

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Fatmi, please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Prime Minister will reply later. Shri Ram Jethmalani is concerned with the matter. Please allow him.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, please.

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI) : Sir, after I have spoken for five minutes, all the hon. Members who think I have said something atrocious will unanimously get up and give me a reward for what I have said. But kindly have the patience to hear and explain what I have said yesterday, you will all appreciate it and as I have said, after that I will deserve a prize.... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No, please let him complete

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI : Sir, before explaining, what I have said yesterday, let me say two things by way of a pure personal observation of mine. I normally hate to use the first person singular in any stage of mine but I depart from my own self-restraint.

Sir, I am a respectful and a reverential student of Dr. Ambedkar and I revere the Constitution which he made as holier than any other Book that has been available in this country ever.

Sir, this hon. House is aware of my credentials. I have been the supporter of Mandal when people who subsequently started talking about Mandal had not talked about its non-implementation. Hon. Members are present here, who know my role in support of the backward classes of this country. Now, with this background, yesterday at a Press Conference, the usual charge was made that "Your party and your Government wishes to tinker with the Constitution."

What is this amendment of the Constitution that the hon. Members are talking about ?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA) : To which party do you belong ?.... (Interruptions)

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI : Please, for God's sake, listen.... (Interruptions) Sir, I have said that with all my reverence for that Constitution, the Constitution still ultimately remains the document made by frail human being and the document made by frail human being must be reviewed from time to time as indeed it has been because the Parliament has already amended the Constitution hundred times during the last fifty years.

Now, let me make it clear. I want the reservation. And I have said at the Press Conference that these reservations

have to be continued for the next thirty years or forty years at least. The reservations will not come to an end until the last member of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe has achieved the level of dignity, status and economic prosperity of the high class people.

But, when I am being charged with tinkering with the Constitution, I have said that the reservation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is now coming to an end because you have prescribed it in the Constitution as you have been doing every ten years. We raised it from fifteen to twenty, twenty to thirty, thirty to forty and now to fifty. But this fifty is coming to an end. If you want to make it sixty, seventy, eighty, you have to amend the Constitution. (Interruptions) Therefore, some amendment of the Constitution is compulsory every ten years.

I was explaining this and this is how the newspapers have reported it. But in some newspapers due to the faulty reporting, things get a little distorted. The entire Press was present and the whole of my speech yesterday was on the Doordarshan and it has been videotaped. Hon. Members are free to see. I am next to none in my support of the rights for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and all other backward classes and people sitting here know of my record. I am surprised that anybody should even raise a whisper against my intention about this harassed part of humanity. I believe that until and unless this part of the humanity is raised to the highest levels of the best of us, the reservations shall continue..... (Interruptions)

[Translation]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE)

: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there has always been unanimity in this House on the matter of reservation and my friend, Shri Ram Vilas Paswan will agree with me on this issue. Whenever time limit of reservation used to come to an end, it was extended and whole House supported that move. Therefore, it is not good that this House may get divided on this issue. Everyone knows pitiable conditions of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the reasons thereof. For centuries, they have remained oppressed. Reservation is needed in a society where there is no equality and where there are disparities. If we cannot change the society immediately, and it seems it will be difficult to do that at the moment, then we have to continue with reservation. We will support continuance of reservation and I am sure that you will also support the same.

Our policy is clear in the National Agenda. Besides, Supreme Court fixed 50% as the limit of reservation. But some states have given more than 50% reservation. The Congress Party was in power at that time. Mr. Chauhan had called a meeting of all parties. We supported at that time that where reservation was more than 50%, that should continue and the Constitution should be amended accordingly.

It is mentioned clearly in our manifesto that wherever there is more than 50% reservation that should continue Shri Jethmalani has already given his clarification.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : We are not satisfied with it.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : You will never be satisfied. I think it would be better to let the matter rest.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN : You have referred to Supreme Court's decision. Let me tell you that in Delhi University and in many other places, reservation has already been done away with. I raised this question earlier also. You may please look into that.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : There are no two views on this and the matter will be looked into. House should not get divided on this issue. I can understand agitated feelings but that should be within limits. Therefore, I request that.....
(Interruptions)

As far as reservation for women is concerned, let me clarify that we will not agree to less than 33%. They must get 33% reservation. We have called a meeting of all parties tomorrow. I am fully confident that a consensus will emerge and we will be able to bring this bill in the House.

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : This Bill should be passed.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : That will be passed only when it is brought
(Interruptions)

[English]

PROF. A.K. PREMAJAM : We want the Bill providing reservation for women in Parliament is put to the vote of the House because the nation should know who are against this Bill. Even if there is no consensus, let it be put to the vote of the House.....
(Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : We have talked about 15 per cent
(Interruptions) I agree that the Bill should be passed and I am confident that everybody will support it.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2.30 p.m.

13.45 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Thirty minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.

14.38 hrs.

The Lok Sabha re-assembled at Thirty-Eight minutes past Fourteen of the clock.

[DR. LAXMINAHAYAN PANDY in the Chair]

(Interruptions)

[Translation]

DR. SHAKEEL AHMED (MADHUBANI) : Mr. Chairman Sir, Has the government resigned ? There is not even a single minister of government present in the House.....
(Interruptions)

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Bandaru Dattatreya is present here. Shri Madan Lal Khurana is here.

Now, the House will take up Matters under Rule 377.

(Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS (MUKUNDAPURAM) : Sir, I am seeking your permission. I want to raise a very important matter.....
(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : No other matter, please.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please be seated. This is not a 'Zero Hour'.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : We are taking the issue of price rise at 3 o'clock.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : I have not permitted you.

(Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS : Sir, I am seeking your permission. About six lakh postal employees, comprising of two Federations, have gone on strike from today onwards. They have submitted a memorandum containing ten points before the Government. The Government never negotiated with them.
(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, no other matter other than Matters under Rule 377.

(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please take your seats. Hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is making a statement.

[Translation]

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI MADAN LAL KHURANA) : I want to say that before coming here, the Minister of Communications informed me that she is going to meet union leaders at 3 o'clock in connection with this strike....
(Interruptions)