimensional convergence of interest and the resultant

strategic partnership between India and Russia. The relationship with ASEAN collectively, and with the countries of that region individually will be intensified. Traditional ties with the countries of West Asia will be given a fresh thrust. My government will continue to fully support the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. Our relations with Israel, which have developed on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation, are important, but this in no way dilutes our principled support for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people. India will pursue an independent foreign policy on all regional and global issues keeping in view our interests. We have to reorient the role of Non Alignment in a post-Cold War, globalising world. My government is committed to fostering multipolarity in the world political and economic system.

Democracy has been described by someone as a periodic redistribution of power. The people of India have spoken loud and clear. The mandate they have given to my Government is to treat power as a sacred societal trust to be used for the good of society, paying particular attention to the pressing needs of our farmers and other downtrodden sections. Our Government will stay faithful to this vision. The Government will work sincerely to build a national consensus for strengthening the secular and pluralistic foundation of our polity and to accelerate the process of social and economic development. Our people possess a vast pool of creative energies. They are eagerly waiting for the improvement in processes of governance for fuller utilisation of these energies for the task of nation building. All of us have an obligation to make the 21st century as India's century. India is destined to emerge as a major powerhouse of the evolving global economy and in the process also get rid of the chronic poverty, ignorance and disease which still affect large sections of our society. Your duty as representatives of the people^a is to canalise the tremendous upsurge among our people to build a new India free from the fear of want and exploitation. It is my earnest hope and wish that your deliberations will be marked by maturity and wisdom and guided by patriotic and selfless devotion to the cause of the nation.

I wish you all success in your endeavours.

JAI HIND

12.31 hrs.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY SPEAKER

**Re: Amendments to the Motion of thanks on
President's Address**

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : As the hon. Members have already been informed *vide* Lok Sabha Bulletin – Part II dated 4th June, 2004, amendments to the Motion of Thanks on President's Address can be tabled today upto 1700 hours.

12.32 hrs.

OBITUARY REFERENCES

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, I have to inform the House of the sad demise of nine of our former colleagues, namely, Shri Abhaysinh S. Bhonsle, Shri Bhagirath Bhanwar, Shri Sikander Bakht, Shri S.B. Chavan, Shri Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Shri Abdul Shafee, Shri A.M. Thomas, Shri N. Gouzagin and Shri E.K. Nayanar.

Shri Abhaysinh S. Bhonsle was a Member of the Twelfth Lok Sabha from 1998 to 1999 representing the Satara parliamentary constituency of Maharashtra,

Earlier, Shri Bhonsle was a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1978 to 1995. An able administrator, Shri Bhonsle served as a Minister in the State Government holding various important portfolios.

An active Parliamentarian, Shri Bhonsle was a Member of the Committee on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution and its sub-Committee on Department of Sugar and Edible Oils from 1998 to 1999. He was also a member of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research Society from 1998 to 1999.

An agriculturist by profession, Shri Bhonsle was a devoted political and social worker.

Shri Abhaysinh S. Bhonsle passed away on 4th February, 2004 at the age of 60.

Shri Bhagirath Bhanwar was a Member of the Fifth and Sixth Lok Sabhas from 1971 to 1979, representing the Jhabua parliamentary constituency of Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Bhanwar started his public life as a Councillor in the Alirajpur Municipal Committee in 1958. Later, he served as a Member of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly from 1962 to 1971. He was Member, Consultative Committee on Tribals, Government of Madhya Pradesh from 1962 to 1975 and was Chairman, Consultative Committee on Forest Production, during 1977. He also served as a Deputy Minister of Education in the Madhya Pradesh Government from 1967 to 1969.

A devoted social worker and journalist. Shri Bhanwar was Assistant Editor of the *Panchayati Raj*, a weekly. He was actively associated with many political, social and public welfare movements.

His passion for social work led him to strive relentlessly for the education and upliftment of the Scheduled Tribes in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

An able Parliamentarian, Shri Bhanwar was Member, Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Steel and Mines from 1972 to 1977; Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Industrial Development from 1977 to 1978; Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, from 1973 to 1976 and again from 1977 to 1978; Joint Committee on the Prevention of Food Adulteration (Amendment) Bill, 1974; and Committee on Subordinate Legislation, from 1977 to 1978.

Shri Bhagirath Bhanwar passed away on 10th February, 2004 at Sarwad, Madhya Pradesh, at the age of 70.

Shri Sikander Bakht was a Member of the Sixth Lok Sabha from 1977 to 1979, representing the Chandni Chowk parliamentary constituency of Delhi. He was also a Member of the Rajya Sabha from 1990 to 2002. Earlier, Shri Bakht was a Member of the Delhi Municipal Corporation from 1967 to 1971; and the Delhi Metropolitan Council from 1972 to 1977.

An able administrator, he served as the Minister of Works, Housing, Supply, Rehabilitation and Wakf from 1977 to 1979; Minister of Urban Affairs and Employment, and External Affairs from 16th May 1996 to 31st May, 1996; and Minister of Industry from March 1998 to November, 1999.

He was the Governor of Kerala at the time of his death.

As ideal Parliamentarian, he served on various Committees. He was a Member of the Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Home Affairs from 1991 to 1997 and the Committee on External Affairs during 1996-1997. He was also a member of the Committee of Privileges, Committee on Ethics and the General Purposes Committee of Rajya Sabha, and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Installation of Portraits and Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in Parliament House Complex. He also served as the Chairman, Committee on Commerce from 1999 to 2002 and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Functioning of Wakf Boards from 2000 to 2002.

From 7th July 1992 to 15th May 1996 and 1st June 1996 to 18th March, 1998, Shri Bakht was the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha. He was Leader of the House, Rajya Sabha from 20th May 1996 to 31st May 1996 and from 19th March 1998 to November, 1999.

An ardent enthusiast of sports, Shri Bakht also evinced keen interest in Indian classical music and Urdu poetry. Shri Bakht was conferred the Padma Vibhushan Award by the President of India on 30th March, 2000.

A widely travelled person, Shri Bakht attended the Inter Parliamentary Union Conferences held in Australia in 1993 and in Romania in 1995. He also attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences held in Malaysia in 1996 and in Mauritius in 1997.

Shri Sikander Bakht passed away on 23rd February, 2004 at Thiruvananthapuram at the age of 86.

Shri S.B. Chavan was a Member of the Seventh and Eighth Lok Sabhas from 1980 to 1986, representing the Nanded Parliamentary constituency of Maharashtra. Shri Chavan was also a Member of the Rajya Sabha from 1988 to 2002. Shri Chavan had a long and distinguished political career.

An advocate by profession, Shri Chavan participated in the freedom struggle in the former Hyderabad State. He organised Students' Movement and gave up practice during the 'Quit Court' Movement in the Hyderabad State. In 1952, he was chosen President of the Nanded Municipal Council.

He was elected to the erstwhile Bombay State Legislative Council in 1956 and thereafter he was a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly from 1957 to 1980. Later, he was a Member of the Maharashtra Legislative Council from 1986 to 1988.

An efficient and effective administrator, Shri Chavan served the country in various important capacities. He was the Deputy Minister of Revenue in the erstwhile Bombay State in 1956. Later, he was a Minister in the Government of Maharashtra. He served as the Chief Minister of Maharashtra twice from 1975 to 1977 and from 1986 to 1988.

At the Union, he served as Cabinet Minister of Education, Culture and Social Welfare from 19th October, 1980 to 7th August, 1981; Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission from 8th August, 1981 to 18th July, 1984; Minister of External Affairs from 19th July 1984 to 1st August, 1984; Minister of Defence from 2nd August, 1984 to 30th December, 1984; Minister of Home Affairs from 31st December, 1984 to 12th March, 1986; Minister of Finance from 25th June, 1988 to 2nd December, 1989 and thereafter, as Minister of Home Affairs from 21st June, 1991 to 16th May, 1996.

He was Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha from 2nd July, 1991 to 15th May, 1996 and Leader of the Opposition from 23rd to 31st May, 1996. He also served as the Chairman, Standing Committee on Human Resource Development and Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha and as a Member of the Committee on Rules, Business Advisory Committee and General Purposes Committee to Rajya Sabha and of the Consultative Committee for the Ministry of Railways.

An educationist, he established the Sharda Bhavan Education Society in 1950. He was Chancellor of the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune. He also served as Chairman, Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi; Bharat Scouts and Guides, Delhi; Maratha Mitra Mandal, Delhi and Marathwada Mitra Mandal, Pune.

Besides, Shri Chavan was associated with several other institutions in different capacities.

Shri Chavan took keen interest in the Hindustani Classical Music. A widely travelled person, he visited many countries.

Shri. S.B. Chavan passed away on 26th February, 2004 at Mumbai at the age of 84.

Shri Gurcharan Singh Tohra was a Member of the Sixth Lok Sabha from 1977 to 1979, representing the Patiala Parliamentary Constituency of Punjab. He was a sitting Member of the Rajya Sabha. Earlier also he was a Member of the Rajya Sabha from 1969 to 1976 and 1980 to 1988.

An agriculturist by profession, Shri Tohra played a prominent role in contemporary Sikh political, cultural and religious affairs. A very popular leader, he not only served as a Member of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee and its Executive Committee and Hazoor Sahib Gurudwara Board, Nanded, but was also elected President of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, as many as 26 times.

Shri Tohra led a simple life. His life exemplifies the virtues of austerity and selfless service and has left a deep imprint on the lives of the people, particularly in Punjab.

A devoted social worker, he was actively involved in the uplift of the weaker sections of the society. He relentlessly fought for the betterment of the marginalized farming community. He headed several religious, educational and other bodies.

Shri Gurcharan Singh Tohra passed away on 1st April, 2004 at New Delhi at the age of 80.

Shri Abdul Shafee was a Member of the Fifth Lok Sabha from 1971 to 1977, representing the Chandrapur Parliamentary Constituency of Maharashtra. An active parliamentarian, he was a member of the Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions from 1976 to 1977.

Shri Shafee, an agriculturist and businessman by profession, was a devoted social worker. He worked for the betterment of the poor and the underprivileged. He started social work in Rajoli village and was awarded the First Prize by the Government of Maharashtra for making Rajoli an ideal village. During the Chinese aggression in 1962, through his tireless efforts, he collected the maximum contribution of gold from the public for the coffers of the country.

Shri Shafee also served as the President of several bodies including the Gram Panchayat, Rajoli, Chandrapur; Zila Parishad, Chandrapur; Sardar Patel College of Arts, District Chandrapur; Patel Education Society, Nagpur; and Kidwai Education Society, Nagpur. He was a member of the Zila Parishad, District Chandrapur, for ten years; and he also worked on several State-level Committees.

Shri Abdul Shafee passed away on 26th April 2004 at Rajoli, District Chandrapur, Maharashtra at the age of about 79 years.

Shri A.M. Thomas was a Member of the First to Third Lok Sabhas from 1952 to 1967, representing the Ernakulam Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala.

Earlier, Shri Thomas was a Member of the Cochin Legislative Assembly in 1948 and of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly from 1949 to 1952. He also held the office of the Speaker of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly during 1951-52.

An able administrator, he was the Union Deputy Minister, Food and Agriculture, from 1957 to 1963 and Union Minister of State, Food and Agriculture, from 1963 to 1964, and Defence and Defence production, from 1964 to 1967.

An advocate by profession, Shri Thomas was also a capable legislator. He was a member of the Standing Finance Committee and the Committee appointed by the Cochin Government to enquire into disabilities of Paliam Tenants and Tenancy Select Committees. During his membership of Lok Sabha, he was the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Rubber Bill.

Shri Thomas led the Indian Delegation to the United Nations Sugar Conferences held in Geneva in 1958 and 1961. He also served as India's High Commissioner in Australia and Zambia and as the Chairman of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission.

He was ever sensitive to the socio-economic problems facing the country and he worked devotedly for resolving the same.

Shri A.M. Thomas passed away on 27th April 2004 at Ernakulam, Kerala, at the age of 92.

Shri N. Gouzagin was a Member of the Seventh Lok Sabha from 1980 to 1984, representing the Outer Manipur Parliamentary Constituency of Manipur.

Earlier, Shri Gouzagin was a Member of the Manipur Legislative Assembly from 1972 to 1974. He was re-elected to the Assembly in 1974. He served as Deputy Chief Minister in the Government of Manipur from March 1974 to July 1974. Thereafter, he again served as Cabinet Minister from January 1976 to July 1977.

During his membership of the Lok Sabha, he also served as a member of the Committee on Absence of Members from the Sittings of the House.

An agriculturist by profession, Shri Gouzagin was also a devoted social worker. He was actively associated with the students' organisations and was the General President, Siaminpawpi (Paite Students' Association) from 1961 to 1962 and 1963 to 1964. He was the Founder President of the Lamka College in 1977. He was an active member of the Red Cross Society, Churachandpur Branch.

He was a member, Presidium of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society, Manipur Branch and Indi-GDR Friendship Society, Manipur Branch.

Shri Gouzagin authorised a book '*Pullai*' which was a collection of songs.

Shri Gouzagin passed away on 11 May, 2004 at Imphal, Manipur at the age of about 74 years.

Shri E.K. Nayanar was a Member of the Fourth Lok Sabha from 1967 to 1970, representing the Palghat Parliamentary Constituency of Kerala.

Shri Nayanar was a leading figure of the Communist movement in the country. He began his political career as a student leader and participated in the freedom struggle.

Shri Nayanar was elected to Kerala Legislative Assembly six times.

An able administrator, Shri Nayanar served as the Chief Minister of Kerala for about eleven years during 1980-81, 1987-91 and also 1996 to 2001. Shri Nayanar thus had the distinction of being the Chief Minister of Kerala for the

longest period. During his Chief Ministership, the State of Kerala witnessed many socio-economic reforms. His major contributions as an administrator included the pioneering role his Government played in democratic decentralisation in the State, in the inspiring campaign to make Kerala cent per cent literate and in the measures taken to strengthen the Public Distribution System.

Shri Nayanar had a literary bent of mind. A man of letters, he wrote several books and also served as the Editor of *Deshabhimani*.

In his demise, we have lost a popular leader of the masses. Shri E.K. Nayanar passed away on 19th May, 2004 at New Delhi at the age of 85.

We deeply mourn the loss of these friends and I am sure the House would join me in conveying our condolences to the bereaved families.

As the hon. Members are aware, on 23rd May, 2004, 29 persons were killed and five were injured when extremists blew up a Border Security Force bus by detonating a bomb in Anantnag district on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway in Jammu and Kashmir.

The dead included 12 Jawans of the Border Security Force besides women and children.

We strongly condemn his heinous act of violence and deeply mourn the loss of lives in this incident.

The House may place on record its profound sorrow on this tragedy.

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

12.45 hrs

The Members then stood in silence for a short while.

(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, please wait.

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAGHUNATH JHA (Bettiah) : Mr. Speaker, Sir, please give me an opportunity to speak for one minute.

(Interruptions)

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura) : Mr. Speaker, Sir. ... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members, let us go through the procedure.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER : Now, Secretary-General.

12.46 hrs.

ASSENT TO BILLS

SECRETARY-GENERAL : Sir, I lay on the Table the following six Bills passed by the Houses of Parliament during the Fourteenth Session of Thirteenth Lok Sabha and assented to by the President since a report was last made to the House on the 30th January, 2004.

- (1) The Appropriation (Railways) Bill, 2004;
- (2) The Appropriation (Railways) No. 2 Bill, 2004;
- (3) The Appropriation (Railways) Vote on Account Bill, 2004;
- (4) The Finance Bill, 2004;
- (5) The Appropriation (Vote on Account) Bill, 2004; and
- (6) The Appropriation Bill, 2004.

I also lay on the Table copies, duly authenticated by the Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, of the following two Bills passed by the Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President :-

- (1) The Foreigners (Amendment) Bill, 2004; and
- (2) The British Statutes (Repeal) Bill, 2004.

MR. SPEAKER : Now, the House stands adjourned to meet again on 8th June, 2004 at 11 a.m.

12.47 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, June 8, 2004/
Jyaistha 18, 1926 (Saka).*

*Not recorded

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