

LOK SABHA DEBATES

Vol. XI.VII

First day of the Sixteenth Session of Tenth Lok Sabha

No. 1

LOK SABHA

Monday, February 26, 1996/ Phalgun 7, 1917 (Saka)

12.22 hrs.

The Lok Sabha met at Twenty-Two Minutes

Past Twelve of the Clock

(MR. SPEAKER in the Chair)

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The National Anthem was played.

12.24 hrs.

[English]

Secretary-General : Sir, I beg to lay on the Table a copy of the President Address* to both Houses of Parliament assembled together on the 26th February, 1996.

[Translation]

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Honourable Members,

I welcome you to this Session of Parliament.

The 10th Lok Sabha has accomplished substantially its tasks and the country has been guided through momentous changes in every sphere. I take this opportunity to congratulate all of you for your dedicated service to the nation.

The Nation celebrated the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi which was marked by a large number of significant activities in different parts of the country and abroad. An important landmark was the institution of the Gandhi Peace Prize for Social, Political and Economic Transformation through Non-violence and other Gandhian methods. The first Gandhi Peace Prize was conferred upon Dr. Julius K. Nyerere. The Anniversary concluded with a solemn function on 31st January, 1996 at the Bapu Kutir in the Valmiki Mandir Complex in New Delhi where Gandhiji used to stay.

The law and order situation in the country has been under control. Government would continue to exercise extreme vigilance in the coming months to ensure that relations between different communities and groups continue to be harmonious.

*The President delivered the Address to both Houses of Parliament in Hindi

[Also Placed in Library, See No. LT-8988/96]

Terrorism and insurgency have been curbed. Separatist tendencies have been contained to a very large extent. In this context the performance of the security forces has been creditable. However, the incident of arms drop in Purulia in West Bengal has highlighted the need for constant vigilance. In this connection, investigations into the incident, and its national and international ramifications, are being pursued vigorously. Steps are being taken to ensure effective policing of the air corridors of the country.

In Jammu and Kashmir, due to the concerted drive by security forces against militants and foreign mercenaries, coupled with the acceleration of development activities, there is a perceptible change in the overall situation. The revival of political activities has been made possible. Parliament passed a balanced budget in 1995-96 and for the first time in many years the Plan outlay is expected to be spent fully on development schemes without any diversion for meeting the Non-Plan resources gap. Though Government had to seek further extension of President's Rule upto 17th July, 1996, it remains committed to the restoration of representative Government in the State at the earliest.

In the North-East several initiatives have been taken to tackle the economic backwardness of the region. The North-East Council has emerged as an effective institution for implementing developmental activities. The Sixth Schedule to the Constitution was amended for giving more powers to the Autonomous District Councils of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills in Assam.

The economic scenario has been continuously improving. The Gross Domestic Product has shown a substantially faster rate of growth in the years subsequent to 1991-92. In 1994-95, this had increased to 6.3%. Gross Domestic Savings at current prices improved in 1994-95 and was 24.4% of GDP. Industrial production increased by 12% in the first 6 months of the current year over the corresponding period last year, showing a strong revival.

Along with this, exports have gone up further by 24.17% in the first 8 months of the current financial year. Imports have also grown as a consequence of the overall growth of the economy, and the industrial sector in particular. Foreign exchange reserves are at a comfortable level of about \$16 billion.

The annual rate of inflation which had almost reached 17% in August, 1991 has been controlled and in the current year, the inflation rate has been brought down to around 5%, which is the lowest in the last 7 years. As a result of the strong support to the agricultural sector, foodgrain production and stocks have reached very comfortable levels. The availability of various items of mass consumption has been maintained. The Public Distribution System has been strengthened and by introducing the Revamped Public