

[Shri H.D. Devegowda]

Charity begins at home and let that message of harmony go from this august House. Let the world know that when it comes to national issues, this Parliament thinks, behaves and acts as one nation and not as divided principalities of British India. There cannot be a greater tribute to our freedom fighters on this 60th anniversary of independence and 150th anniversary of the First War of Independence.

Sir, though I promised you that I would not take up that particular issue, I would like to only say that all the MPs belonging to the State of Karnataka had requested you to allow a discussion under 193 on that subject. That is all. We do not want to disturb the proceedings of the House. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: What is this going on?

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shivanna, why are you standing?

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA: Sir, I appeal to you and to the hon. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs that whenever the time is permissible to you, you please allow us to have our say, and let our friends also have their say. There is no question of any dispute on this issue. Let us have a frank, cool and calm discussion so that we can exchange our ideas, our views and we can solve the problem. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I can only say that more and more we are showing that we are not fit for democracy. We are no longer fit for parliamentary democracy. Will you please sit down?

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA: Sir, I know my limitations. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Who has told you that it will not be discussed?

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI H.D. DEVEGOWDA: The hon. Minister of Finance, Shri P. Chidambaram is present here. In 1991 when the matter was discussed when late Shri P.V.

Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister, my colleague, Shri T.R. Baalu was not there at that time. ...*(Interruptions)* In this very same House, we have discussed this issue for four hours. ...*(Interruptions)* Sir, if you kindly permit us, we will accept and if you do not permit us even then we do not want to discuss this issue. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: It is a very sensitive issue. I know the Chair has no respect in this House. We have sufficiently decimated its authority. You do not have the simple courtesy to hear what the Chair is saying in this House. You dispense with this.

You know very well that I have agreed to allow a discussion. I had only said that time will be decided at the appropriate occasion and you had agreed with me. It was said that I should give priority to complete the Financial Business after the President's Address. I have never said that it will be denied. Unfortunately, you have made a reference as if I have rejected the notice under Rule 193. I have not rejected the notice. When you asked me for an opportunity to speak on a very important subject of the President's Address, you had said that you will not refer because you know what is happening. Let there be a structured debate which I want. But some references on that issue will always create problems. We have to hear the hon. Prime Minister of this country replying to a very important debate.

Therefore, I can assure you that there is no intention on the part of the chair at least, so long as I am here, to deny any discussion. Please for heavens sake do not impute motives to the Chair. I am not attracted to this position. I can assure everyone in this House. It will not take me half a second to get out of this.

THE PRIME MINISTER (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH):

Mr. Speaker, Sir I join all the hon. Members of this House in expressing our gratitude to the respected Rashtrapatiji for his inspiring Address which sets out the broad strategies, policies and programmes of our Government, the challenges that we face and the manner in which these challenges that we face can be converted into opportunities to build a new India, which has an inclusive growth process, which helps to integrate all regions of our country, all sections of our community, a growth process which will enable us to pursue a path which integrates our country, unites our people and does not divide them on various grounds.

Sir, our primary concern, as a nation, is to work steadfastly for the removal of mass poverty, ignorance and disease which still afflicts millions and millions of people in our country. Considerable progress has been made to soften the harsh edges of extreme poverty. But we have a long journey ahead of us and the primary concern of our Government, whether in dealing with internal matters or external matters, is to widen the opportunities for the progress of an inclusive growth process which will make all sections of our community effective partners in the process of development.

I have always believed and I have had an opportunity to express these views before, that the problems of mass poverty, ignorance and disease which afflict large segments of our population can best be dealt with only in the framework of a rapidly expanding economy. I say with some satisfaction that in the three years that our Government has been in office, we have set in motion a growth process which promises that in the years to come, if we remain faithful and steadfast in the pursuit of this inclusive growth process, we will be able to make a significant dent on problems of poverty and unemployment.

Our economy in the last three years that our Government has been in office has grown at an average annual rate of 8.3 per cent per annum. This year, the growth rate will probably exceed 9 per cent. ...(*Interruptions*) We have, for the first time in our history, managed to raise our investment rate to 34 per cent of our GDP. We have managed to raise our savings rate close to 32 per cent of our GDP.

Everybody knows that the demographic profile, the proportion of people belonging to the working age is rising in the next 10 to 15 years. If we can find productive job opportunities for this youthful population, that will further boost the rate of savings, the rate of investment and our ability to deal with problems of poverty and mass deprivation.

Having said that, I would like to emphasise that while growth is a necessary condition for tackling the enormous social and economic problems that our country faces. But it is not a sufficient condition. Therefore, we need to pursue a purposeful strategy which will ensure that the growth process benefits all sections of our population; that our farmers see the benefits of growth; that our policies and programmes should be such as to improve the productivity of our agriculture; that our policies and programmes should reduce the regional disparities which

characterised our past development profile and that the processes of growth must give a particular ray of hope to the disadvantaged sections—whether they are Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities, to our women and our children. These are the concerns which should not divide this House. These are concerns which should unite all sections of our population.

When I listened to the debate, I was encouraged by the fact that despite our party differences, there is a broad agreement in this House that we should move in a particular direction, that we must also pay attention to the fact that growth processes must benefit all; that the needs of agriculture and the needs of our farmers must be attended to on a priority basis, that in the process of growth, if inflation becomes a problem and it brings agony and hardship for the poorer sections of our society, that also has to be dealt with on a priority basis.

Sir, I assure you that that precisely is the concern that I have, that our Government has and we will remain steadfast in pursuing the path of inclusive growth. What do I mean by inclusive growth? Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru defined the broad contours of economic policy for our country. Panditji used to say, agriculture cannot wait and he was right. But he also taught us that the destiny of a country as large and as diverse as India lies in aggressive industrialization of our economy. This does not mean that we should not pay attention to improving agricultural productivity. But we have to recognize that in a country like ours where the average size of landholding is so small; there are limitations to what you can do to improve agricultural productivity. The long-term solution to that problem has to be to take people away from agriculture, to manufacturing, to services and to other non-agricultural pursuits and it is in this context the industrialization of our country, creating an environment in which industry can create lot more jobs than before, becomes relevant. It is this concern that unites the people of this country.

I know there are issues which cause concern to this House, whether a particular process of industrialization is leading to loss of availability of land at a pace which has undesirable consequences. Those concerns have to be taken on board. But I do sincerely believe that my friend Buddadab Bhattacharyjee is right when he says that the time has come in this country to work steadfastly to rapidly industrialize its economy. Therefore, I draw satisfaction from the fact, from the debate that has taken place, that

[Dr. Manmohan Singh]

despite party differences, our country is united about the direction in which we are moving.

Sir, Advaniji and many other hon. Members referred to the problems of agriculture. I do admit that the pace of progress in agriculture in recent years has not been adequate. It falls far short of what we need and we should do a lot more to accelerate the growth of our agriculture, growth of agricultural production and growth of agricultural productivity. How are we going to do it?

Sir, we need to place greater emphasis on the expansion of the area under irrigation. Irrigation is a priority concern of our programme of Bharat Nirman. This will also be an important focus of the 11th Five-Year Plan which is going to be launched from next month.

Sir, we need a technological breakthrough to improve the productivity of dry land agriculture. The recently-established National Rainfed Area Authority will attend to this task on a priority basis. The need for rapid expansion of institutional credit for our agriculture will be attended to with determination. I recognize that in some parts of our country, indebtedness of farmers constitutes a major burden. We have appointed an Expert Group under Dr. Radhakrishnan to look into this matter. We shall process this report speedily as soon as it is received.

Sir, the modernization of agricultural research and extension service will receive priority attention. Districts characterized by agricultural distress have been identified. Area specific strategies have been put in place to deal with the problems of these districts. In addition, all these districts will now be covered by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme which will provide a valuable social safety net for the rural poor and the deprived sections of our rural population.

Sir, as the House knows, this programme will now cover 330 districts and in the Eleventh Plan, our intention is to cover all the rural districts of our country. In addition, the Bharat Nirman, a Programme designed to develop rural infrastructure with emphasis on irrigation, rural roads, rural electrification, safe drinking water and rural housing will also make a major contribution to improving the quality of rural infrastructure. The Backward Regions Grants Fund will also focus on improving the quality of rural infrastructure in backward districts. My own feeling is that if the programmes that we have identified are well implemented, they will make a handsome contribution to softening the harsh edges of extreme poverty. A great

responsibility rests on State Governments as well as on the Central Government in improving the quality of governance and to plug loopholes in the effective implementation of these programmes.

Sir, I wish to assure this House that our Government takes very seriously the challenge of near stagnation in our agricultural production in the months that lie ahead. We will work steadfastly to identify the problems as they vary from one part of our country to another. I have asked the Planning Commission to work out area specific regional plans for the development of our agriculture. We are going to call a meeting of the National Development Council specially to focus on the problems of agriculture and what needs to be done to revitalize our rural economy.

Sir, several Members have expressed concern about the rise in prices. I do share their concern. But Sir, I am convinced that the measures that we have put in place, both on the demand side and supply side, will help us to moderate inflationary pressures in months to come. Already there are indications that the rate of inflation has declined by nearly one percentage point in the last two weeks. Those figures are available.

However, I would like the House to appreciate that we are trying to curb inflationary pressures without adversely affecting the strong growth impulses which now characterize our economy. Supply side shortages can be relieved through imports, but our effort has been to bring in these imports without affecting the profitability of domestic agriculture. Also international prices of wheat, maize and vegetable oils have gone up, partly due to crop shortfall and partly because of increased demand for use in production of bio-fuel all over the world. Thus it becomes difficult to control domestic prices when international prices of both petroleum products and food grains are experiencing a rising trend.

However, the monetary measures taken by the Reserve Bank to moderate growth of money supply, the measures announced by the Finance Minister to reduce customs duties on essential commodities and arrangements being made to augment domestic supplies through imports will, I am convinced, have the desired effect.

In the medium term, of course, we must evolve a more effective strategy to increase production of food-grains, vegetable oils and pulses, and this will be a priority

concern of our Government during the Eleventh Five Year Plan. As I have already mentioned, I am asking the Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission to prepare region-wise plans for revitalizing our agricultural economy. These plans will be discussed at a meeting of the National Development Council which is being called specifically to discuss the problems of revitalizing our agriculture.

Sir, I do not want to go into the details of problems that have arisen with regard to the management of our nation's water resources. All that I can say is that the management of our water resources and putting in place viable and effective arrangements for the resolution of inter-State disputes is critical for sustained development in years to come. I call upon all the political parties to treat water as a national resource and not an issue which should divide our people. We should all work together in a spirit of national unity and harmony to resolve these issues.

Advanji criticized the Government for not paying adequate attention to internal security. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Advanji, commented that the President's Address has not paid enough attention to it. He may have been satisfied with more words, but let me assure him that in terms of real hard work on the ground, our Government and our Home Ministry have a better track record to show than that of the previous Government. Be it the North-Eastern Region, be it Jammu and Kashmir or be it the naxalite-affected districts, the overall internal security situation today is far better than what we saw during the previous Government. Even when we have had terrorist incidents like the ones we saw during the NDA rule, we have not had a breakdown of law and order and an upsurge of communal violence of the type we saw in Gujarat. Compare the violence after the Godhra incident in Gujarat to the situation in Maharashtra after last year's Mumbai blasts.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I agree that we could have waxed eloquent through the President's Address about all the work being done to minimize the loss to human lives after such ghastly terrorist acts. That would have added several paragraphs to the speech. Let me take this opportunity to compliment our security and police forces for the exemplary manner in which they handled the situation, be it in Mumbai, be it in Malegaon, be it in Assam or be it in Nagpur, where a plan to attack the RRS headquarters was foiled. More importantly, our Government ensured that there was no communal

violence as a consequence of such terrorist attacks. Rather, in Mumbai, we saw people coming out in thousands to stand up for peace and communal amity.

Sir, we have been working in tandem with State Governments to tackle threats to internal security. I do not wish to minimize any of these threats whether they be from terrorist elements or naxalite elements. I myself have held a conference with Chief Ministers on this important matter and committed Central support to any action by State Governments to improve their security situation.

As far as naxalism goes—and this is the most widespread internal security threat as seen in the recent shooting of a sitting MP of this House—we have consistently followed a two-pronged approach to tackling this menace.

On one front, we have been resolutely supporting States in improving the performance of security and police forces taking up anti-naxal action. We are supporting them in cash and kind. We are supporting them through training, intelligence sharing. We are promoting greater coordination between States. At the same time, we are not ignoring the deep rooted causes giving rise to disaffection among tribals and other sections in some parts of our country.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, the conferment of land rights on tribals in forest areas, the Backward Regions Grant Fund - all contribute to improving the economic lot of people living in naxal affected areas. The aim is to ensure that they too benefit from the positive effects of the growth processes taking place in the rest of the country and avoid straying into the path of violence.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Shri Advani ji referred to Assam and stated that ULFA was not even mentioned. He wanted to know what we were doing to identify and deport illegal immigrants. At the outset, let me say that I have always condemned violence and extremism in Assam as elsewhere and never hesitated to say that we can negotiate only with those who want peace, not with those who kill innocent people. We will never hesitate to sit down and talk to a fellow Indian - howsoever misguided he or she may be - if such conversation can bring peace to our people. But we will never compromise the unity and integrity of our country or allow those who kill innocent people to go unpunished. It is with this in view that we began a dialogue with the People's Consultative

[Dr. Manmohan Singh]

Group so that it may gradually extend to ULFA as well. As talks did not make headway, we continued with action by security forces. Mere mention of one insurgent group or the other will not serve any purpose. What is required is the will and resolve to maintain peace and order and defeat any terrorist designs. About this, there should be no doubt whatsoever about the firmness of our resolve.

Sir, as for the reference to IMDT, let me clarify the matter. In Assam, large elements of the minority community generally fear that the process of detection of foreigners could degenerate into an instrument of harassment of minorities. It is for this reason to re-assure them, not to protect illegal immigrants but to protect genuine citizens of our country that the IMDT Act was enacted. I know that the IMDT Act was struck down by the Supreme Court. Then, we acted under the existing Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964. A separate procedure for detection of illegal migrants was laid down for Assam which was also struck down by the Supreme Court as being unnecessary. Our intention - and I would wish to state this categorically - was only to prevent undue harassment of genuine Indian citizens. We respect, of course, the decision of the Court and have continued to work under the existing laws for detecting illegal immigrants. Tribunals have been constituted under the 1964 Order and work is going on. There is no laxity or lack of commitment on our part in detecting and deporting illegal migrants.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, several Members - Shri Basudeb Acharia and Shri Ramjilal Suman - were concerned about the unemployment situation in the country.

I believe, as the hon. President said in his Address, that "India will be able to gain from a demographic dividend only if we invest in the capabilities and the intellectual and emotional development of our children." Therefore, we need to generate gainful employment opportunities for our youth, and at the same time equip them to take advantage of these opportunities. The rapidly growing economy is the best generator of jobs. We are giving a deliberate tilt in favour of sectors that create new jobs, such as manufacturing, textile, agro-processing and services.

In rural areas, the NREGA provides a basic minimum social safety net to the rural poor in the form of 100 days of assured employment. Simultaneously, the youth are being equipped through the modernization of ITIs, the Vocational Educational Mission, and the recently

announced scholarship scheme from Class VIII to Class X. I am certain that our effort at making our workforce more skilled and capable is going to be, in fact, the biggest driver of inclusive growth in the coming years. I foresee India becoming a manufacturing hub of the world for many products, the workshop which it was famed to be centuries ago.

Sir, some hon. Members, Shri Basu Deb Acharia, for example, have referred to the Special Economic Zone Policy. As I said, we need to industrialize. And, if we do need to industrialize, we need to encourage industries, which will be labour-intensive. If certain incentives have to be given, I think, those have to be given. We must recognize that today skilled labour as well as capital are internationally fully mobile. Therefore, our system of incentives has to be competitive enough to attract more capital, both domestic and foreign. But this does not mean that everything that is being done is sacrosanct. My colleague, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, is heading a Group of Ministers to review the approach to Special Economic Zones, to find out if there are any pitfalls in the present policy framework. It will be our intention to redress whatever genuine grievances there may be. If we have made a mistake in enacting particular elements of the Act, we do not stand on any formality; we will make necessary corrections.

But I would like to say that the Special Economic Zone controversy has given rise to the much due longer term debate, that is, with regard to the problems of rehabilitation and resettlement of dispossessed families from the areas which are taken over for public purposes under the Land Acquisition Act. I do recognize, that there is a need for a more humane approach, which takes into account the problems of all those who suffer as a consequence of land having been taken away from them, and it will be our effort to come up with a more humane Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy taking into account their needs.

Sir, there was a mention in the statement of the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the President's Address made no reference to the Report of the Administrative Reforms Commission on ethics in governance. Sir, there are other reports also that our Government has commissioned. I attach great value to these reports because they bring together valuable ideas on governance and policy. I hope, the House will find time to discuss and debate these reports. I do sincerely believe that in the longer run, it is ideas rather than vested interests that hold sway on policy.

I thank all those who have been associated with this intellectual effort of generating new ideas to give a new direction to development and governance in our country. As Karl Marx once observed, "When ideas capture the people's minds, they become a material force."

Some hon. Members, including Shri Ilyas Azmi, have expressed concern at the corruption in development programmes launched by the Government and leakages in expenditures. I share their concern. We need to have much better leakage free implementation of many of our programmes if we have to achieve the desired outcomes. The thousands of crores of Rupees that are being funneled into development programmes will not bear fruit unless they are spent wisely and ethically. The rural development and other programmes which have been launched in the last three years make available for each district Rs.150 crore to Rs.200 crore each. That is a large sum of money. If spent wisely, they can bring about a softening of the harsh edges of extreme poverty to a very considerable degree. The State Governments and local bodies, however, have a major role in ensuring this.

The Right to Information Act goes to some extent in bringing in accountability into governance. At the same time, we need a change in the mindsets if we have to root out corruption. Our Government will work with States in ensuring that outcomes of development programmes match outlays.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must share the concern expressed by many speakers, including Shri Madhusudan Mistry, who moved the Motion of Thanks, with regard to the resurgence of communalism and the signs of intolerance in parts of our country. He mentioned in particular the penchant to ban screening of films and the free expression of opinion in some parts of our country. Sir, the UFA Government came to power because the people of our country rejected the forces of communalism and sectarianism. Our inclusive culture and our inclusive civilisational inheritance have no space for such intolerance.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are an open society. Some ask whether we are becoming an open society with a closed mind. I certainly hope not. The UFA will never allow anyone to weaken our democratic traditions. At the same time, we will never allow any force to break the unity of our people. We remain committed to our Constitutional and national values of secularism and pluralism. I share the concern expressed by the hon. Members about signs

of communal resurgence and sectarian intolerance. We too receive such reports from different parts of the country. I assure all Members, and every citizen of our country that we will fight communalism and sectarianism in all their forms and manifestations. We will defend the secular and pluralistic basis of our democratic Republic.

Some hon. Members have referred to the need to ensure that minorities too benefit from our growth processes and to ensure that they are not left behind. I share their concern. The Sachar Committee has brought out the stark reality about the conditions of the Muslim community in our country. The New 15-Point Programme is focused on ensuring an equitable sharing of the benefits of crucial development programmes, particularly in health and education. We are also designing targeted programmes for minority concentration districts. In the long run, as all communities catch up in their social indicators, there would be no need for such programmes. But given current disparities, it is imperative that we carry all sections along.

Sir, I would like in conclusion to say a few words about foreign policy issues. I feel satisfied, Sir, that we have been able to forge a broad national consensus on our foreign policy orientation. As I have often said, our policy reflects our enlightened national interest. We regard our national security and the need to create a global environment conducive to our rapid economic development as the key defining elements of our foreign policy. We also regard peace and stability in our region as a key objective of our foreign policy. The goal of our foreign policy is to expand the developmental options that are available to the people of India; to expand the possibilities for our citizens to exhibit their inherent enterprise and creativity, and to facilitate the creation of a prosperous, equitable and inclusive nation living in harmony with its immediate and wider neighbourhood. If our foreign policy initiatives are seen through this prism, it would be apparent that there is consistency in our approach in every direction.

In the last two years, our relations with Russia, the United States, the European Union, China, Japan and the ASEAN nations have all grown. We have expanded relations to cover many new areas and in all these regions, there is a growing realisation of the importance of India in world affairs. There is a realisation that the success of India as a nation, as a democracy has deep implications and lessons for the world. Our success is a success of democracy, inclusiveness, harmony, openness

[Dr. Manmohan Singh]

and tolerance for diversity. It is this realisation that makes India a regular destination for all major world leaders. At the same time, our traditional relations with the Non-Aligned Movement, Africa and West Asia have also deepened and our Government proposes to expand those further in the coming years. The benefits of this extensive improvement in our relations has had tangible benefits for our people - in improving trade, in increasing opportunities for employment, in expanding the reach of our business enterprises. I believe, Sir, that we have crossed a significant point in our economic history where we are now seen as important, credible partners in managing the evolving global economic and political order.

In our immediate neighbourhood, we are looking forward to hosting the SAARC Summit early next month. India seeks a neighbourhood of peace, prosperity and mutually beneficial economic and social development in our Sub-Continent. I have often said that the destinies of the nations of this region are interlinked. We have not slackened in our efforts to promote peace and stability in the region despite obvious difficulties. As the incoming Chairman of SAARC, we will expand the scope of our relations with all nations of the SAARC region. I am sure, the House will join me in expressing the hope that the SAARC Summit will be purposeful and productive, and contribute to the progress and welfare of all people of South Asia.

Sir, we have been working purposefully for the all round improvement of our relations with Pakistan. The difficulties that arise are well known to this House, but I believe that the efforts that we have made are beginning to bring positive results. We need to establish long-lasting peace, friendship and amity between our two nations. We will work resolutely in this direction. I am sure that through dialogue, we will be able to resolve all outstanding issues and I have great hope in what the future holds for our two nations - for our progress, for our prosperity.

Finally, Sir, in thanking the President for his Address to the House, I once again express my gratitude to hon. Members for their thoughtful comments on various issues of national and local concern. I respect the sentiments behind many of the Amendments tabled by the hon. Members.

13.00 hrs.

Our Government will pay heed to each and every one of the valuable suggestions made, and concerns that have been expressed in this august House.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, a number of amendments have been moved by hon. Members to the Motion of Thanks. Shall I put all the amendments to the vote of the House together or does any hon. Member want any particular amendment to be put separately?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes, Sir. Please put all the amendments together to the vote of the House.

MR. SPEAKER: I shall now put all the amendments together to the vote of the House.

The amendments were put and negatived.

MR. SPEAKER: I shall now put the main motion to the vote of the House. The question is:

"That an Address be presented to the President in the following terms:—

"That the Members of the Lok Sabha assembled in this Session are deeply grateful to the President for the Address which he has been pleased to deliver to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on February 23, 2007."

The motion was adopted.

13.02 hrs.

STATUTORY RESOLUTION RE: DISAPPROVAL
OF SPORTS BROADCASTING SIGNALS
(MANDATORY SHARING WITH PRASAR
BHARATI) ORDINANCE, 2007
AND
SPORTS BROADCASTING SIGNALS
(MANDATORY SHARING WITH PRASAR
BHARATI) BILL, 2007

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we will take up Item Nos. 13 & 14 together. Item No. 13 relates to the statutory resolution, Shri Bachi Singh Rawat—not present.

Shri Ramjilal Suman—not present

Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh 'Lalan'.